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Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators Within A Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS

WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL (PDS) LEARNING

COMMUNITY

by

Ginger L. Zierdt

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS
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COMMUNITY

Ginger LuAnne Zierdt, Ph.D.
University of Nebraska, 2009

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The traditional roles of early childhood educators have expanded to include
management and leadership responsibilities. Through the stories and observations of
early childhood administrators who participated in a Professional Learning Community
within a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership, we discover new insights
about the leadership and management skills needed to lead quality early learning
programs.

Given the importance of professional development for early childhood
administrators, it is important to understand how this phenomenon is experienced. The
purpose of this case study was to understand the nature of professional development for
early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School
(PDS) learning community. For the existing body of knowledge on early childhood
administrators, the major contributions resulting from this study is a greater
understanding of the inadequate training and professional development available to these
leaders.

Through interviews and observations, the stories of six early childhood
administrators were elicited. All interviews and observation notes were transcribed,
analyzed and coded for salient themes. An external auditor was used to examine both the
process and product of the inquiry, and to evaluate the trustworthiness of the study.

Five themes emerged from the study: strength of peer network, rich resources, tangible results and activities, role of top leadership within early childhood, and collaboration across the greater community. An exploration and description of the following issues were presented for each participant: employing organization and work site description; organizational hierarchy, role, and responsibilities; educational background and career path; professional development as a teacher and leader; introduction to the PDS Learning Community; and reflections on the most challenging and gratifying experiences as an early childhood administrator.
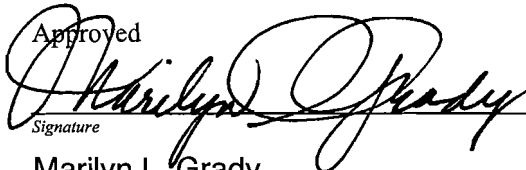
The findings may inform and emphasize the importance of the following: engaging Professional Development Schools more intentionally with early learning programs and professionals affiliated with them; offering new early childhood administrators leadership training; engaging K-12 leaders more intentionally in early childhood, specifically elementary principals; exploring the viability of new or expanded licensures for administrators; and encouraging and supporting mentor-mentee relationships between early childhood administrators.

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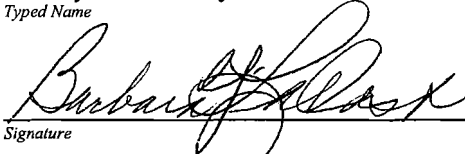
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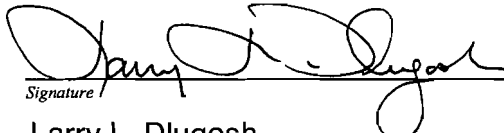
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Dedication

"I think that early childhood administrators are the best-kept secret. They are the most

phenomenal people. They give more time and more energy, more of their souls to their

programs I think than anybody else in the school district. And you don't know that

unless you've seen an early childhood program in action."

Patrice Hovden, 2008

Acknowledgments

I would like to gratefully acknowledge and thank my advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, for her assistance, expertise, and generous support. As a mentor and shepherd throughout my doctoral experience, her wisdom, wit, and never failing belief in me is humbly and deeply appreciated.

I would like to sincerely acknowledge the early childhood administrators from the Professional Development School partnership who inspired me to begin this project. Their commitment and dedication to improving and championing the field of early childhood is incomparable, and I am gratefully honored to have had the opportunity to learn from them.

I would like to acknowledge and thank my husband, Jonathan, for his unyielding support, relentless encouragement, and eternal optimism. His enthusiasm and passion for helping me fulfill my dream have been rooted in love, patience, confidence, support, and faith.

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

The traditional roles of early childhood educators, focused on direct care and

education, have expanded to include management and leadership responsibilities.

Increased accountability and financial constraints, as well as greater competition and

frequent changes in government policy, all require sophisticated leadership and

management skills along with quality professional development.

> The lack of leadership development programs is clearly a key issue in
> early childhood. In contrast to their counterparts in primary and secondary
> schools, directors have had plenty of opportunity in their training to
> become familiar with issues of child development, assessment, classroom
> management and curriculum design, but not with management or
> leadership. (Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, & Briggs, 2004, p. 164)

The literature confirms administrator professional development in general has not

been coherent, but likened to a "patchwork quilt" of experiences – self-chosen and often

isolative within the learning experience. The literature further supports an essential

element to quality professional development is for administrators to frequently and within

an intentionally designed-format, engage with other administrators "outside" of their own

organizations. The challenge is that most learning experiences for administrators have not

met the standard of "frequent and intentional design." One model, based on "frequent and

intentional design," continues to emerge in the literature for teacher professional

development is the Professional Learning Community.

The Professional Learning Community (PLC) model flows from the assumption

that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure students are taught but

to ensure that they learn (DuFour, 2005). The quality of teaching, learning, and

relationships depends on the quality of leadership (Sparks, 2005).

> Profound change in leaders results from and is revealed through deeper understanding of complex issues, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and 'next action thinking' that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time. (Sparks, 2005, p. 10)

The major purpose of the learning community is the learning in which the adults in the school (organization) engage. When the professionals learn new practices, leading-edge instructional strategies, explore new leadership and management techniques, and find collective advocacy outlets, they become more effective with the staff they lead — and, then, students learn more successfully. Thus an important aspect of the PLC is not only how well the PLC is functioning as an infrastructure or way of working, but how well the administrator puts into practice what is learned (Hord and Sommers, 2008, p. 117).

One challenge for early childhood administrators is the isolative nature of their work. Many are the sole administrator of all early childhood programming for their organization; therefore, their participation within a learning community will require structural support from outside. The literature indicates the Professional Development Schools (PDS) model may be an appropriate "convener" for such professional development activity to occur. The Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (AACTE, 2008) describes the work of PDSs as "a P-12 school(s), which support a multidimensional program collaboratively designed and managed by a school-university partnership" (http://www.aacte.org/Programs/PDS/pds_glance.aspx). The literature is non-existent about the impacts and "next action thinking" resulting from such an innovation as early childhood administrator professional development within a learning community of a Professional Development School partnership.

Purpose Statement

Given the importance of professional development for early childhood administrators, it is important to understand how this phenomenon is experienced. Therefore, the purpose of this case study was to understand the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School (PDS) learning community.

The central question for this study was: What is the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators? Specific research questions included:

1. What has been the historical context of professional development for early childhood administrators?

2. What situational factors prompted the early childhood administrators to engage in a PDS Professional Learning Community?

3. What was the experience of the early childhood administrators' participation within a Professional Development School Learning Community focusing on issues of Early Childhood and School Readiness?

4. What changes in administrative/leadership practices were noted by early childhood administrators following their PDS Learning Community experience?

5. What has been the worth and value of the PDS Learning Community experience?

6. How do these discussions with early childhood administrators reflect the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development?

Delimitations and Limitations

The study was limited to the experiences of six early childhood administrators who were participants in a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community focused on issues of early childhood and school readiness. Although the results of the study provided valuable information regarding their roles and experiences, the generalizability of the study results are limited by the number of study participants. All of the participants were white women, living within a 90-minute radius from a Midwestern university in rural communities smaller than 50,000. Each participant had more than 20 years of education-related experience. As the parameters of the sample were narrowly defined (early childhood administrator, PDS partnership involvement, and learning community participant), I was able to interview and observe for the maximum amount of time agreed to by each participant in the study. For the interviews, 629 minutes were recorded with an additional 210 minutes comprised of interview post-briefings with the participants. For observations, each participant was observed three school days; however, two participants invited me to extend my series to five school days to observe special family-engagement events and administrator meetings. The aggregate observation hours totaled 108.

As an educator of early childhood and early childhood teachers, a community and higher education advocate for early learning programs, and an administrator of a center leading a Professional Development School (PDS) model at a university, the potential for researcher bias was significant. To counter my bias, an external auditor examined both the process and product of the inquiry, and evaluated the trustworthiness of the study.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

To understand the nature of professional development for early childhood

administrators within a Professional Development School (PDS) learning community

context, one must examine historical and current trends, the interconnectedness of

themes, and implications for research within the literature regarding the following:

Professional Development Schools (PDS), professional development of K-12

administrators, early childhood administrator development, learning communities,

innovation-change phenomenon, and tradition of inquiry.

Professional Development Schools (PDS)

History

The PDS concept is not a new one "as some manifestation of the PDS has existed

since the late nineteenth century. The laboratory school, connected to schools of

education, has been its most popular form, beginning with Dewey who conceived of it as

a laboratory similar to that used by scientists and medical doctors" (Campoy, 2000, p. 5).

As Darling-Hammond (1994) notes, "The Holmes Group's 1986 proposal for PDSs

recognized that efforts to reform teacher education must also be accompanied by efforts

to make schools better places for teachers to work and to learn" (p. 4).

The PDS is one of the most "prominent, compelling, and recent models of teacher

education reform" (Campoy, 2000, p. 3). The PDS movement has been promoted by a

range of organizations: the Holmes Group, the Carnegie Forum on Education and the

Economy, the National Network for Education Renewal, the American Federation of

Teachers, the National Education Association, The American Association of Colleges for

Teacher Education, and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

(Teitel, 2003; Clark, 1999).

The PDS movement, however, has encountered some identity confusion.

Movements that share similar mission and goals are known by various names, including:

Professional Practice Schools, Clinical Schools, and Partner Schools (AACTE, 2008).

The National Association for Professional Development Schools (NAPDS) released a

policy statement on April 12, 2008 to provide a common framework for defining PDS.

Elliot Lessen, NAPDS President, acknowledged "There is a tendency for the term 'PDS'

to be used as a catch-all for various models of school-university partnership work that

may or may not be best described as PDS" (NAPDS.org, 2008).

Definition, "Essentials," and Characteristics of PDS Work

The American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education (AACTE)

distinguishes a PDS as follows: "A PDS is a P-12 school, which supports a

multidimensional program collaboratively designed and managed by a school-university

partnership (2008, http://www.aacte.org/Programs/PDS/pds_glance.aspx). The National

Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) expands,

> Professional development school partners work together over time,
> building relationships and commitment to their shared goals. They develop
> new strategies, roles, and relationships to support their work. Together,
> they move to institutionalize their partnership so that it is supported and
> becomes a part of their institutions' expectations. At the most advanced
> stages of development, PDS partnerships influence policies and practices
> at the district, state, and national levels (2001b, p.1).

The NAPDS (2008) encourages all those working in school-university

relationships to embrace the "Nine Essentials" of PDS work:

1. A comprehensive mission that is broader in its outreach and scope
   than the mission of any partner and that furthers the education

profession and its responsibility to advance equity within schools and, by potential extension, the broader community;

2. A school–university culture committed to the preparation of future educators that embraces their active engagement in the school community;

3. Ongoing and reciprocal professional development for all participants guided by need;

4. A shared commitment to innovative and reflective practice by all participants;

5. Engagement in and public sharing of the results of deliberate investigations of practice by respective participants;

6. An articulation agreement developed by the respective participants delineating the roles and responsibilities of all involved;

7. A structure that allows all participants a forum for ongoing governance, reflection, and collaboration;

8. Work by college/university faculty and P–12 faculty in formal roles across institutional settings; and

9. Dedicated and shared resources and formal rewards and recognition structures. (http://napds.org/)

As definition melds with essential components, the work of the PDS will be seen as simultaneous reform of schools and teacher education programs with resulting synergy that helps each institution accomplish more than it could alone (Campoy, 2000, p. 4). The most commonly identified characteristics associated with this synergy include:

1. A vision of teaching as a profession: knowledge-based, collegial, and inquiry-oriented.

2. A student-centered approach to teaching and learning.

3. The sharing of the responsibilities for teaching between the partnering institutions.

4. The simultaneous renewal of school and university.

5. A commitment to provide equal opportunity for all participants (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Campoy, 2000; AACTE, 2008; NCATE, 2001b).

Standards, Benefits, and Challenges of PDS

One of the signature elements of a PDS is that it is informed and guided by standards. In 2001, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education proposed

standards that embodied a set of concepts or theoretical ideas about professional

development schools. Levine notes (as cited in Teitel, 2003, p. xiii), "The PDS Standards

are a necessary framework for defining context or inputs in studies that seek to determine

effects of PDSs on teacher quality and student learning."

The PDS Standards are as follows:

1. Learning Community - represents the teaching and learning activities, philosophies, and environments created in these partnerships.
2. Accountability and Quality Assurance - assessment of the partnership and its outcomes in ways that address the PDSs' accountability to its various stakeholders.
3. Collaboration - addresses the partnership's formation and its development of an increasingly interdependent, committed relationship.
4. Diversity and Equity - focuses attention on how the PDS prepares a diverse group of educators to provide opportunities to learn for all students.
5. Structures, Resources, and Roles - addresses how the PDS organizes itself to support and do its work. (Teitel, 2003, p. xviii)

As standards guide practice, Clark (1999) notes "Research and the informed

opinions of people who have been working with PDSs point to the following benefits of

PDSs" as a vehicle of effective educational reform:

• Students enrolled in professional development schools perform better than other students on common measures of student learning in basic subjects such as language arts and mathematics.
• Teachers prepared in professional development schools are better able to elicit student learning than those assigned traditional internships.
• Teachers prepared in professional development schools are more familiar with the practices required in schools than those who obtain clinical experiences in other ways.
• Professional development conducted by professional development schools is more closely integrated with preservice education (and vice versa).
• Teachers perceive that professional development obtained through a PDS is more valuable than that obtained in traditional ways.

- Administrators report that they prefer to hire teachers whose clinical training occurred in a professional development school.
- Teacher associations believe that professional development schools contribute to the enhancement of the profession.
- Universities benefit from teachers who are prepared in professional development schools because these teachers help enable students to perform more successfully at the university level.
- Universities benefit from professional development schools because they generate tuition and fees in connection with the preservice and professional development course work completed in the PDS.
- Local school districts benefit from professional development schools because they reduce recruiting costs, retraining costs, legal fees, and professional development needs.
- Local school districts benefit from professional development schools because they are useful sources of research information concerning the quality of new programs.
- Teachers working in PDSs are more likely to pursue graduate study to enhance their skills as teachers and mentors of teachers.
- Students in PDSs experience more hours of adult attention than do similar students in other schools.
- New teachers prepared in PDSs exhibit more reflective practice than teachers prepared through other kinds of clinical experiences.
- New teachers prepared in PDSs assume leadership roles among their peers more quickly than teachers prepared in other ways.
- The university usually views itself as having a substantial responsibility to the community. Service to P-12 schools discharges part of such responsibility.
- Better teachers make better schools.
- PDSs help business secure better workers, because the students in the schools are better educated thanks to teachers who were prepared in professional development schools. (p. 24-26)

In providing balance to the discussion of PDSs, researchers also have found the implementation and sustainability of PDSs have been challenging in some cases. Petrie (1995) sought to compare the nature of school and university partnerships from a biological lens in that, "Symbiosis, in the nonparasitic interpretation of the word, means the intimate living together of two dissimilar organisms in a mutually beneficial relationship. For the five decades since World War II, the relationship between schools and universities has not been symbiotic" (p. 11). Sirotnik and Goodlad's research (as

cited in Petrie, 1995) identifies ten lessons where symbiosis in a PDS can break down if

not intentionally attended to:

> Lesson 1: Dealing with cultural clash. School systems and universities are
> not cut from the same cultural cloth
> Lesson 2: Dealing with schools of education
> Lesson 3: Sustaining leadership and commitment
> Lesson 4: Providing adequate resources
> Lesson 5: Modeling authentic collaboration
> Lesson 6: Living with goal-free planning, action, and evaluation
> Lesson 7: Avoiding the quick-fix syndrome
> Lesson 8: Winning the process/substance debate
> Lesson 9: Avoiding over-and understructuring
> Lesson 10: Translating leadership as empowerment and shared
> responsibility. (p. 13)

Finally, according to the American Association for Colleges of Teacher Education

(http://www.aacte.org/Programs/PDS/faqpds.aspx),

> There is less evidence that student learning is significantly or consistently
> enhanced. The relative newness of PDSs as institutions, failure to embed
> systematic documentation and assessment into program design, and
> inherent difficulties associated with devising reliable measures of
> outcomes from innovative, nontraditional practices contribute to the
> paucity of P-12 student outcome data. (2008)

Bridging Vested Interests of P-12 and Higher Education

Goodlad surmises that the "current wave of interest in professional development

schools appears to have risen out of proposals to join universities and schools in order to

improve pre-service teacher education" (Petrie, 1995, p. 7.) Robinson and Darling-

Hammond (1994) note,

> Professional development schools are organizations that cannot be created
> by either public schools or universities acting alone. They grow out of and
> depend upon collaboration for their very existence. Each partner brings a
> critical element to the relationship. Public schools provide venues for the
> authentic clinical development of teachers now generally accepted as
> essential for new teacher development and for professional development
> of veteran teachers. Universities provide access to theory and knowledge
> production. (p. 203)

As PDS partnerships continue to be mindful of Sirotnik and Goodlad's lessons, the result has included "increased opportunities for future teachers to be involved in school settings, evidence of curricular innovations in school and university teaching, and more collaborative professional development activities for experienced teachers and university faculty" (Wiseman & Knight, 2003, p. 7). These results indicate that PDSs can be a critical link for guiding professional development throughout all levels of the partnership.

Professional Development

Call to Action

Earley and Bubb (2004) note, "One of the hallmarks of being identified as a professional is to continue to learn throughout a career" (p. 3).

> There is a growing recognition that the management and development of people — human resource management (HRM) and human resource development (HRD) — is more effective in enhancing the performance of organizations, including schools and colleges, than any other factor. People and their training and development – their continuing professional development – must be seen as an investment and it is therefore essential that each school establish not only a policy but also the means of its implementation through effective management and leadership. (p. 2)

In response to such a call, the National Staff Development Council (2008) has proposed an Amendment to Section 9101 (34) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, to explicitly, within law, define professional development: "A comprehensive, substantiated, and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement" (p. 4). This historic proposed amendment shows,

> The increased emphasis being placed on teachers' (and administrators') professional development. Policy processes and systems are moving from

a preoccupation with universal pre-service education, one of the great achievements of the twentieth century, to the challenges of creating opportunities for career-long education and training in the twenty-first. Such a reorientation recognizes:

- Changing forms of economic and social organization, most notably the shift from manual to knowledge-based forms of employment;
- Increasingly rapid changes in the knowledge base of many parts of the curriculum;
- Rising public expectations about the standards that schools and other educational institutions should achieve;
- New forms of public accountability at all levels of the public education system; accountability often enforced by regulatory and statutory mechanisms;
- The availability of new forms of technologies with the potential for significantly enhancing access to personal and communal professional development programs of a formal and informal nature. (Moon, 2000, p. 3)

Guided by Standards with Adult Learning Theory in Mind

"Effective professional development is conducted in accordance with the standards of the profession" (Easton, 2005, p. 58). One example is that of the National Staff Development Council.

These standards emphasize that staff development should improve the learning of all children. They address the context, process, and content of professional improvement. The context standards encourage learning communities to have goals linked to those of the school and the district. They stress the need for leaders to promote ongoing improvement and resources to support adult learning. (Easton, 2005, p. 58)

As standards inform the framework for professional development, knowledge and application of adult learning theory is particularly important for effectiveness. Easton states,

Adult learners are more self-reliant than children are and resist others dictating to them what they should learn. They prefer to be in charge of their own learning. They need to connect new concepts to what they already know in order to make use of new ideas. They learn best when the new concepts and skills are related to real-life circumstances. This is one reason that job-embedded staff development is so effective. Adults need follow-up support, such as coaching, to help them transfer their new skills

into everyday practice. They tend to take fewer risks than children do for fear of affecting their self-esteem. Because of the number and diversity of experiences they have had, adult groups are much more heterogeneous than children's groups. (2005, p.60)

Carnell's 2004 six-year study of effective adult learning (as cited in Earley & Bubb, 2004) would concur with the previous findings and extends the body of knowledge. The following summaries, as shared by teachers, describe characteristics of their most effective learning:

- Are linked inextricably with teachers' day to day work contexts, for example, in the classroom or working with groups of colleagues in their school;
- Are challenging, developmental, and take place over an extended period of time;
- Arise when teachers feel in control, have ownership, develop shared aims and reciprocity — supporting and being supported by respected colleagues;
- Are participatory; the more teachers are engaged in activities and the more interaction with colleagues, the more effective the activities are seen;
- Are practical and relevant with opportunities for reflection, learning and change;
- Happen in a trusting, non-hierarchical environment;
- Include pupil and peer learning dialogue;
- Occur when teachers work together in social exchange, reflecting, planning and developing actions for change;
- Focus explicitly on their own learning. (p. 18)

Professional Development within a PDS

Professional development in PDSs emulate a number of the characteristics indicated previously for effective learning strategies for adults. However, as professional development is considered within the context of a PDS, the focus is generally broader than enhancement of individual skills. Abdal-Haqq (1998) continues,

First, teachers themselves participate to a larger degree in the design, focus, and implementation of professional development activities.

Activities are more closely linked to local needs and priorities, which are more likely to be identified by school personnel (Wiseman & Cooner, 1996), as well as district or state directives (Houston, Clay, Hollis, Ligons, Roff, & Lopez, 1995). Professional development in PDSs is intended to increase the capacity of teachers to actively participate in the change processes associated with school and teacher education renewal. Ideally, professional development in PDS settings is enabling and empowering; a major objective is to engage teachers in the effort to move teaching closer to being a profession that sets its own standards of practice and is accountable to students, parents, and communities (Darling-Hammond, 1994; Holmes Group, 1986)." (p. 21)

As an example of PDS professional development-in-action, consider the Franklin County Academy of Physical Educators (FCAPE), a multi-school PDS (MSPDS) also known as a network PDS. This PDS of physical education educators was the first network PDS. The faculty in physical education teacher education gathered together K-12 physical educators across nine urban and suburban school districts. This network PDS provided support for physical educators, who often were isolated in their school buildings. Johnston, Brosnan, Cramer, and Dove (2000) report an aggregated reflection of these participants' professional development experience:

A benefit of the initial large group of teachers from multiple sites was that we could share common concerns about our subject matter. As the content of physical education is often marginalized in the schools, it was beneficial to address issues and concerns with a group of professionals who valued and were committed to a similar focus. We were able to select a topic, share concerns from various contextual settings (i.e., urban, suburban, elementary, secondary schools) and discuss possible solutions and survival strategies. Through these formal and informal conversations, the problems did not disappear, but the knowledge that others had the same experiences was cathartic. We could share strategies and move forward because we knew that other teachers understood and supported us. (p. 243)

Teitel (2000) shares that "in theory, professional development in the PDS applies not only to school and university-based faculty, but also to administrators at both sets of

institutions and to all other partners" (p.131). Stroble and Luka (1999) concur with Teitel

in recommending "PDS leaders (including those not in formally titled leadership

positions) need 'opportunities to learn across boundaries'"

(http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.mnsu.edu:2048/hww/results/results_single_ftP

ES,jhtml).

<div align="center">K-12 Administrative Professional Development</div>

Overcoming Fragmentation and Incoherence

Quality professional development is a critical concern in educational leadership.

Peterson (2002) notes,

> Over the next 5 years, districts are expected to replace more than 60% of
> all principals. This new cohort of principals will lead their schools for the
> next 15 to 20 years, through the first quarter of the new century. It is
> crucial to provide high-quality preparation programs for these principals.
> It is equally important for districts, associations, states, and other
> organizations to offer carefully designed professional development
> programs over the careers of these leaders. (p. 213)

Ensuring quality school leadership through effective professional development is not a

concern centralized to the United States. Earley and Bubb's (2004) research in England

concludes, "An overriding theme emerging was the urgent need to see put in place a map

of leadership development ensuring coherence, continuity, some common themes, and

some choice at different stages" (p. 168).

As Peterson (2002) notes,

> Currently, many associations, organizations, and groups provide a variety
> of forms of professional development for school principals in the United
> States. Principals often construct a crazy quilt of these offerings to
> enhance their learning and connect to professional groups. Many of these
> (programs) have carefully designed curricula, quality instruction, and a
> clear mission, but fragmentation for the administrator can occur as they
> pick and choose programs and workshops from such a wide array. (p. 217)

Peterson and Cosner (2005) identified the following elements as essential for administrator professional development and adhere to the best principles of adult learning theory:

- Collaborative interactions around real problems and tasks also allow principals to be exposed to a broader, and perhaps richer, palette of ideas and approaches.
- Structured interactions between superintendents and principals can support principals' experiential learning because they are in close proximity to school leaders' immediate context.
- Interactions with other experienced administrators also can support learning from one's experiences. Whether through regular administrative meetings or retreats, professional development should legitimize the nature of the work while at the same time fostering deeper analysis, reflection, and interpersonal sharing about the principalship.
- Job-embedded mentoring and coaching can provide critical support to principals, particularly as they grapple with complex problem solving. Mentors and coaches who shadow a principal and observe classrooms and school events gain important insights into principals' school contexts and are in good positions to support school leaders learning on the job.
- Drawing from executive education approaches, school districts' collaborations with local universities or other professional development organizations can produce powerful learning opportunities for school leaders grounded in their current projects and problems (Tucker & Codding, 2002). The district/university partners often design professional development experiences customized to local contexts using case-based and problem-based learning. (p. 31)

PDS and the Administrator

Cramer and Johnston (2000), Teitel (2003), and Stroble and Luka (1999) commented on the missing, but essential, voice of the administrator within the work of Professional Development Schools. Stroble and Luka (1999) note,

> Although "research on the change process shows that principals are crucial to successful implementation and realization of change," the literature about professional development partnerships says little about their roles in PDSs or the impact those partnerships may have on their roles (Bowen & Adkison, 1996, p. 5). Trachtman and Levine (1997) observed, "To date,

little attention has been paid to the kind of leaders needed to build
Professional Development Schools, or to the nature of effective leadership
for collaborative, restructuring environments." Indeed, frequently leaders
are not even identified. Participants and theorists have paid too little
attention to the role in PDS development of those in formal organizational
leadership positions: deans, school principals, superintendents, union
leaders, and other school-based leaders.
(http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.mnsu.edu:2048/hww/results/res
ults_single_ftPES,jhtml)

Miller, Devin, and Shoop (2008) believe that Professional Development School

partnerships can be an ideal venue for growing leadership. They contend,

Becoming leaders suited to the educational environment today requires
knowledge of theory — and a vision of what that theory looks like when
put into use in a real school. Meaningful experiences must allow leaders to
practice, reflect, refine, and revise, until finally given full responsibility
for leadership. Neither the university setting nor the schools alone can
bring all of those components together. What better solution than
partnerships between the two for merging theory and practice. (p. 46)

Early Childhood Administrator Development

Unique Identity within Education Leadership

"Although the care and education of young children in the United States has

garnered increasing national attention in recent years, early childhood education (and

most notably administration/leadership) continues to be an undeveloped profession and

often unrecognized field of expertise" (Larkin, 1999, p. 21). Muijs, Aubrey, Harris, and

Briggs (2004) note, "Much of the literature on leadership in the early childhood field is

anecdotal, and in some cases does not transcend the 'tips for leaders' style. This finding

is all the more remarkable given the extensive research literature on leadership that exists

in the K-12 school sector" (p. 158). Rous (2004) contends,

In the field of early childhood, the distinction between supervision and
leadership has been difficult to articulate (Sciarra & Dorsey 2002). At the
most basic level, supervisors often are in leadership positions by the nature
of their job title and description. They are responsible for the day-to-day

administration of a program including resolving conflicts, addressing budget and physical management issues, and providing overall supervision of staff. (p. 267)

According to Muijs et al. (2004), there is a "certain hesitance to engage with concepts of leadership among professionals in the early years settings, who view themselves first and foremost as educators and child developers. This has led to a situation in most English-speaking countries where there appears to be a lack of early childhood educators with both early childhood and leadership backgrounds (p. 158). Jorde-Bloom (1992) and Jorde-Bloom & Sheerer (1992) (as cited in Catron and Groves, 1999) note,

> Frequently early childhood administrators are promoted to their positions from the teaching ranks of child care staffs with little more than good intentions and classroom experiences as preparation for their new managerial posts. Usually these new administrators have little or no training in leadership, supervision, and administration. (p. 183)

The deficiency of early childhood leadership preparation and professional development is a significant issue in early childhood. "In contrast to their counterparts in primary and secondary schools, directors have had plenty of opportunity in their training to become familiar with issues of child development, assessment, classroom management and curriculum design, but not with management or leadership" (Muijs et al., p. 164).

Early Childhood Administrator Professional Development

The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) states that the main route to professionalism is to develop an articulated professional development system (Decker & Decker, 2001, p. 377). Catron and Groves (1999) recommend that,

> Program directors should be prepared not only with a background in early childhood education and teaching but with a working knowledge of

management principles and procedures, marketing and evaluation techniques, public relations, legal issues, staff training and development techniques, family counseling, community services, and public policy. The administrator's focus must extend beyond the classroom to encompass the program in its entirety, the participating families, the community in which it functions, the state of early childhood education as a profession, and the relationship of that education to future learning and to the society as a whole. (p.183)

Advocacy, as described by Decker and Decker (2001), is one of the highest levels of leadership, and an area that all early childhood administrators need increasing professional development. Advocacy leadership is:

(a) Having a long-term plan, (b) reaching beyond the early childhood care and education community, (c) finding opportunities to move the issue forward, (d) making use of supportive data, (e) developing new advocacy approaches, (f) deciding on priorities of many worthy issues, (g) "hanging tough" but knowing when to compromise, and (h) supporting new leaders. (p. 380)

Catron and Groves (1999) advocate for professional development of early childhood administrators that is beyond mechanical management and supervisory skill development, but rather within the realm of "good leading."

Good leading demands caring individuals who are able to nurture adults at a variety of stages of growth and development; competent educators who are able to model best practice in early childhood programming; creative directors who value autonomy, diversity, and self-expression in teachers of young children; administrators who possess a commitment to the excellence in all programs for young children; and directors of programs who have the courage to be strong and effective advocates for program resources and effective public policy. (p. 184)

Early Administrators Learning Together

The literature review to this point has brought forward consensus around the impact of collaborative learning. The field of early childhood administration and leadership would also support this. Larkin (1999) surmises,

Specialized professional development for directors should address the issue of isolation. Without membership in a larger educational system, a peer, or the tools and recognition of formal credentials, a director is singularly vulnerable to isolation and to the erosion of his or her confidence. The participative style of management that directors espouse may be not only due to an ethic of care but also a natural response to circumstances causing loneliness. There is a bond, and a measure of reassurance, in knowing that you are not alone in the important and sometimes stressful process of caring for young children. (p. 31)

The literature will also support the need for early childhood administrators to cooperate and collaborate with K-12 leaders for professional development as well as to enhance coherence within the field of early childhood. Ferrandino (2005), executive director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP), affirms this partnership by citing,

We hear from principals who have opened lines of communication with private child care providers and other community preschool programs, and who now share what their schools' kindergarten screenings or observations of kindergarten teachers say about the strengths and weaknesses of local children's school readiness. It's a great benefit to both the schools and the community preschool providers and we believe it's a good practice for all elementary principals. (http://vnweb.hwwilsonweb.com.ezproxy.mnsu.edu:2048/hww/results/results_single_ftPES.jhtml)

As more publicly funded pre-school programs become affiliated with K-12 systems, intentional coordination of early childhood and elementary leadership will be needed to provide coherence of expectations and a shared understanding of the early childhood program. As an example, a 2003 study of 176 teachers employed in prekindergarten programs in Nebraska's public schools were surveyed regarding their perceptions of the administrative supports and challenges associated with their programs. According to Marvin, LaCost, Grady, and Mooney (2003), "Teachers stated significantly more often that administrators other than principals demonstrated traits that were

supportive of the EC teachers' roles and responsibilities." Within this context, NAESP would encourage principals (and early childhood administrators) to take the lead for emphasizing professional development within learning communities whereby growth is stimulated by choosing challenging topics for professional development and making every activity an opportunity to learn (NAESP, 2005, p. 52).

Learning Communities

What is a Learning Community?

Hord states, "Today, the most promising context for continuous professional learning is the professional learning community. The three words explain the concept: Professionals coming together in a group — a community — to learn" (2008, p. 10). The literature discriminating the essential components or characteristics of a "professional learning community" tends to centralize around five common themes (Roberts, 2003; Murphy & Lick, 2001; Hord & Sommers, 2008; Kanold, T., Toncheff, M., & Douglas, C., 2008; DuFour, R., Eaker, R., DuFour, R., 2005; Senge, P. 1991):

1. Shared beliefs, values, and vision

2. Collective inquiry

3. Reflective dialogue

4. Collaborative teams

5. Focus on continuous improvement and results.

As educators build learning community structures, collaboration becomes essential for the achievement of their collective purpose of learning for all (DuFour, 2005, p. 36). Hord (2008) adds,

> A professional learning community is not just a place where faculty meet regularly or groups come together to work collaboratively. A true

professional learning community is a way of organizing the educational
staff to engage in purposeful, collegial learning. This learning is
intentional for the purpose of improving staff effectiveness so all students
learn successfully to high standards. The professional learning community
serves to promote quality teaching, the prime factor in whether students
learn well. (p. 13)

Learning Community Structures

Dana and Yendol-Hoppey (2008) provide an overview of what might be

considered a typical professional learning community structural framework among

teachers:

PLCs meet on a regular basis and their time together is often structured by
the use of protocols to ensure focused, deliberate conversation and
dialogue by teachers about student work and student learning. Protocols
for educators provide a script or series of timed steps for how a
conversation among teachers on a chosen topic will develop. When used
within a PLC, protocols ensure planned, intentional conversation by
teachers about student work, a teacher's dilemma, a lesson to be taught, or
other aspects of practice. Different protocols are selected for use
depending on the topic for discussion that day. (p. 7)

As organizations consider adopting learning communities as their professional

development innovation, Louis and Kruse (as cited in Roberts & Pruitt, 2003) note five

structural conditions that are essential:

(l) Providing adequate time for teachers to meet and exchange ideas; (2)
locating teachers physically closely to one another so that they can
observe and interact with peers; (3) ensuring teacher empowerment and
school autonomy so that teachers may feel free to do what they believe to
be best for their students; (4) creating school-wide communication
structures, including regularly established meetings that are devoted to
teaching, learning, and other professional issues; and (5) employing
methods, such as team teaching, that require teachers to practice their craft
together. (p. 9)

Learning Communities as Professional Development for Administrators

The majority of literature written about learning communities is from the perspective of teacher participants. Administrators, however, are an emerging group of individuals who are finding learning communities as a viable alternative to the fragmented professional development that they often find themselves assembling. Sparks (2005) comments,

> Profound change in schools, I believe, begins with profound change in leaders, which radiates out to others and into the 'system.' Structural change is almost always required, but it is not sufficient. Profound change in leaders results from and is revealed through deeper understanding of complex issues related to professional learning communities, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and next action thinking that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time. (p. 157)

For administrators, advocating for their own professional learning community experience can be a challenge. These leaders are often charged with the responsibility to facilitate the professional learning of those they lead, subsequently, they will put their own learning needs aside. Due to the isolative nature of the administrative role, most notably within the early childhood arena, administrators may simply have no others within their own district to join in forming a learning community. Professional Development Schools are one means of offering new structures and approaches for deepening and sharing knowledge for teaching and leading (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. 4). As administrators let go of their traditional culture of piecing together professional development, and look toward a new innovation, learning communities, as a more coherent and seamless alternative, the shift will necessitate change. Eaker and Keating (2008) note, "The challenge of changing culture is the challenge of changing behavior, of persuading people to act in new ways" (p. 17).

Innovation — Change Phenomena

Sparks (2005) references how Peter Senge "challenged corporations to become learning organizations for their own survival. Learning organizations bolster the ability to recognize threats to survival as well as opportunities for growth" (p. 3).

> Learning organizations learn to innovate constantly by paying attention to five "component technologies." These disciplines are never mastered; the best organizations practice them continuously. And while organizations develop them separately, the presence of each is critical to success: systems thinking, personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning. (Senge, 1991, p. 2)

Learning organizations, such as the ones Senge describes, are capable of diffusing an innovation.

Diffusion of Innovation

Rogers (1962), considered a pioneer in the study of diffusion of innovation within organizations, suggests,

"There are four crucial elements in the analysis of innovations: 1) the innovation, 2) its communication from one individual to another, 3) in a social system, 4) over time" (p. 12). Rogers elaborates,

> An innovation is an idea perceived as new by the individual. Communication diffusion is the process by which an innovation spreads. A social system is defined as a population of individuals who are functionally differentiated and engaged in collective problem-solving behavior. What happens after individual B learns about a new idea from individual A? Under certain conditions B may decide to adopt the new idea. (p. 13)

Adoption is a decision to continue use of the innovation. The adoption process, beginning with one individual, concurrently spreads new ideas in a social system or society (Rogers, 1962, p. 13-17). Fullan (2001) explains that "the main problem is not the absence of innovation in schools, but rather the presence of too many disconnected, fragmented,

superficially adorned projects" (p. 21). Rogers would contend, "One important ingredient

of the diffusion and adoption processes is the innovation itself. The characteristics of the

innovation, as perceived by the individuals in a social system, affect its rate of adoption"

(1962, p. 146).

> What can we conclude about the sources of innovation? First, there is an
> abundance of ideas out there, and if anything they will continue to expand.
> Second, policies and programs are often imposed on schools in multiple
> disconnected ways. Third, even if there is choice, schools and school
> districts do not have the capacity to sort out which programs to pursue, or
> even the capacity to say no in the face of innovation overload. Fourth,
> only a minority of schools and districts are tapping into the more powerful
> teaching and learning ideas that are beginning to emerge from cognitive
> science. (Fullan, 2001, p. 21)

Within the challenges noted by Fullan, Glatter and Kydd (2003) suggest a way to filter

the various innovations presented to organizations. The development of a "learning

system" model of governance is an attempt to foster a culture of experimentation and

learning at every level of practice. The indicative components of such a model are:

- "Reform by small steps"
- Focus on evidence-informed policy and practice
- Tolerance of divergent views-minimal blame/derision
- Creation of test-beds for innovation
- Genuine partnerships built on trust
- Reduction of conflicting incentives. (p. 236)

The Professional Development School as Incubator for Innovation

Darling-Hammond (1994) suggested that Professional Development

Schools provide an especially important contribution for interrelated innovations

(p. ix). Mulford (1998) and Mitchell & Sackney (2000) (as cited in Giles &

Hargreaves, 2006) note,

> Learning organizations will develop innovative structures and processes
> that enable them to develop the professional capacity to learn in, and
> respond quickly and flexibly to their unpredictable and changing

environments, that draw on the collective power of a shared vision and genuine communities, that draw on the collective power of a shared vision and in pursuit of continuous improvement (Deming, 1986). Through 'systems thinking,' their members would be able to see the 'big picture' of their organizations and understand how parts and whole were interrelated and how actions in one domain create consequences in another. They would see the connections between people's personal and interpersonal learning, and how the organization learned collectively, as the key to change and success. (p. 126)

PDSs are places for responsible and long-lasting innovation. They are places for ongoing invention and discovery, where P-12 and university faculty work collaboratively for good practice and policy through applied study (Darling-Hammond, 1994, p. ix).

Learning Communities as Innovations

Senge (2000) (as cited in Giles & Hargreaves, 2006) surmises that professional learning communities emphasize three components illustrative of adoptable innovations:

Collaborative work and discussion among the school's professionals, a strong and consistent focus on teaching and learning within that collaborative work, and the collection and use of assessment and other data to inquire into and evaluate progress over time (Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2000 Newmann & Wehlage, 1995), Instead of bringing about "quick fixes" of superficial change, they are sufficiently flexible and adaptable to create and support sustainable improvements that last over time because, through teamwork and dispersed leadership, they build the professional capacity to solve problems and make decisions expeditiously. (p. 126)

Fullan (2001) is supportive of learning communities as adoptable innovations for learning communities effectively combine pressure and support in a seamless way. "Pressure without support leads to resistance and alienation; support without pressure leads to drift or waste of resources" (p. 91).

Administrators, who elect to adopt the learning community innovation for their

vehicle of professional development, will experience what Fullan refers to as real change.

> Real change, then, whether desired or not, represents a serious personal
> and collective experience characterized by ambivalence and uncertainty;
> and if the change works out it can result in a sense of mastery,
> accomplishment, and professional growth. The ties of uncertainty and the
> joys of mastery are central to the subjective meaning of educational
> change. (Fullan, 2001, p. 32)

Chapter 3

METHODS

Tradition of Inquiry

Qualitative Method

For this study, a qualitative method of inquiry was chosen. I was interested in understanding the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within a Professional Development School context. Qualitative methods elucidate the central phenomena from the perspective of those living it (Hatch, 2002, p. 7). The data were gathered through participant observation field notes and transcriptions of interviews. Hatch describes the "logic behind the researcher-as-instrument approach is that the human capacities necessary to participate in social life are the same capacities that enable qualitative researchers to make sense of the actions, intentions, and understandings of those being studied" (Hatch, 2002, p. 7).

Within the qualitative methods framework, Hatch and Creswell (2007) encourage the researcher to carefully consider the paradigm or worldview in which they will conduct their study. The constructivist paradigm aligns with the epistemology. From a constructivist worldview,

> Researchers and the participants in their studies are joined together in the
> process of construction. From this perspective, it is impossible and
> undesirable for researchers to be distant and objective. It is through
> mutual engagement that researchers and respondents construct the
> subjective reality that is under investigation. (Hatch, 2002, p. 15)

The goal of research from the constructivist paradigm is to "rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2007, p. 21). As I recognized how my own background will shape my interpretation, I "positioned myself" in the research to

acknowledge how my interpretation streams from personal, educational, and historical experiences.

Case Study

I chose case study methodology. Stake (1995) notes,

It is not unusual for the choice of case to be no "choice" at all. The case is given. We are interested in it, not because by studying it we learn about other cases or about some general phenomenon, but because we need to learn about that particular case. We have an intrinsic interest in the case. (p. 3)

Case study research has a long history across multiple disciplines (Creswell, 2002; Creswell, 2007; Hatch, 2002; Stake, 1995). It is most notable within psychology, medicine, law, and political science, while Merriam "advocates a general approach to qualitative case studies in the field of education" (Creswell, 2007 p. 73). Creswell (2007) defines case study as "research involving the study of an issue explored through one or more cases within a bounded system (i.e. a setting, a context)" (p. 73).

Richards and Morse (2007, p. 34) emphasize the need for researchers to establish "methodological congruence"; therefore, I chose case study for knowledge produced within the constructivist paradigm is often presented "in the form of case studies or rich narratives that describe the interpretations constructed as part of the research process" (Hatch, 2002, p. 16). The role of interpreter and gatherer of interpretations is central to the work of a constructivist case study researcher. Following a constructivist epistemology does not require the researcher to avoid delivering generalizations, but encourages the researcher to provide readers with sufficient "thick descriptions" within the material for their own generalizing (Stake, 1995, p. 102).

Positioning Myself (Researcher Reflexivity)

I entered the study with 19 years of professional experience within education focusing on teaching, leading, and advocating for early childhood. My professional experiences include teaching kindergarten and grade two for ten years, teaching early childhood and elementary literacy methods courses for a Midwestern university for three years, and serving as a director for a center that facilitates school-university partnerships. As one who holds both an early childhood and K-12 principal certification, professional development for administrators has been a career interest.

I have facilitated three Professional Development School (PDS) learning communities between 2004-2007. My quest for understanding the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators, within a PDS, is fueled by my need to understand what is truly helpful, of value, of significance, of no consequence, or of futility. This understanding will allow me to advocate for early childhood in a more informed and effective manner.

Sampling Method

The sample consisted of six participants. All are early childhood administrators within a school district or university setting and have been participants in a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community focused on early childhood. The purposive sampling was essential for it "informed an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (Creswell, 2007, p. 126). This sample may be considered a "critical case" whereby "permitting logical generalizations and maximum application to other cases" (Creswell, 2007, p. 127). As each participant

represents an individual district/institution, the participant becomes a "case." For case study research, Creswell recommends 4 or 5 cases for a single study (2007, p. 128).

Each of the participants' employing school district or university received a letter (Appendix A) requesting permission to conduct the study within the organization under the parameters of conducting interviews and observations. I received formal permission from all six organizations. I contacted the early childhood administrators via invitation letter (Appendix B), made appointments with them for the interview and observations, and obtained informed consent (Appendix C).

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Procedures

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Interviews

In keeping with best traditions of case study, interviews were conducted with individuals within the study sample as one means of data collection. I adhered to the following steps recommended by Creswell (2007, p. 132-134) for interview data collection:

1. Identified interviewees based on the purposeful sampling strategies of intensity and criterion,

2. Determined that one-on-one interviews were most appropriate for the project,

3. Used a digital recording device for interviews,

4. Designed an interview protocol form containing five "grand tour" themes and forty-four questions. Ample space between the questions was given to write field notes from the interviewee's comments. The interview took 90 minutes to complete (Appendix D),

5. Refined the interview questions and the procedures through pilot testing (pilot testing was conducted on June 20, 2008 with an early childhood administrator from a Midwestern school district outside of the PDS partnership),

6. Determined the place for conducting the interview,

7. Obtained consent from the interviewee to participate in the study after arriving at the interview site. I asked the interviewee to complete a consent form for IRB. I reviewed the purpose of the study, the amount of time that would be needed to complete the interview, and plans for using the results from the interview. I offered a copy of the report or an abstract of it to the interviewee. (During the interview, interviewees were given the option to draw responses to address interview questions wherever they deemed appropriate).

I recorded all interviews in their entirety. The interviews were transcribed by a professional transcriptionist (Appendix G). The data consisted of transcribed interviews and field notes from the observation sessions. According to Creswell (2002, p. 104), interviews permit participants to describe detailed personal information, and the interviewer has better control over the types of information received since specific questions can be asked to elicit this information.

Observations

As with best traditions of case study, participant observation fieldwork was conducted with individuals within the study sample as the second means of data collection. Hatch (2002) states "first-hand experience will allow the researcher to be open to discovering inductively how the participants are understanding the setting, and allows the researcher to add his or her own experience in the setting to the analysis of what is

happening" (p. 72). Each participant was observed a total of three school days. There was no recording of identifying information about students. During the observations, only field notes were taken following a participant observation protocol. There was no audio taping within the observations. I followed steps as recommended by Creswell (2007, p. 134-135) for observation data collection:

1. The observations took place at agreed upon location. I obtained the required permissions to gain access to the site (Appendix A),

2. At the site, I identified who was to be observed (Early Childhood Administrator) and determined the duration of the observation,

3. I determined to use the role of "complete observer" within my fieldwork,

4. I designed an observation protocol as a method for recording notes in the field. I included in this protocol both descriptive and reflective notes (Appendix E),

5. I recorded aspects such as the physical setting, particular events and activities, and my own reactions,

6. After observing, I slowly withdrew from the site, thanking the participant and informing them of the use of the data and their accessibility to the study.

Ethical Considerations

Primary ethical concerns included confidentiality and informed consent. I maintained a list that links the names of the participants to their pseudonym. This list will be kept in a locked cabinet within my home, and maintained for seven years before the list is destroyed. I obtained informed consent from participants (Appendix C) and received permission from the school districts and university for this study. There were no identified risks associated with this study. This study received approval on June 24, 2008

by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects at the

University of Nebraska – Lincoln (Appendix F).

Verification

First, transcriptions of the digitally recorded interviews were required. In adhering

to the best traditions in transcription, the Minnesota Historical Society Oral History

Office recommends,

> All original transcripts should be audited by the interviewer (principal
> investigator) and an external auditor to ensure that the transcript accurately
> reflects the narrator's words and meaning. Generally, this series of
> interviews done in conjunction with this project, should be edited by the
> principal investigator to ensure a consistent editorial style. Most
> importantly, each interview should be tracked through the process, from
> the original interview to the transfer to the audio-visual collections (2008,
> http://www.mnhs.org/collections/oralhistory/oralhistory.htm).

The digital file was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and was sent to the

interviewee for review. The interviewee clarified respective responses or gave me other

information in keeping with the procedure of member checking. (Appendix G –

Confidentiality Form: Transcriptionist and Appendix H – Confidentiality Form: External

Auditor).

Second, as field notes were taken and protocol notes were written, I was aware of

my personal reactions to and reflections on what I observed. Hatch (2002) recommends,

"These reactions and reflections should be recorded in the raw notes and protocols, but

they should be kept separate so that it is clear exactly what they are" (p. 87). The

technique of organizing such raw notes, acceptable in qualitative methodology, is

bracketing. Finally, as a method to clarify any biases, I maintained a field journal.

"Journal entries are useful for self-assessing researcher biases when interpreting data and

for constructing the story of the research" (Hatch, 2002, p. 88).

Field Issues

With regard to conducting interviews, equipment is always a concern; however, I took the following steps in preparation for equipment failure: brought two digital recorders to each interview, installed new batteries into recording devices prior to each interview, and conducted a test recording/play back with each interviewee to ensure satisfactory recording and sound capture.

Interview questions can pose potential field issues; however, during the pilot interview, I was able to develop a number of prompts that allowed the interviewee to expand/clarify responses. The pilot interview also informed a more effective sequencing of questions to elicit a deeper level of response and a higher level of engagement during the interview.

Another field issue that Creswell advised consideration of was the potential hierarchical relationship between the participants and myself (Creswell, 2007, p. 140). In my former role with the study participants, I served as their learning community facilitator between 2004-2007. Four participants commented that due to the long-standing relationship developed during the Learning Community experience, they were more at ease and unencumbered to respond candidly to interview questions. The interviewer-interviewee relationship was one of equal trust.

Data Analysis

With intrinsic case studies, the primary task is to come to understand the case. Continuing the search for meaning often is a search for patterns, for consistency, for consistency within certain conditions, which we call "correspondence." Finally, naturalistic generalizations are made. These are the conclusions arrived at through

engagement with the study experience and data collected (Stake, 1995, p. 71-88). Data analysis followed a format that was in keeping with best traditions of case study methodology (Creswell, 2007, p. 156-157):

1. Create and organize files for data.

2. Read through text, making margin notes, form initial codes.

3. Describe the case and its context.

4. Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns.

5. Use direct interpretation.

6. Develop naturalistic generalizations.

7. Present in-depth picture of the case using narrative, tables, and figures.

Data Reporting

Stake recommends case study researchers utilize the following outline for developing the overall rhetorical structure for reporting.

1. Open with vignette.

2. Identify the issue, the purpose, and the method of the study.

3. Provide extensive description of the case and its context.

4. Present a few key issues.

5. Present confirming and disconfirming evidence as issues are probed further.

6. Present assertions.

7. Close with vignette (Creswell, 2007, p. 195-196).

In presenting the data of this study, I first identified the issue, purpose, and the method of study. Next, I provided contextual information regarding the following: rationale for the establishment of the Professional Development School Learning

Community, characterization of the PDS Learning Communities, and characterization of the PDS Early Childhood/School Readiness Learning Community. I then provided extensive descriptions of all six participants and their work sites, followed by a presentation of salient themes. Finally, conclusions, recommendations, and implications of the study were presented.

Chapter 4

CONTEXT FOR PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL LEARNING

COMMUNITIES

The following section includes the background context for the establishment of

Professional Development School Learning Communities within the Midwestern PDS

partnership, characteristics of the PDS Learning Communities, and characteristics of the

PDS Learning Community that focused on early childhood/school readiness.

Context for Establishing the Professional Development School Learning Community

The determination of mutually meaningful, relevant, and essential joint work is at

the core of Professional Development School (PDS) partnerships – the creation of a

shared vision to serve children, families, and communities. As stakeholders embraced a

shared vision, responsibility for action and outcomes was taken on as well. This interplay

between mutual cooperation and responsibility characterizes this Midwestern university

Professional Development School partnership.

During the 2004-2005 academic year three key issues were identified as

presenting significant challenges to seven PDS partner districts over the next decade:

Early Childhood-School Readiness, English Language Learners, and Family-School-

Community partnerships. P-16 partners between 2004-2007 shared resources and

expertise within Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The PLC model was

intentionally incorporated within the strategic plan for PLCs were considered, by the

review of current research in 2004, as a best practice for adult learning and continued

professional development (Zierdt, 2007).

Characterization of the PDS Learning Communities

The PDS PLCs within this Midwestern university partnership engaged its

members in job embedded professional development to enhance the capacity to build

each other's professional competence and to ensure continuous organizational growth.

High standards were maintained through a continuous focus on planning for learning,

reflecting on learning, and evidence of improved student performance. As the partnership

entities operated as PLCs, members were united by a clear sense of purpose, a common

understanding of the learning organization they were trying to create in order to achieve

that purpose, collective commitments regarding what they needed to do to move the

learning organization in the desired direction, and shared goals that provided benchmarks

of their progress. Members worked together in collaborative teams that engaged in

collective inquiry on the large questions of teaching, learning, leading; engaged in action

research, building continuous improvement cycles into the routine practices of the school,

and assessed their efforts on the basis of results rather than activities (Zierdt, 2007, p. 6).

Characterization of the PDS Early Childhood/School Readiness Learning Community

Each PDS Learning Community established an independent identity that was

defined through their documented values, goals, vision, mission, and critical

achievements. In a review of *Professional Development Schools-Learning Communities*
2004-2007: Learning Together, Sharing Together, and Changing Practices Together, the

Early Childhood/School Readiness Learning Community reported the following:

- Key commitments and behaviors: Respect, dialogue, preparation, collaboration,

  open mindedness, awareness, support, positive outlook, and a willingness to

  embrace change.

- Goals: Enhance scholarly knowledge in topics of relevance to our administration/leadership, students and families, and professional interests; read and discuss current best practices and research in the area of school readiness as well as community support programs for families of young children; understand the issues surrounding school readiness and sort through the ideas presented; network with other EC professionals across P-16; share local, regional, state, and national information as a conduit of exchange; contribute to each member's professional growth in working with/informing staff, students, and families.

- Vision: Create a clearer understanding of school readiness, and how to advise staff and families as they make decisions for their students about entrance into kindergarten and success in the first 2-3 years of school; become a link for community and county collaborations; serve the community and partnership schools by providing and promoting professional development opportunities to meet children's and families' needs; develop an early childhood/kindergarten transition structure.

- Mission: Strengthen early childhood programs locally, become a voice for political change on a statewide level.

- Critical Achievements [2004 - 2007]: Four white papers were crafted for the 2005 state legislative session and were revised and reissued for the 2007 state legislative session. The state's Ready-4-K organization sought this PLC's input through personal visits to the PLC by the Ready-4-K CEO as well as requesting the PLC to write letters to inform state legislators and the state's Early Childhood Caucus on research-based practices of school readiness and assessment. In

February 2007, the PLC was invited to participate as an "organization" in the

"Seize the Moment – Kids Can't Wait to Learn" statewide conference. The

activities/strategies of the PLC were shared on local, state, and national levels via

school district presentations and district task-force committee assignments from

2005-2007, the 2006 state Kindergarten Association Conference, the 2006

National Professional Development School Conference, and the 2007 American

Association of Colleges of Teacher Education Conference (Zierdt, 2007, p. 15).

Each administrator within this study was engaged in the creation or execution of the

learning community's goals, vision, and mission.

Chapter 5

DESCRIPTION OF SPRINGTON AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EARLY

CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR JESSICA SLATTEN

District and Site Description

Jessica Slatten works in a public school district serving a Midwestern

micropolitan center of 51,693 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). The school district educates 7,050 students from five communities across 13 school

sites. For the 2007-2008 academic year, the school district's K-12 student population is

consistent with state averages for students receiving free and reduced price lunches

(32%); is lower than the state average for students identified as racially diverse (15%)

and students categorized as Limited English Proficient (5%); and higher than the state

average for student receiving special education services (15%) and student graduation

rate (94%). Three-hundred sixty-three students from other school districts open enroll to

Jessica's school district while 303 students living in the school district attend another

district, including home schooling and charter schools (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2008, http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do).

Jessica is the building principal for one K-5 site that is home to 240 students and

one Grade 6 site that is home to 650 students. She supervises a combined staff of 42

licensed teachers. The school district's central administrative team is comprised of the

following: superintendent, directors of core service areas, and site principals. Jessica is

classified as a full-time elementary principal with dual-school leadership, and is the

district-designated administrative liaison to Early Childhood Family Education. A

summary of Jessica's district and site demographics is shown in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools	
District:	
Student Population	7,050
Limited English Proficient	5%
Special Education	15%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	32%
Graduation Rate (2008)	94%
American Indian	1%
Asian	3%
Black	7%
Hispanic	4%
White	85%
Site Responsibility:	
K-5 Elementary School Student Population	240
6th Grade Complex Student Population	650
Licensed Teaching Staff	42

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

Jessica reports directly to the superintendent of schools and is responsible for the following in her role as building(s) principal: Directing the development of each school site's vision, establishment and maintenance of the school philosophy and educational programs consistent with community characteristics and school system goals and practices**;** implementing School Board policies and regulations; and developing annually, each school site's program plans to include: instruction, performance, technology, and areas of special emphasis (early childhood, ESL, special education, talented and gifted, minority achievement). She is responsible for selecting, orienting, assigning, supervising and evaluating staff to meet the objectives of the educational program; preparing the school, parents, and community by facilitating activities and interpreting policies, and encouraging participation in school life; articulating the plans and activities of the school to the administration and school board; providing for adequate inventories of both sites' property and for the security of and accountability for those properties; and responding to administration's written and oral requests for information and required reports.

Jessica is responsible for fostering good interpersonal relations among staff and students, and establishing and successfully implementing high standards of student behavior. She assumes overall responsibility for the safety, security and appearance of the school facility and the supervision and evaluation of all support staff; monitoring the evaluation of student performance and utilizing related data to assess the effectiveness of the instructional program; conducting staff meetings on regular basis, and other grade level, topical and subject area activities as appropriate; and completing other tasks and responsibilities as assigned by the superintendent.

Educational Background and Career Path

Jessica's entire educational career, beginning from kindergarten through graduate school, has taken place within the community of Springton. As she states,

> I love where I grew up and went to school, was fortunate to be able to attend a great university in the same community, and have had the good fortune of working professionally in this community. Even after I retire, which is 3 years from now, I know I'll continue to volunteer for the schools or university. I want to give back.

Jessica pursued Social Work as an undergraduate, but eventually felt called to pursue a degree in Early Childhood and Elementary Education. During her undergraduate experience, she worked at the university's Laboratory Preschool and Care Center, and upon her graduation, the "Lab School" (known today as Growing Friends Early Learning Center) offered her a full-time preschool teaching position.

Within her first few years, she felt the need to pursue graduate education within the field of Special Education. Jessica said that she felt very ill-prepared to work with young children with great special needs, although her supervisor felt she had a "special knack" for working with these children, and most especially noted the positive and proactive relations she established with their parents. Based on this encouragement, Jessica continued to work at the Laboratory Preschool while concurrently enrolling as a full-time graduate student pursuing Special Education licensure. After ten years of teaching preschool, Jessica took time away to raise her own young children. She comments, "It was the right time. I was beginning to feel burned out and desired a change."

As Jessica's children became school-aged, she was compelled to re-enter the education arena, but this time at the elementary level. She was hired as a Grade 1 teacher

in the Springton Area Public Schools, and subsequently taught Grade 2 followed by

Grade 3 within a ten-year period of time. As a teacher in the school district, Jessica

continued to be empowered with site-level leadership responsibilities, district grade-level

leader assignments, and district-wide curriculum articulation leadership. Her site

principal encouraged her to return to graduate school to pursue an administrative license.

As she did this, she had the opportunity to complete internship hours with cooperating

administrators across the school district.

Upon the completion of her administrative licensure program, she was offered a

unique position – to be the first "Teaching Principal" in the modern history of the

Springton Area Public Schools. This assignment was posted as 60% administrative /

40% teaching within one of the smallest elementary school sites. Jessica accepted the

assignment, and over time as the school site grew, the administrative portion of the job

became 100%. In the last two years, Jessica has added one additional site to her overall

responsibilities – a 6th grade complex that serves students from four feeder schools.

Currently, Jessica supervises an assistant principal at the 6th grade complex, a staff of 12

at the K-5 site, and a staff of 30 for the 6th grade complex.

Jessica finds one of her primary superintendent-delegated roles is that of liaison to

the Springton Area Public Schools' Early Childhood Family Education division. She

states that this is one of the greatest components of her job for it allows her to return to

her educational roots and passion. Jessica concedes,

> I can't say this in front of staff, really, because I work with teachers all the
> way up through sixth grade; but I spend way more of my time on this job
> concerned about the earlier grades, for certain primary grades, and then
> the early childhood issues than I know other people do.

Professional Development as a Teacher

When Jessica reflects on the professional development experiences she was

afforded as a teacher, she positively recalls those from the Growing Friends Early

Learning Center where "in-house training" was conducted by the region's most skilled

teaching researchers. Jessica reflects,

> The staff at Growing Friends Early Learning Center is looked at in this
> area as really highly qualified in the area of early childhood, and so often
> we were the people providing area workshops, and so, a lot of it was stuff
> that we did ourselves. We collaborated on workshops at the state level,
> but I got all of my support from staff at MSU professionally.

Jessica remarks that the mentoring she received from her supervisor at Growing Friends

Early Learning Center would serve her well as a future administrator. She found the way

her supervisor made her thinking visible to staff during times of problem solving was

inspiring. She states,

> I think the best part about my relationship with Louise is that she would
> always say, 'Come in here now and play the devil's advocate. This is what
> I want to do. Let's bounce it back and forth.' So she taught me really
> early on to be able to look at all different sides of an issue and make a
> good decision about what needed to be done but taking into account all
> sides. So I fondly, fondly remember those discussions about - oh, various
> things, like should we be accepting special education students here?
> Because it was difficult. We didn't have a staff member with background
> and so we kicked around a lot of those issues.

Professional Development as an Administrator

Jessica has been dismayed, however, during her career by the lack of quality

professional development for administrators in K-12, and early childhood ones in

particular. She remarks,

> One thing I noticed is that when you're a classroom teacher and you go to
> a workshop or class, it's very hands-on. When you go to administrative
> things, it's pretty much sit with a pitcher of ice water in front of you and
> the pen and pad they give you. Very seldom interactive.

Jessica notes that she has had the opportunity to participate in the Metropolitan

Principals' Academy, sponsored by a neighboring Education Service Cooperative Unit

(ECSU), on a rotating basis with other Springton administrators, and comments, "The

rest of the professional development we are in charge of pursuing on our own." Jessica

finds it rare for the Early Childhood-Family Education coordinator and elementary

principals in Springton to ever share common professional development experiences, and

says that "considering the levels of leadership and related administrative functions to a

seamless pipeline of children and families, the absence of such professional development

will not serve our community well in the long run."

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

Jessica became aware of professional learning communities through a national

training with Dr. Richard DuFour, and wanted to increase her knowledge of them since

the Springton Area Public Schools was implementing PLCs as a district staff-

development model within the 2005 academic year. She learned from her superintendent

that the PDS partnership that her district was engaged in would be facilitating a learning

community dedicated to Early Childhood/School Readiness. Since the district was

becoming increasingly aware that a continuum was needed for B-12, and other districts in

the partnership also were concerned about their links to early childhood, Jessica was

highly encouraged by her superintendent to join. As she reflects on her initial view of

what the learning community could offer her, Jessica comments,

> I don't think I went into it with any expectations really. Although one of
> the very first meetings that I attended was the group that made the
> statement for the legislative report and I thought, "Whoa, things have
> changed." I mean, I remember writing letters to legislators and stuff but
> never working on a (position) statement paper. I was very impressed and I

thought, "Okay, I really need to step up here. People are making a big commitment and I need to understand what's going on and try to be a part of that." So that was very inspiring.

Jessica actively participated in the PDS learning community between 2004-2007.

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

Jessica finds frustration in trying to effectively help alleviate the challenges her

staff has in working with data, parental expectations, and student behavior. She remarks,

> Oh, I think right now, anyway, it's the frustration with what classroom teachers are expected to know and do with data. I totally get it. I totally get how data drives what we do and I totally believe it as well. I believe it. But it is so frustrating for the classroom teacher who is so overtaxed often with parental expectations and student behaviors that are a full-time job in themselves. And then we keep throwing these pieces of data in front of the teacher, saying, "Well, how come your kids aren't doing very well in the area of vocabulary?"

Jessica finds helping bridge the needs of a polarized staff in relation to

"experience," as half of her staff are 25+ year veterans, while the other half has less than

10 years experience. New staff is comfortable in working with data, while experienced

staff has deep intuition regarding what works for kids. Jessica comments,

> I find that the teachers who are more recently prepared are coming out with an understanding of the importance of the data and they get it and they know what to do. And those of us who are around a long time are really struggling because we want – well, we worked on the personal connection with the student, the personal connection with the family because that's what we were taught. And it is really hard for us to make that connection to the number on the page and then to turn it into part of our instruction.

> So that's really frustrating for me right now and it's personal too because I'm in that group. I'm in that older group who – and especially, if you come from the early childhood community. You're taught to worry about the whole child. And so I'm struggling with that right now and how I help staff make the jump and understand that that DIBLES data that we're throwing at them has true meaning. And it really is very little change and effort on your part to help the student over that hump. But that's frustrating right now to me.

Jessica believes that her school district could be doing so much more to help ease the "readiness" challenge that exists for the early childhood community.

> I think we could so easily do that. People just want to know, "Well, what does the kindergarten teacher expect? What does the kindergarten curriculum look like?" And it changes so often that we really should have a regular vehicle for early childhood professionals/daycare people to just have access to what we're doing. And I think there used to be this huge secret, you know, that we didn't share what happened once kids started school. And now, all of the sudden, the whole thing is – well, we need to start at birth.

> So we can't behave that way anymore. We have to make the early childhood community part of the education community and we don't do a very good job of that as a school district, our school district anyway. That's probably my job, isn't it? We're on our way. We're on our way.

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

As Jessica reflects on her career as an administrator, she finds her role as the liaison to Early Childhood-Family Education to be the most gratifying, the consumer of more time than anyone is aware of, and is becoming increasingly more important to the school district. Jessica is the only site principal in Springton who has an educational and experiential background in early childhood; therefore, all birth to age 5 related inquiries that come forward to the K-12 system are immediately fielded to Jessica. She laments,

> Each administrator has several areas they are responsible for and early childhood things all fall in one lump. And I think that's mostly because I have that background. I think if it weren't that way, maybe those inquiries/committees would be scattered around a little bit, but now they kind of fall to one person. It makes me wonder what's going to happen when I'm not here. But for now, I thoroughly enjoy being the resource-person and it keeps me connected to what's really important – our youngest learners.

While early childhood has been a career passion of Jessica's, she finds that this love and

support has always been fostered and supported by her personal and professional

connection with the university. Jessica comments,

> You know I feel like I've always been connected to MSU since I
> graduated. I mean, I started working at Growing Friends Early Learning
> Center literally the Monday after I graduated and I was an intern, so I was
> connected then. And then as a staff member, I was always in night school.
> I did some adjunct classes, so I've always been involved. And then being
> a district mentor made that connection again and sort of bridged between
> the district and campus, instead of being part of the campus. But I've
> always felt like MSU is just part of what I do.

A summary of Jessica Slatten's education and career path is shown in Table 5.2.

Table 5.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools	
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	50,000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Education Specialist
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	Yes
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	No
MN Community Education Director Licensed	No
Initial MN Teaching License	P-K-1-6
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	No

Table 5.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools	
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	42
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	Yes (2)
Direct Supervisor	Superintendent
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	3
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	No
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections of Jessica Slatten are shown in Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools
Employers encouraged pursuit of formal leadership training.
Informal leadership mentoring early in career found valuable for later work as an administrator.
Formal administrator professional development found uninspiring compared to teacher professional development.
University-influence has positively impacted her from pre-service candidate to career-level educator.

Chapter 6

DESCRIPTION OF GREENLEAF PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EARLY CHILDHOOD

ADMINISTRATOR JANICE MORTENSON

District and Site Description

Janice Mortenson is employed by a public school district serving a Midwestern

community of nearly 22,000 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). Her school district educates approximately 4,000 students across 7 school sites. For

the 2007-2008 academic year, the school district's K-12 student population is consistent

with state averages in students receiving special education services (13%); is higher than

the state average in students receiving free and reduced price lunch (40%), categorized as

Limited English Proficient (14%), and identified as racially diverse (25%); and is lower

than the state average for high school graduation (86%). One-hundred thirty students

from other school districts open enroll to Janice's school district while 526 students

living in the school district attend another district, including home schooling, charter

schools, the Academy for the Deaf, and the Academy for the Blind (Minnesota

Department of Education, 2008, http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do).

As Janice holds a Minnesota K-12 Principal's license, she has a unique role of

serving as the district's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Coordinator with the

responsibility of building administrative leadership for the Gillis Early Childhood Center,

serving more than 500 children (birth-age 5). Gillis is the signature site for the delivery

of ECFE parent education classes, preschool classes for children ages 3 and 4, and early

childhood special education classes. Janice leads a staff of 37 including 15 licensed

teachers, 14 paraprofessionals, a full-time administrative assistant, and a full-time custodian. Janice is also responsible for the shared-supervision of five Special Education specialists with the Director of Special Education during the times they provide services to the students at her site. A summary of Janice's district and site demographics is shown in Table 6.1.

Table 6.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools	
District:	
Student Population	4,017
Limited English Proficient	14%
Special Education	13%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	40%
Graduation Rate (2008)	86%
American Indian	0%
Asian	2%
Black	6%
Hispanic	18%
White	75%
Site Responsibility:	
Early Childhood Special Education Student Population	500
Licensed Teaching Staff	15
Specialists (Occupational Therapy, Physical Therapy, Speech,	5

Table 6.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools	
Vision, School Psychologist)	
Paraprofessionals	14
Full-time Administrative Assistant	1
Custodian	1

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

Early Childhood Family Education in the state of Minnesota is most commonly positioned under the auspices of school district Community Education; however, in the case of Greenleaf Public Schools, ECFE is a program that resides within the Special Education unit. Janice's direct supervisor is the Director of Special Education Services. Within the district organizational hierarchy, building principals and directors report to the district superintendent as part of the central administrative cabinet. In Janice's situation, where she is responsible for a building and holds an administrator's license, she is an invited and active member of the district's central administrative cabinet where she remains in dual roles as subordinate and peer-colleague. Janice comments,

> Now I'm pretty much one of them – I've been here and have some of that history that other (administrators) don't. Therefore, I'm feeling more confident in my role and that just kind of helps to solidify my presence there.

Janice describes her role as the one who "provides the glue that holds the whole place together." Janice's role as ECFE coordinator encompasses the following administrative performance responsibilities: design, promote, and evaluate the ECFE,

Preschool, and ECSE programs; hire, supervise and evaluate ECFE, Preschool, and

ECSE staff, both licensed and unlicensed, and formulate their work schedules; design and

facilitate professional development for staff including the planning, implementation, and

assessment of early childhood curriculum using the *Minnesota Early Childhood*

Indicators of Progress rubric as an evaluation framework, and continued training in the

assessment of student learning and communication of student progress to parents using

the *Indicators of Progress Domain Framework*. Janice is accountable for early childhood

programs being delivered by staff in a safe, educationally sound and developmentally

appropriate environment for children; to serve as a pedagogical leader to staff by

modeling positive behaviors and effective communication with children, parents, and

volunteers; to serve as an instructional leader and site expert within the discipline of early

learning; and to promote positive, professional relationships and partnerships with county

and external human service agencies, community organizations and foundations, and

district and community-based advisory councils related to early learning. Janice is

responsible for the financial budgeting and management of the early learning programs

and accountable for completing district and state reports for ECFE and ECSE.

As Janice reflected on the day-to-day practice of her work from the vantage point

of her staff, she reports,

> What people would say that I do here is that I guess it would be the
> supervision. They come to me for questions about almost anything. I help
> troubleshoot situations either with students or with parents. I am a
> resource to parents of the families within the program and also for families
> looking for information or referrals. Like the three to five early childhood
> special education program, I take a lot of the phone calls there. So I think
> the staff would see me as being the administrator, the supervisor of their
> classrooms and (meeting) their needs within the building.

When Janice was asked if she considered her role similar to a building principal's in her

district, she states,

> Definitely there are comparisons. The program has evolved over the years.
> But when we (Early Learning Services) came into this building, that's
> really when my responsibility changed, but also that's when I did receive
> my principal's license. And so then with that, I was given more
> responsibility as far as I do the supervision of licensed teachers; I'm
> responsible to do the observations for tenure, for probationary teachers,
> and I'm involved with many of the same functions that principals in other
> buildings do.

As Janice's administrative responsibilities span from Early Childhood Family Education

to Early Childhood Special Education, she indicates,

> That is sort of the oddity of this position is that I do not hold a Special
> Education license. I am totally doing the supervision based on my
> principal's license. And so that is a deficit in the whole picture here that
> the director or the assistant director (of Special Education) does
> supplement the areas where I don't have the expertise. I have the licensure
> that's necessary to supervise in all cases. I'm totally legal with my
> licensure, but there are certainly other licensures that would help like an
> early – I'm also not early childhood licensed per se, either.

Educational Background and Career Path

Janice has been a "life-long resident" of Greenleaf. She attended the community's

parochial school between kindergarten and grade 8 followed by enrolling in the public

school for grades 9-12. Following high school, Janice enrolled at the University of

Minnesota and earned a bachelor's degree in Home Economics Education, subsequently

licensing her in Minnesota with a Grade 7-12 Family Consumer Science teaching license.

Upon her college graduation, Janice moved with her husband to Springton, Minnesota for

one year where she was employed as an instructor in the TeenAge Parenting Program

(TAP). As Janice's husband was given an opportunity to change careers from teaching to

farming, she and her husband returned to their home community of Greenleaf to manage

a family farm. While Janice assisted her husband in farming by managing the computerized farm record-keeping system, she also taught microwave cooking classes as part of Community Education, taught Laubach classes for students learning English in the Adult Basic Education program, and raised three children.

As Janice's children became older, she was able to accept more teaching responsibilities serving as part-time ECFE parent educator, a newly created role within the school district. The "Parent Educator" license was offered in Minnesota for the first time in 1984, and Janice was encouraged by her school district to pursue the license while teaching in the role. The district next offered Janice the role of ECFE coordinator, which at the time was a part-time position. As the community grew, and the need for early learning services increased, the ECFE Coordinator role was elevated to full-time. Janice chuckles as she reflects on her unusual career path from secondary education to working with early learning programs and adds, "I've had a number of positions in my life where I was in the position before I really had the background or the expertise to do the job."

Janice reflects that as she became a full-time coordinator, she felt compelled to go back to college for advanced degree work – to "learn the ropes of leadership." Janice enrolled at Minnesota State University where she earned a Master's degree in Education Leadership followed by a Specialist degree in K-12 Administration. Janice's tailored Specialist degree program allowed her to earn not only a Minnesota K-12 Principal license but a Minnesota Community Education Director's license as well.

Professional Development as a Teacher

When Janice reflects on the professional development that she received when she was in a teaching role, she notes that the majority of it came through her formal training

she received in pursuit of the parent educator licenses. Janice comments that her district was not in a position to direct or guide her professional development since the license and program were brand new, "uncharted waters." Janice found the training provided by the State of Minnesota's Department of Education to be exceptional, and recognized that the intensive, high quality training offered was "rare," and she attributes its existence specifically to the state's assurance and accountability to the public that parent educators would be a significant value-add to ECFE programs across the state of Minnesota.

Professional Development as an Administrator

Since Janice had paved her own way for professional development as a teacher due to the uniqueness of her assignment, she was not shocked by the hands-off approach her district took regarding professional development. Janice confides, "I figured it out on my own. Though my latest supervisor does take interest in my growth, and that's nice." In Janice's role of supervising ECSE teachers, the Special Education division, her supervisory body, does invest in Janice by sending her to trainings as well as Special Education administration meetings. Janice, as a member of the district administrative cabinet, is afforded the opportunity to attend the "Metro Principals' Academy", a district-subscribed membership to a professional organization, housed out of the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, to assist Minnesota principals with continual development and renewal of skills and/or attitudes necessary to maximize the effectiveness of their leadership (Metro ECSU, 2008, http://www.ecsu.k12.mn.us/programsServices/mpa/index.html). Janice shares that the Academy is outstanding for individuals who lead in K-12 setting, but rarely finds the content to touch upon issues of early learning.

Janice remarks that the K-12 district staff development team is increasingly

becoming more proactive in early childhood by including her staff in district-wide

opportunities for professional growth. She offers,

> I think that now there's a much better structured system within the district,
> and our building/programming is now a piece of the big puzzle of staff
> development within the school district. So I work with the curriculum
> director. And especially now, the person who was the Special Ed director
> became the curriculum director this last year, so now the person that used
> to supervise me is now the curriculum director. So we have a great
> relationship and I expect wonderful things for the future, too.

As Janice's district continues to shape the delivery of staff development across the entire

system, Janice sees a change regarding in-house professional development for district

administrators,

> We have created leadership academies geared toward strategic planning or
> forming a cohesive team, teamwork, and some of those types of things.
> But as far as actual (administrator) skill development, I guess – well, yeah,
> that's strategic planning - they brought in a facilitator to help us to think
> about our leadership styles and some things like that.

Janice suggests that one professional development conduit that speaks specifically

to the needs of early learning services administrators is the monthly Regional

Coordinators meeting. The Regional Coordinators meetings are informal networks of

ECFE Coordinators from specific geographical areas across Minnesota. Janice says that

when ECFE and the parent educator license was newly introduced, the State of

Minnesota Department of Education created regions to facilitate training for the

coordinators. As programs became mainstream and fully implemented in the

communities, formal trainings became fewer; subsequently, the formal regions facilitated

by the state disbanded all together. However, individual coordinators throughout the

state determined to keep the regional communication network intact by facilitating their

own regional meetings. Janice finds her particular region today to be somewhat inactive,

and states, "The last couple years we haven't gotten together. There, again, is some turnover and then as my responsibilities increased, that was sort of something that fell by the wayside on my list of things to get done."

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

Janice indicates that one of her most recent professional growth opportunities came through the Professional Development School Learning Community focused on early childhood and school readiness. Janice, who had previously interacted with the PDS partnership through being a recipient of a PDS mini-grant to support early learning initiatives involving pre-service teacher candidates and university faculty, did not immediately respond to the flyer that she received announcing the creation of the Early Childhood-School Readiness Learning Community. Janice offers that it wasn't until she was personally invited by the learning community facilitator that she really "connected the dots" about what this experience was going to be all about. She comments,

> The facilitator sent out a really appealing agenda of some things that
> sounded like things I was interested in and would be wanting to – I mean
> after spending all that time learning to become an administrator, realized
> that I hadn't been – I had sort of neglected my early childhood background
> a little bit. And so I thought, 'this sounds like a really neat way to get on
> some cutting edge research'. And then with the other communities that
> were involved and people that I already knew and respect, and so I just
> thought it sounded like it would be a good thing to try and see what it had
> to offer.

Janice's supervisor was very supportive of her participation in the learning community, and furthermore, her district supported her participation by reimbursing her mileage to drive to and from the university where the learning community convened monthly. Janice was an active participant in the learning community from 2005-2007.

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

Janice simply states that the number one challenge she faces is the lack of funding for early childhood programming. Janice comments, "Not being able to serve all the kids that I know are there and need services . . . it's extremely frustrating."

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experience as an Early Learning Administrator

As Janice reflects on the most gratifying aspect of her role as the leader and administrator of all early learning services offered by the district, she offers,

> I guess the satisfaction of knowing that we've made a difference in the lives of children and families in the community. And I think – you see a kid's name in the paper who is a senior in high school now, or that type of thing where you know that there's reasons or you think, wow, where they came from and where they are now. You gotta think that we did something that helped with that. You never know for sure in a preventive program. But that's I think what makes me smile the most.

A summary of Janice Mortenson's education and career path is shown in Table 6.2.

Table 6.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools	
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	20,000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Education Specialist
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	Yes
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	No
MN Community Education Director Licensed	Yes
Initial MN Teaching License	Home Economics Education

Table 6.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools	
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	Yes
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	37
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	Yes
Direct Supervisor	Director of Special Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	2
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	No
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections by Janice Mortenson are shown in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools
Offered and worked in numerous education-based positions where she had no previous experience or formal training.
Holding a MN K-12 Principal's licensure while serving as an Early Childhood administrator has afforded her a place at the district leadership table.
Self-directed and independent in making choices to pursue formal leadership training and additional administrative licensures.
Works in a unique district structure whereby ECFE and School Readiness sit subordinate to Special Education as opposed to traditional Community Education.

Chapter 7

DESCRIPTION OF GROWING FRIENDS EARLY LEARNING CENTER AND

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR TERRI SIMON

University and Site Description

Terri Simon works in a comprehensive early learning center, known as Growing

Friends Early Learning Center, which resides on a Midwestern university campus. The

campus community supports 14,500 students and 1,800 faculty and staff. The

community is a micropolitan center of 51,693 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). Terri serves as the Director of Growing Friends Early Learning Center, serving 90

children (12 infants, 21 toddlers, and 57 preschool-age children), and leads the following

staff: 5 full-time lead teachers, 1 full-time administrative assistant, 35 student employees

(assistant-teacher qualified), 45 work-study employees, and 5 kitchen student staff.

Growing Friends Early Learning Center, as a non-profit childcare center on the university

campus, provides a model of service for helping children and university-based parents

while allowing university students to develop their skills in helping children attain their

fullest potential. A summary of Terri's university and site demographics is shown in

Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: University and Site Demographics Summary: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center	
University:	
Student Population	14,500

Table 7.1: University and Site Demographics Summary: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center	
University Faculty and Staff Population	1,800
Site Responsibility:	
Student Population	90
Infants	12
Toddlers	21
Preschoolers	57
Licensed Teaching Staff (Lead Teachers)	5
Student Staff	95
Kitchen	5
Student Employees	35
Work-study Employees	45
Full-time Administrative Assistant	1

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

Terri reports directly to the Dean of the College of Education, and is a member of the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF) collective bargaining group. As Growing Friends Early Learning Center serves multiple roles in providing childcare and early learning services along with being a field-based training ground for numerous pre-professional programs focusing on teaching, nutrition, psychology, and human performance, Terri's administrative and leadership roles are diverse. Terri is accountable for the supervision and evaluation of her

lead teachers, and subsequently the oversight of the supervision of those teachers to the

80 student staff members. At present, Growing Friends Early Learning Center holds a

prestigious accreditation by the field's preeminent early learning organization, the

National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). In maintaining

accreditation, as an expectation by the university, Terri must satisfactorily lead her

organization to full compliance with the NAEYC's *10 Standards of High-Quality Early*

Childhood Education:

1. Promote positive relationships for all children and adults to encourage each child's sense of individual worth.
2. Implement a curriculum that fosters all areas of child development: cognitive, emotional, language, physical, and social.
3. Use developmentally, culturally, and linguistically appropriate and effective teaching approaches.
4. Provide ongoing assessments of a child's learning and development and communicate the child's progress to the family.
5. Promote the nutrition and health of children and protect children and staff from injury and illness.
6. Employ a teaching staff that has the educational qualifications, knowledge, and professional commitment necessary to promote children's learning and development and to support families' diverse needs and interests.
7. Establish and maintain collaborative relationships with each child's family.
8. Establish relationships with and use the resources of the community to support the achievement of program goals.
9. Provide a safe and healthy physical environment.
10. Implement strong personnel, fiscal, and program management policies so that all children, families, and staff have high-quality experiences. (http://www.naeyc.org/selfstudy/pdf/StatsAndFacts.pdf)

Terri says that to meet accreditation expectations, she is responsible for the planning and

implementation of rigorous, high quality professional development for her staff on an

ongoing and consistent basis. Further, Terri is responsible for the planning and

management of a $650,000 budget, not including facilities as those are provided in kind

by the university, along with overseeing the food service program (menu planning,

budgeting, and quality control) in partnership with the Dietetics Department at the university.

As an early learning facility within the community, Terri works in collaboration with the local school district for the monitoring, evaluation, and learning support of Children's House students who receive Early Childhood Special Education services. As a campus-based employee, Terri is responsible for serving on college and university committees, and is the liaison between Growing Friends Early Learning Center and all university departments who request to place students in field-based experiences within her facility. Terri directly provides supervision for pre-service and teacher candidates within the Elementary and Early Childhood Department.

A uniquely defining aspect to Terri's role as an administrator of an early learning center within a collegiate environment is the added expectation of being a leader among leaders within the field of early childhood. Terri is expected to be an active and leading member among local, state, and national organizations; however, the university supports this expectation with financial resources and time-release. Locally, Terri serves as an advisory member to her community's Success by 6 Community Impact team, an affiliate of the United Way, along with active membership in the community's childcare association. On a statewide level, she serves as the Board Secretary of the Minnesota Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators (MnAECTE), while nationally she serves as an Executive Board member to the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC).

When Terri was asked if she considered her role similar to a building principal's, she offers,

> My sister is a principal and it seems like we have so much in common. We talk about the same things. She might have to go to a school board meeting, which I don't have to do but other than that, I can't think of a whole lot.

Terri considers herself well networked with other campus-based administrators, and recently was elected as President of her local association, Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAAFF). Within the structure of the university, Terri is a member of her Dean's Department Chairs and Program Directors leadership team. However, within this team, Terri is the only MSUAFF member while all others are members of the Interfaculty Organization (IFO). Terri notes that Growing Friends Early Learning Center is a rather "odd-fit" for early childhood affinity groups or collegial professional development within her locale since a university-based program has a very different scope of service and expectation of leadership within the field than her Early Childhood Family Education or School Readiness counterparts. Terri acknowledges,

> I mean, I'm involved with them at a local level and sit on some committees with them. But the ECFE people have their own conference that they attend as well as the school readiness people. I think we might have some school readiness people that attend the big national fall conference, though. I don't know if they have the money to attend regularly. And so I think that they attend more local conferences. But what I found out is the local conferences with the program that we run here, they really don't meet our needs. And we found that as teachers, when we were attending the local conference, we then started presenting at the local conference; when we started attending the state conference, we then started presenting. I said, "Okay. Now we'll go to the regional conference, and started presenting there! Now we've started going to national, and so on." It's just like we evolved to the point where we needed more.

Educational Background and Career Path

Terri grew up in a small, rural community approximately one hour from where she works today. Terri comes from an extensive lineage of educators, a tremendous point of pride for her. Both grandparents on her maternal side were teachers, and among the four children they raised, three became teachers. The only child not to pursue teaching was Terri's mother; however, among Terri's three siblings, all have become teachers. Upon graduation from high school, Terri enrolled at Minnesota State University where she earned a Bachelor's degree in K-12 Physical Education.

Terri's career in education began as a physical education teacher and water safety instructor at a suburban junior high school. Within the same district, following a restructuring of schools, Terri next taught elementary physical education. Terri indicates the change to the elementary school, and most especially her work with the kindergarten children, ultimately inspired her future career.

As Terri became a tenured teacher within her school district, her husband had the opportunity to complete his medical residency in a neighboring state; therefore, Terri resigned her position with the school district. Terri says this was a great opportunity for her to focus on raising their three young children, and to determine whether or not she wanted to enroll in graduate school. Upon her husband's completion of residency, the family had the opportunity to return to Springton where he established his medical practice, and Terri enrolled in graduate school where she earned her Master's degree in Elementary and Early Childhood Education.

Terri was immediately hired upon graduation in a community-based preschool where she worked for 5 years. Terri was next approached by Growing Friends Early

Learning Center to join their faculty as an Infant teacher. Terri was promoted to Lead

Infant teacher, and was given responsibility to teach adjunct courses for the university

such as "Introduction to Early Childhood," "Infant-Toddler Methods," and "Materials for

Young Children." Upon the retirement of Growing Friends Early Learning Center

Director, Terri was appointed Interim Director by the university. She was encouraged to

apply for the position once the search-process was initiated, and subsequently, was hired

as the Director.

Professional Development as a Teacher

When Terri reflects on the professional development she received in her public

school teaching role, she states the majority of it came through K-12 committees she

served on such as curriculum study and writing teams. She also regularly attended the

Minnesota Education Association Conference each fall for she found the sessions and

speakers to be exceptional. As she transitioned into early learning areas, Terri regularly

attended the Minnesota Association for the Education of Young Children Conference.

Terri reports that in her position as a teacher for Growing Friends Early Learning Center,

she was considered an IFO member, and as part of the IFO negotiated contract, she

received professional development funds to support her continuous growth and

improvement within her field of study. These funds facilitated Terri's ability to

participate in the Far West Lab for Infant-Toddler Training, as well as fully participate in

the University of Minnesota's Center for Early Education and Development (CEED)

trainings. Terri says that the training by the Far West Lab allowed her to bring a new

innovation to Growing Friends Early Learning Center – implementing the Primary Care

Provider model. Terri indicates that the way her director responded to her request, and

the subsequent support and encouragement for the innovation, was a model of leadership

that Terri strives to emulate today. Terri summarizes,

> You know when I came here, Louise had been here for 20 years. And so I could come in and I could say, "I read about this and I'd like to incorporate this in my classroom." Primary care giving is a prime example. When I went through the infant-toddler training intensive course, that was one of the things we talked about was primary care giving. What I had to do was figure out how to set it up in a classroom where I'm the person that's there full time, everybody else is there two or three hours a day. How am I going to do that? Well, I worked it out that I could do it. And so I came in and I said, "This is really what I want to do and these are the reasons why. The research is showing this." And she said, "Okay. Go for it." And I could do it. But, you know, I couldn't come in and just say, "I want to do this." I needed to come in and say, "This is why I want to do it. This is what the research shows and that's why I want to do it in the classroom."

Professional Development as an Administrator

As Terri transitioned from teaching to administration, she has felt well supported

by the university to plan her own professional development that meets her needs. Terri

acknowledges that to lead an early learning center that represents the "model" within the

field and has accreditation and state child care licensures attached to it, one's professional

development is explicitly mapped out. Terri recognizes that the professional development

she and her teaching staff receive is not the norm within the field.

> We're in a very unique position because most early childhood centers do not have the opportunity or the monies to attend on a larger scale the professional development conferences. And that, you know, it's very helpful but the university, they want a quality program. They want to grow professionally. They want to meet the needs of the students that come here. I mean the students that come here, they want them to see, "This is a quality early learning setting. This is a model. This is where you're striving to go."

Terri attends the NAEYC Annual Conference, the NCCCC Annual Conference,

and the NAEYC Summer Professional Development Institute. Terri considers her roles

on the state and national board as part of her professional development, and adds that she

was supported by the university to attend a leadership program that worked with cohorts

of community leaders within Springton. Within her new role as president of the local

MSUAFF organization, Terri finds the experience to be professionally uplifting, and sees

her role as being a positive mark for Growing Friends Early Learning Center.

> It's been a learning experience. I took over the presidency in June.
> However, that's another thing that really keeps me in the loop at the
> university, and that's good for me, and it's good for our program. So I
> understand the makings of the university. I hear all about the budget. I
> know where the university has to make revisions in their budget or
> reallocations in the budget. I know all about that because I'm serving in
> this capacity now.

Terri sees her transition in professional development from a teacher to administrator as

having a different vision and level of responsibility. She offers,

> When you're an administrator, you're going to leadership workshops, or
> workshops on professional development that you can offer your teachers.
> So workshops, I mean, I don't have to do this so much but there are
> administrators that do who have to go to workshops on budget, on setting
> up a budget. Workshops on accreditation because you're constantly
> looking at ways to improve your program for your accreditation. So you
> have a different vision than you do as a classroom teacher.

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

One of Terri's most recent professional development experiences was her

participation in the Professional Development School learning community focused on

early childhood and school readiness. Terri's inspiration for joining the learning

community came from a community member who she happened to be seated near during

a PDS stakeholder "needs assessment" meeting. Terri recalls,

> I was invited to go to the very first strategic mapping meeting and I'll
> never forget . . . I sat next to Phillip Atwood, who was a superintendent of
> schools, and we were coming up with the key components of how children
> could be successful in schools. And I'll never forget him when he said,

"You know, I think early childhood education is one of the most important key components so that children can be successful in schools." I thought, "This is coming from our superintendent. This is great." And I was the person that was being the note-keeper for the group, and I wrote that down, and I starred that baby.

Terri's dean was very encouraging of her to engage in the learning community, and would inquire about her learning and "take-aways" during her monthly one-to-one meetings with him. Terri was an active participant in the learning community between 2004-2007.

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

With the volume of student staff that Terri leads, she confides that scheduling is one of her largest headaches because "it's like a giant jigsaw puzzle, and changes every semester." As Growing Friends Early Learning Center is considered a model early learning center grounded within a specific philosophy and curriculum framework, she finds inducting new professional staff, who are experienced in other programs and philosophies, to be particularly challenging. Terri states that the early childhood field is richly diverse in pedagogy, and experienced teachers who want to become employed as staff at Growing Friends Early Learning Center may find it challenging to make the "jump" and teach and lead university students in a specific way. However, as Terri indicates, " 'Our way' is what our program's reputation is built on, so it is critically important that we are all practicing from a common set of beliefs, values, and practices."

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

As Terri reflects on the most gratifying aspects of her role as the leader and administrator of Growing Friends Early Learning Center, she has great pride in helping the program grow in reputation and stature across the university and community. She

comments,

>When I first became Director of Growing Friends Early Learning Center, it wasn't very well known on campus. And so it was like, "Let's get our name out there. We're a valuable piece of this campus and a valuable piece of the College of Education and people need to know we're here."

Terri, without hesitation, finds the single most gratifying aspect is the impact that she and her staff make on the children, and reciprocally the impact children make on them. Terri remarks,

>The greatest joy and delight is the children here . . . they come every day with a smile and leave every day with a smile. And knowing they feel good about themselves. If I could have a hug from a child every single day, which I usually get one, I would do it. I would hug them more and more and more.

A summary of Terri Simon's education and career path is shown in Table 7.2.

Table 7.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center	
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	14,000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Masters
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	No
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	No
MN Community Education Director Licensed	No
Initial MN Teaching License	K-12 Physical Education
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	Yes

Table 7.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center	
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	86
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	Yes
Direct Supervisor	Dean, College of Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	2
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	No
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections by Terri Simon are shown in Table 7.3.

Table 7.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center
Compared to the majority of Early Childhood administrators within the region, as well as statewide, Terri is responsible for leading a unique early learning environment

Table 7.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center
with a significantly different staff size, mission, and level of accountability due to required NAEYC accreditation.
Involved in leadership and advocacy within the field of early childhood and higher education on a local, state, and national level.
Informal leadership mentoring early in career found valuable for later work as an administrator.
Afforded generous state and national-level professional development by employing organization with the expectation to present at these venues and foster the organization's reputation and mission.

Chapter 8

DESCRIPTION OF SPRINGTON AREA PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EARLY

CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR CHRISTINE HESS

District and Site Description

Christine Hess works in a public school district serving a Midwestern

micropolitan center of 51,693 residents (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). The school district educates 7,050 students from five communities across 13 school

sites. For the 2007-2008 academic year, the school district's K-12 student population is

consistent with state averages for students receiving free and reduced price lunches

(32%); lower than the state average for students identified as racially diverse (15%) and

students categorized as Limited English Proficient (5%); and higher than the state

average for student receiving special education services (15%) and student graduation

rate (94%). Three-hundred sixty-three students from other school districts open enroll to

Christine's school district while 303 students living in the school district attend another

district, including home schooling and charter schools (Minnesota Department of

Education, 2008, http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do).

Christine is responsible for leading one of the largest ECFE programs in southern

Minnesota. As Christine describes, "I am basically the leader or the manager, some

people call me the principal, of a large early childhood family education program. And,

in that early childhood family education program, we have several components."

Christine's ECFE program encompasses programs for infants through preschoolers,

traditional and specialized parent education and parent/child classes, inclusion-based

ECFE/ECSE preschool programs, and sponsors numerous community-wide events focused on the community's youngest learners.

The ECFE program is facilitated in three sites across the micropolitan center. The signature and oldest site is Eisenhower Community School, a former elementary school now serving the fourteen individual Community Education programs including ECFE, the school district's Alternative Learning Center, and the Sober School Collaborative. Christine's office is located at the Eisenhower facility along with pre-school, toddler, infant, and parent education rooms. Twin Lake Elementary School, the second "satellite" site, accommodates ECFE programs. As the art and music rooms are not utilized to 100% capacity for K-5 use, ECFE is able to offer programs during non-K-5 specialist instructional days. The third site newly opened this fall in North Springton. The school district partnered with the regional Education Cooperative Service Unit (ECSU) to lease half the newly constructed facility and design a state-of-the-art early learning center to host ECFE and ECSE programs. Christine's staff includes, 1 full-time administrative assistant, 1 full-time program supervisor who is responsible for the Minnesota Early Learning Fund (MELF) "Parent Aware" site coordination, 18 part-time licensed preschool teachers and parent educators, 22 teaching assistants (paraprofessionals), and 1 full-time custodian. A summary of Christine's district and site demographics is shown in Table 8.1

Table 8.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools	
District:	
Student Population	7,050
Limited English Proficient	5%
Special Education	15%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	32%
Graduation Rate (2008)	94%
American Indian	1%
Asian	3%
Black	7%
Hispanic	4%
White	85%
Site Responsibility:	
ECFE/School Readiness Student Population (Eisenhower, North Springton, and Twin Lake Programs)	1000
Program Supervisor	1
Part-time Licensed Teaching Staff (Parent Educators and Preschool Teachers)	18
Paraprofessionals	22
Full-time Administrative Assistant	1
Custodian (Eisenhower site)	1

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

The ECFE program in Springton is classically positioned under the auspices of

Community Education. Christine reports to the Director of Community Education who is

a member of the superintendent's administrative cabinet (building principals and

directors). Within Christine's district structure, the term "director" is reserved for

Community Education, Curriculum, Safety, Human Resources, Business, and Special

Education. Christine suggests,

> Well, I think that people look at me as an administrator, I really do. I
> think the term they use is supervisory staff. I get many memos on safety
> issues, on staff development issues, on everything that a principal might
> get, but not quite the same. And, I recognize that too - that my job is
> different than a principal. But, many things are the same. But, I think I'm
> – many people look at me as an administrator. I think coordinator is what
> they like to use. But, I think it's supervisory staff is what they use in this
> district too if I'm not mistaken – for people that aren't in the
> administrative category.

Christine says that the job of an ECFE Coordinator is continuously evolving,

especially as the accountability for children's school readiness increases. Christine

comments,

> I'm finding that my job is changing. And, we're more responsible for data
> on children. Tracking the success. And, for me to be more aware of all of
> the curriculums, the assessments, how we can capture that data and
> present it. Those kinds of things are very much a part of my job and
> which other early childhood people don't really do that much of. Maybe
> in the college they do. But, not other directors of other childcare centers.

In Christine's role, she holds responsibility for the human resource activities

involved with being the program administrator such as recruiting, interviewing, hiring,

and mentoring new faculty and staff; creating, revising, and implementing policy and

procedures for staff and families within the program. As the early learning curriculum

leader, Christine provides staff development for the planning, implementation, and

assessment of early childhood curriculum using the *Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress* rubric as an evaluation framework, and provides continued training in the assessment of student learning and communication of student progress to parents using the *Indicators of Progress Domain Framework.*

As the public relations conduit, Christine is in charge of the marketing and publicity of the ECFE programs and services encompassing web-based and print-production. Budget planning and financial management of the ECFE program is one of Christine's responsibilities; and as Springton ECFE programs receive financial support from external agencies and foundations, Christine is the point-contact in managing and encouraging these partnerships.

Christine's programs are sought by the micropolitan's university, community college, and two private liberal arts colleges to host field experience placements for students pursuing careers in working with children and families. She is responsible for managing those partnerships along with coordinating the field experiences based on the needs of the children, staff, and post-secondary partners. As a highly engaged ECFE with post-secondary programs, Christine is seen as a field expert and resource for topics and issues of early learning and child development.

In her role as ECFE coordinator, she is often the district-appointed advocate to represent the community for legislative conversations or presentations regarding the "state of young children" in south central Minnesota. Christine considers herself the "lead advocate for early childhood partnerships – being at the table when resources are availed." Christine's top priority as a leader is being "responsive to the needs of families" by offering innovative solutions for childcare during programming, sliding fee scales and

other helpful financial measures, and active and highly coordinated services with other partnering organizations and agencies.

As a coordinator within the Community Education program, Christine is part of the Community Education leadership team with fellow coordinators such as those who lead Adult Basic Education, Youth, Recreation, Community March Band, and Community Theatre to name a few. She describes the scope of Community Education to be broad and specialized, so at times she finds that ECFE is not well understood by her supervisor as well as coordinator colleagues. Christine laments,

> Does the director understand all of the assessments, the curriculums, all
> those kinds of things they really need to accomplish and with the demands
> of budgets and staff challenges and still being able to move ahead to
> deliver a real vibrant, creative program that is progressive? I'd say they've
> all been supportive, but I think the challenge has been again explaining the
> context that we're coming from and that understanding of the needs of the
> program.

Christine remarks, however, that she is very comfortable in giving any building principal a call to work through situations that may be germane to their environment, and has "excellent professional relationships" with them. Christine senses that it is not so much a "will" to partner more with ECFE, but rather a "way" that challenges building principals. She comments that "every building principal in this district is just completely over-loaded," and suspects that time, administrative structure, and governance issues may be what keeps building principals from interfacing more with ECFE and vice-versa. Christine is not sure whether her district offers support networks specifically for the building principals and directors, and if they did, she's not sure whether or not she could access these resources as a coordinator.

Educational Background and Career Path

Christine considers herself a native of south central Minnesota. Upon graduation from high school, Christine enrolled at Minnesota State University where she earned a degree in Elementary Education with an emphasis in physical education and literacy. Following graduation, Christine received the opportunity to lead a number of community-based literacy initiatives. She found the flexibility of that kind of work was ideal since she and her husband were just starting their family. As Christine's children were enrolled in a private school within the community, Christine was encouraged by the school staff and administration to take on volunteer leadership roles. She chaired many committees and eventually was appointed to the school's board of education. While Christine's children were school-age, she stretched herself professionally by substitute teaching in neighboring school districts, coached volleyball and tennis for her community's public school district, and went on to develop the community's first tennis league.

As Christine's children became older, Christine re-enrolled at Minnesota State University to take coursework in the area of early childhood, and subsequently was hired by the school district as a part-time parent educator. Christine continued to take graduate-level coursework from additional statewide universities who provided very specific trainings within the field of early childhood. As Christine's backpack of knowledge and skills grew, she was given the opportunity to become a team leader within the ECFE division and a committee head within the Community Education program. When the ECFE coordinator resigned her position, Christine applied, interviewed, and was offered the job.

Professional Development as a Teacher

Christine remarks that during the time she was an ECFE parent educator, the state

of Minnesota's Department of Education (MDE) was highly vested in teacher and

coordinator professional development since ECFE was a relatively new program being

implemented in districts across the state and the parent educator license was brand new.

Christine states the vast majority of professional development she received was

sponsored by MDE since school districts had not yet built the capacity for or

infrastructure to incorporate ECFE and K-12 in a comprehensive professional

development program. MDE provided regional training opportunities that were co-led by

coordinators and MDE staff.

Professional Development as an Administrator

As Christine transitioned from parent educator/team leader to coordinator,

professional development was remarkably different. Christine explains that she has been

part of two distinct phases regarding administrator professional development – then and

now. When Christine was a novice coordinator in an emerging service area within the

state, ECFE, she found the caliber of training and mentoring she received from MDE to

be exceptional. She reflects,

> I feel that the State Department of Education (MDE) again did a
> wonderful job. They had an orientation for new coordinators. Barb
> Tashney and Margaret Browne were very committed to doing whatever
> they could do to get new early childhood family education and school
> readiness administrators as quickly up to speed as they could. And, we
> also had manuals that they would review with us. And, it covered
> everything, you know, interviewing, hiring people, troubleshooting, you
> know, safety issues in a childcare setting. I could show you that manual.
> And, marketing, finance, budgeting, everything, they reviewed everything.
> But, it was a situation where you picked up a lot of information fast, fast.

Christine reports that over time as ECFE and the parent-educator license became more mainstream across the state, and the vast majority of people working within those roles received the "new coordinator training," the state shifted its priorities in order to serve more early learning programs that have been created or newly housed within MDE. The regional trainings were disbanded, but a newly formed association, the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MnAFEE) was established. Christine indicates this organization, led by volunteers, works to capture the very best that came from the former MDE trainings through an annual leadership conference format. According to Christine, "It covers everything on leadership management, personnel issues, budget issues, staff development issues, safety issues, curriculum issues, you know, everything. It really is an outstanding conference." Christine finds it unfortunate that this type of professional development is only offered annually, but is grateful for it nevertheless.

From a district perspective, Christine is "on her own" for planning her professional development, but acknowledges that the interactions she has with the Human Resources Director and the Business Services Director are extremely helpful. Christine says every conversation with these individuals turns into a learning moment. Christine offers that at times she has had to be assertive and self-advocating to attend district-provided professional development on topics that are germane to her in a leadership role. She confides,

> I ask, I would often ask if I could be involved in professional kinds of
> opportunities and so I was told that my director would get me that
> information. And, I had some specific questions about custody issues,
> because that's a huge issue. Custody issues – how do we handle it when a
> parent comes in and asks us questions? And, I was invited to that
> training. Principals, all the principals in the district were to attend, so I was

invited to that along with my director at that time. Which I was glad he was there too. But, it's a . . . (shaking head, sigh). I had to advocate for myself to get there.

Christine brightens by sharing that her school district has been working through a new strategic planning design that aligns the professional development of every school district program, including ECFE, within the district's strategic road map. She now interfaces with the Staff Development Association (SDA) for the district more than ever before, and recognizes that as the SDA embraces her entire ECFE team into the district's vision, the level of professionalism and respect for ECFE will grow. Christine remarks,

> I really feel that it's been good for our program for our teachers to be involved in setting goals and being more intentional about our work within the district structure. I think it's been positive. I think they (SDA) always have been supportive, but this is a formal procedure. It's a formal procedure with distinct steps and processes.

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

Christine shares that one of her more recent professional growth experiences came from her participation in the Professional Development School learning community focused on early childhood and school readiness. She was unsure whether or not she received a flyer or email communication, but does remember her superintendent being encouraging of her to participate. She remarks that during this time in her career, the only group she gathered with who really understood the issues of early childhood was the participants at the MnAFEE Annual Leadership Conference. She suggests that this opportunity augmented her growth. Christine describes,

> I just saw it as an opportunity to enhance and to improve my abilities in learning more about what's happening with families, what's happening in child development, assessments. And, also to seek out support, I think. It was an opportunity to meet with other leaders at a level of exploration, sophisticated problem solving, investigation, openness, and an environment of trust that people could talk about what was happening.

A secondary reason for joining the PDS learning community was due in large part

to the affinity she has to her community's university, and for the value it brings to the

field of early childhood. Christine adds,

> I think the surrounding school districts are very lucky to have the
> university in our midst. I think that it is important for the growth of early
> childhood programs, to have somebody there to help sort things out, and to
> offer opportunities and to be an advocate, those kinds of things. And, so,
> over the years, I think that in Springton we've had the opportunities to
> have leaders that have been trained by the college and leaders that
> emerged from the college that have helped the whole community kind of
> progress. So, I think we're fortunate to have it.

Christine participated actively within the learning community between 2004-2007.

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

Christine, like Terri, works with a larger number of staff in part-time capacity;

therefore, scheduling and staff-communication become particular points of frustration.

However, Christine says that the majority of her part-time, licensed teachers are always

looking for full-time opportunities; therefore, turnover at times is high, and as an

administrator, Christine is always training new people to replace those who have left.

Christine indicates that within the past five years, the district's collective

bargaining association has become more actively involved within the early childhood

arena. She reports,

> It has been difficult and frustrating to incorporate union representation for
> the teachers, and that just happened four or five years ago, and its been
> very, very frustrating to kind of make it fit between what the union is and
> what the needs of our teachers are. 'Cause they're working part time,
> they're working in the evenings, and the funding streams are different. It
> is hard to make it connect with the old K-12 union models.

Christine further finds her own role within her teachers' collective bargaining to be

confusing since Christine is not an administrator, but she is a supervisor and advocate for

her teachers. She describes,

> Well, it was a difficult position because I needed to listen to the HR
> person and the committee that was formed to make this transition for the
> early childhood teachers to be represented by collective bargaining, and
> because the district, when they negotiate, they have their goals for what
> happens. And then the teachers have their goals. And, so, I was kind of
> an in-between person to help them understand the nature of ECFE/School
> Readiness. Saying to them, 'Well, this is a little different.' And, so, I was
> kind of in between that a little bit.
>
> So, part of the challenge was that I didn't understand all of the factors of
> the K-12 negotiators. Other people didn't either who were on the
> committee, they didn't understand. And, these are school board members,
> and even my director at the time. So, we kind of all worked together to
> help each other understand it (how to bring early childhood into collective
> bargaining). It was appropriate and made sense to make sure that we were
> moving the program along with a capability for us to be flexible and to
> meet the needs of the community at the same time, you know, and to have
> these professional teachers become a negotiating unit.

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

As Christine reflects on the most gratifying aspect of her role as the coordinator of

ECFE, she summarizes,

> Of course, the parents and the children are at the top. Where else can you
> work with families and children and feel that you have a direct impact on
> their life? We really do. We work with a very diverse program. We just
> know that we've helped a single parent find another connection. You
> know, we've helped somebody get into Head Start. You know, we've
> helped somebody be a better parent, helped foster parents, we've helped
> daycare providers, but we know there's so much more that needs to be
> done.

Christine also finds that the early childhood community, as a whole, is beginning to rally

for each other, working collectively rather than independently. She comments about the

collegiality with and support for others' programs by stating,

> I feel there's a lot of support for each other and what everyone's doing. If someone calls someone up, we say, 'I'll get that for you or I'll find out that piece of information for you or stop in and take a tour of our area if it helps.'

A summary of Christine' education and career path is shown in Table 8.2.

Table 8.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools	
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	50, 000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors+
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	No
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	Yes
MN Community Education Director Licensed	No
Initial MN Teaching License	P-K-1-6
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	No
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	42
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	No
Direct Supervisor	Director of Community Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	3
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE	Yes

Table 8.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools	
Coordinator Training"	
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	No
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections by Christine Hess are shown in Table 8.3.

Table 8.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools
Responsible for the region's largest ECFE / School Readiness program with multiple sites of operation, and is considered a program coordinator rather than administrator.
Post-baccalaureate coursework taken, as professional development, has spanned across multiple institutions and programs whereby numerous graduate credits have been earned though no formal degrees.
Found the ECFE Coordinator training provided by the State of Minnesota early in her career as an administrator to be exceptional, and values the MnAFEE Leadership

Table 8.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Christine

Hess, Springton Area Public Schools

Conference today as a signature source of administrator professional development.
Values and greatly respects her role as Early Childhood expert for the school district, university, and greater community.

Chapter 9

DESCRIPTION OF MORTON-REDVIEW PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND EARLY

CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR DIANE SUMBEE

District and Site Description

Diane Sumbee is employed by a consolidated public school district serving four

Midwestern communities of 3,273, 2,916, 156, and 130 residents respectively (U.S.

Census Bureau, 2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). Her school district educates approximately 1,100 students across three school sites.

For the 2007-2008 academic year, the school district's K-12 student population is lower

than the state average in students categorized as Limited English Proficient (5%),

students receiving special education services (12%), students receiving free or reduced

price lunch (24%), and students identified as racially diverse (8%); and higher than the

state average for its high school graduation rate (94%). One-hundred five students from

other school districts open enroll to Diane's school district while 332 students living in

the school district attend another district, including home schooling and charter schools

(Minnesota Department of Education, 2008,

http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do).

Diane is responsible for a small, rural Early Childhood Family Education and

School Readiness program along with coordination of the district's School-age Care

(SAC) program. Diane's ECFE program encompasses programs for infants through

preschoolers, traditional and specialized parent education and parent/child classes, and

sponsors community-wide events focused on the community's youngest learners. The

School Readiness program is a public school preschool for children age 3-1/2 (as of Sept. 1) to kindergarten enrollment. School Readiness provides preschool and other early childhood program opportunities to all children regardless of family income. The school district's Community Education division sponsors School Age Care (SAC). This program provides care for children, grades K-6, and is intended to assist parents who are working, attending school, or are unable to be home with their children before the school day starts or ends.

ECFE, School Readiness, and SAC are offered at both K-4 elementary sites in the two larger communities within the school district. Within each school site, there is a dedicated ECFE classroom, parent education room, and an administrative office. Diane's staff includes 5 part-time ECFE teachers, 3 part-time classroom assistants, and 9 part-time SAC members (2 site supervisors and 7 program aides). A summary of Diane's district and site demographics is shown in Table 9.1.

Table 9.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Area Public Schools	
District:	
Student Population	1,096
Limited English Proficient	5%
Special Education	12%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	24%
Graduation Rate (2008)	94%
American Indian	1%

Table 9.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Area Public Schools

Asian	1%
Black	1%
Hispanic	7%
White	91%
Site Responsibility:	
ECFE/School Readiness Student Population (Morton and Redview sites)	75
Part-time Licensed Teaching Staff (Parent Educators and Preschool Teachers)	5
Part-time Paraprofessionals	3
School-age Child Care (SAC)	9
Part-time Site Supervisors	2
Part-time Program Aides	7

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

The ECFE program in Morton-Redview is classically positioned under the auspices of Community Education. Diane interprets from her viewpoint,

> We're at the bottom. We really are. You know, our programs - we often feel like we're in limbo land. Because it's like we're part of the school district umbrella, but yet we're also on the outside being part of Community Education.

Diane's immediate supervisor is the Director of Community Education. Within the district structure, the superintendent's administrative team is chiefly the building

principals followed by directors of special service areas. As Diane reflects on the aspects

of her role being likened to that of a building principal, she states, "Our roles are very

similar, but I have definitely told (them) that I am a Coordinator, I am not an

administrator." Diane finds that this separation of roles has grown over time, especially as

she is responsible for the leadership and administration of a staff, like a principal, but is

not housed in her own facility causing her to tread cautiously in cooperation with the site

principals. She commented,

> You know, for example, I serve on our current building principal's
> interview team. Very often he'll ask me to serve in this role. If he's
> dealing with some situation, he will come and ask for advice. But, then on
> the other hand, if there is a situation where for example a space shortage
> or something like that, then it's very definitely I'm in the subordinate role,
> because I (principal) am in charge of this building type of thing.

Diane's role as the coordinator of three specialized programs offers her a variety

of responsibilities. Her chief responsibility is to offer mirrored programs in the two

largest communities within the consolidated district. Public relations and customer

service is one of Diane's foremost priorities; therefore, recruiting, hiring, training, and

retaining quality staff, amidst a challenging part-time employment scenario, is considered

her most essential strategy to achieve success in this priority. Diane is also responsible

for marketing and promoting the three programs to the greater community as well as

presenting updates regularly to the board of education.

As the early learning curriculum leader within ECFE and School Readiness,

Diane provides staff development for the planning, implementation, and assessment of

early childhood curriculum using the *Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress*

rubric as an evaluation framework, and provides continued training in the assessment of

student learning and communication of student progress to parents using the *Indicators of Progress Domain Framework*.

ECFE and School Readiness require accountability reporting of program standards adherence, while SAC requires accountability reporting to the federal government for food reimbursement eligibility. Diane is responsible for filing the monthly or annual reports affiliated with these programs. Along with reports, Diane is accountable for the financial management of these programs specifically the accurate predicting of the staffing needs/expenditures for fluctuating program sizes across two communities, and accurately predicting the revenue intake from year to year as more of her communities' families are qualifying for sliding fees. As Diane noted, "Managing a budget is a big part of my job."

As Diane's teaching staff is small, Diane continues to serve in a teaching role as the district's parent educator, as well as substitute teaching for her staff during their absence. Diane considers her teaching role to be a vital part of modeling and communicating the ECFE philosophy to her staff and families, along with being centrally connected to the curriculum and assessments. Due to the part-time nature of Diane's entire staff, assembling whole-group staff meetings or in-services is rare. Diane often participates in a co-teaching model with her staff as one strategy of delivering professional development in a very hands-on, one-to-one manner. As Diane is responsible for designing and implementing policy and procedures for staff and families, her direct program interaction allows her to evaluate their effectiveness immediately. Finally, as a hands-on coordinator, Diane's role is that of an "approachable expert" for families within the areas of child development and school readiness.

Educational Background and Career Path

Higher education institutions of both Minnesota and North Dakota have informed Diane's educational background. Diane obtained her Bachelor's degree from North Dakota State University where she pursued a degree in Home Economics Education. Prior to Diane's graduation, her academic advisor recommended that she consider enrolling in additional courses to position her to become parent-educator certified. At that time, the Parent Education license was newly offered within the burgeoning field of Early Childhood Family Education in Minnesota. Diane heeded the advice of her advisor, completed the necessary coursework in parent education, and applied for licensure within the state of Minnesota.

In her first professional position, Diane was given the opportunity to serve as a parent educator for an Education Cooperative Service Unit (ECSU) for the west central region of Minnesota. During this period, she provided parent education services to three school districts. Over time, Diane's ECSU responsibilities increased as she added the ECFE Coordinator role in one of the three districts, and subsequently became the ECFE Coordinator for all three while remaining the consortium's Parent Educator.

The school districts that Diane worked for within the ECSU structure eventually formed one consolidated district. Diane moved from being an employee of the ECSU to one of the West Central Area Schools where she was named ECFE Director and School Readiness Coordinator. During this period, she served as a regional advisor for Head Start and Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), and established the Family Services Collaborative. Diane also served on the region's Violence Prevention Council where conflict resolution and character education initiatives were infused into the school

curriculum. She was responsible for writing grants to secure funding for these initiatives.

Diane's final position with West Central was serving as Director of Community

Education. She left the position due to a career change for her husband that required their

family to move to the south central part of Minnesota. Diane confides that the timing of

this move was right for her. She was beginning to burn out by the responsibilities of

raising four young children while serving in a district director role.

Upon her family's move to the south central part of Minnesota, Diane was

immediately hired by the Morton-Redview school district, as there was an unfilled

ECFE/School Readiness/SAC Coordinator position. Diane states she is very comfortable

in the coordinator role that she has held for the past eight years. She finds the flexibility

of the position to work well for her family.

Professional Development as a Teacher

As Diane reflects on the professional development she received as a teacher, she

acknowledges that her entire experience was delivered via the ECSU and the affiliated

trainings that ECSU provided in cooperation with the Minnesota Department of

Education. Diane describes,

> The State Department when I was first teaching was outstanding. The
> Minnesota Department of Education and the Early Childhood division
> really was very interested in the development of early childhood family
> education and provided regional workshops and in-services, but that's –
> that was a limited amount of hours per year probably. So, we took
> advantage of as many of them as we could, because they were very
> reasonable to attend, to sign up for. And, our program paid for some of
> them.

Diane indicates the personalized support that the ECSU Coordinator provided to

individuals, like herself, who delivered programs to the ECSU-member districts, was

valuable. She comments,

> Barb Tashney came and visited our programs, sat in on classes for us,
> gave us suggestions. I mean she was just wonderful, wonderful. She
> provided training for all of us. Otherwise, I'm not sure how I would have
> survived actually.

Diane notes when she working as a parent educator in the late 1980's for the ECSU, the

state's effort in supporting the new parent-education license, along with providing ECFE

training was remarkable. Diane laments, "I'm not sure that those types of resources even

exist anymore."

Professional Development as an Administrator

As Diane transitioned from teacher to ECFE Coordinator while in the ECSU

structure, she continued to be well supported. She comments, "I was very fortunate to be

part of that consortium again and too, they just provided a lot of in-service opportunities

that were specifically related to program administration." Additionally, Diane describes

the level of support provided by the state,

> The Department of Education at that time was also very good about
> offering in-service to new coordinators. You know, like they had a 'New
> Coordinator' day-long in-service where you could go down to the Twin
> Cities and do it. I also remember attending (MDE) classes at Alex Tech
> College. Through the Department of Education, they would have in-
> services about using the manual, about state reporting, what you needed to
> do, and how you needed to do it. You know, there would be things offered
> there through the regional consortiums where we learned all about the
> budget and UFARS (Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting
> Standards)codes and all of those things.

As Diane reflects on her more recent professional development, she finds that the

Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MnAFEE) has been the one

source that focuses on the needs of early learning administrators. She offers,

> MnAFEE's Leadership Conference has been our main source of
> professional development today. MNAFEE, the early childhood
> organization, is trying to provide professional development experiences
> for administrators. But, they're new to the business too and are trying to

feel it out. They're trying to fill the void that's been left by Department of Education.

Diane's affiliation with a Regional Coordinator's group has been very helpful to her. She summarizes the background of this organization as follows,

> As MDE's Early Childhood support programs ended due to new priorities, shift of resources, the 'regions' created disbanded except for those who chose to keep them alive through informal networks. MnAFEE now manages the regional membership lists to help new coordinators get connected with their regional group . . . if it exists.

Diane is dismayed by the hands-off approach that her school district has shown regarding her professional development as an administrator. She remarks, "I think the school district itself hasn't done anything. It's been all – it's been my personal motivation I think to do better as an administrator that has kind of led that." Diane concedes; however, that her supervisor, a Director of Community Education, is sincerely interested in Diane's growth as a professional, but just does not have the time available to plan with her strategically. She comments, "Her (Community Education Director) plate, too, is exceedingly full, exceedingly full. And, now, for this school year, they put all of the middle school sports and activities into her office - on top of Community Ed." Diane concludes that her supervisor "entrusts me to find avenues to continue growing as a professional" and is somewhat thankful of her autonomy. She states,

> I kind of appreciate that hands-off approach myself. You know? It's like if I'm not doing the job, let me know, otherwise, leave me alone. I don't mind that approach at all. I'm comfortable with that.

Diane finds that her teachers, as "very part-time staff," also have few intersections with district-led professional development that K-12 teachers are afforded. She finds the need to advocate for them by gleaning what she can from the district-provided professional development experiences, and comments,

I do, on my own, kind of keeping track of what the district is offering to teachers and pass that on to my teachers. Because we're certainly invited to participate - if there isn't a cost involved. Then certainly our staff can participate in those things. So, part of it is just keeping aware of what the district is offering to the teachers and then seeing where our staff can fit in.

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

Diane noted that one of her more recent professional growth experiences came out of her participation in the Professional Development School learning community focused on early childhood and school readiness. She commented,

I was seeking support. Support. Support for what we do. Because a part – maybe because I had had that in the district I was previously in. You know, because of our connection with the ECSU up there and the ECSU director. And, even though our district did leave that consortium, I still had access to what was being offered through it. And, when I moved here and I didn't have that network . . .

Diane's school district is a PDS partner with the University; however, it is a Level 2 Partnership that consists predominantly of the district hosting student teachers. School districts in a level 3 partnership include the hosting of student teachers, placement of pre-service teaching experiences, release of master teachers to work part-time for the university as PDS communication conduit and supervisor/coordinator of field experience within the district, and engage with the university for professional development and cross PDS district learning and sharing. An overview of the PDS Partnership Levels is shown in Table 9.2. One of Diane's ECFE Coordinator colleagues from a neighboring school district, a level 3 PDS partner, who was a participant in the PDS learning community, extended an invitation to Diane to join. Diane describes,

And, so she had told me about this opportunity and that she had said that she could invite anyone. And, so, she invited me to come and, wow, I was just thrilled to have an opportunity to talk with other early childhood people on that level, on an administrative level. And, I enjoyed it immensely. It was a very great experience. And, you know, the topics

that were covered and the resources that we learned about and just the programming ideas and, yeah, it was very good, very good.

Diane finds that as an administrator, it can be very challenging, within the daily schedule and rigorous responsibilities of supervision, to participate in professional development activities at all.

It's like sometimes you have to make time to do things like that. Because it's so easy to get in your office and the stacks are here and there's ten messages and there's how many different emails. And, you've got this staff person who needs this and this one who needs that and this person is unhappy about that. And, it's so easy to just focus on what needs to be done right here at this desk, that you lose sight of what our future needs to be. And, so, I think taking the time to do things like that (professional learning community) is very important. Because otherwise, you get caught in the day-to-day grind. And, then you forget where your program needs to be going. I really do.

Table 9.2: Professional Development School (PDS) Partnership Levels	
Partnership Level	Activities
Level 1	Pre-service teacher field experiences
Level 2	Pre-service teacher field experiences Student teaching experiences
Level 3	Pre-service teacher field experiences Student teaching experiences University faculty liaisons (shared resources) District liaisons (shared resources) P-20 professional development Multi-site coordinating council

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

Diane, like Terri and Christine, finds the nature of working with part-time staff to be very challenging. Scheduling, communications, training, and continuous training of

new staff, as Diane contends, take a lot of time and energy from curricular planning and

working toward being more innovative. Diane concedes, however,

> Our budget doesn't allow for benefits. And, so, we make sure that
> everyone stays on a part-time basis, which is not the way I'd like for it to
> be, but it's the reality of it. And, school readiness is the same. Everyone
> is part time.

> Diane remarks that "not being seen as legitimate, as an equal, as a colleague with

other administrators" in her district is also a frustration for her. She finds a lack of

professional recognition for early childhood professionals compared to K-12, but

acknowledges that the structure of Early Childhood under Community Education does

have its benefits. She concludes,

> You know, making the early childhood programs part of E-12 . . . I know
> there's a catch-22 to that. There is a certain amount of freedom under
> Community Education, you know. And, to give that up for more
> professional recognition, there is a trade off.

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

As Diane reflects on the most gratifying aspect of her role as the coordinator of

ECFE/School Readiness/SAC, she finds it to be the personal connection she has with

every child and their family. She comments that her program's size is "just right" to

maintain a very approachable venue for families to ask questions, seek resources, and to

feel included and valued within the programs. Diane comments that the

"approachability" aspect is part of quality customer service in helping families become

welcomed into the district's educational system.

A summary of Diane's education and career path is shown in Table 9.3.

Table 9.3: Education and Career Path Summary: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview

Public Schools

Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	3,000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors+
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	No
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	Yes
MN Community Education Director Licensed	Yes
Initial MN Teaching License	Home Economics Education
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	Yes
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	17
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	No
Direct Supervisor	Director of Community Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	2
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	Yes
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	No

Table 9.3: Education and Career Path Summary: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools	
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections by Diane Sumbee are shown in Table 9.4.

Table 9.4: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools
Found the ECFE training provided by the State of Minnesota as well as her interactions with her local ECSU early in her career as a teacher and administrator to be exceptional in the way of professional mentoring and support.
Considers her role as a "teaching" coordinator to be beneficial to the children and families in her programs as well as a vehicle for mentoring and modeling best practices for staff.
Perceives, and is subsequently frustrated by her perception, that ECFE rests on the lowest rung of the K-12 district hierarchy ladder in relation to importance, impact, and legitimacy due to a myriad of factors including budget constraints and under-funding from the state, numerous competing K-12 priorities, and a lack of understanding the value-add proposition that early childhood makes to

Table 9.4: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools
the entire system.
Finds her source of support and professional development to come from her informal Regional Coordinators group and the MnAFEE Leadership Conference, whereas her district has offered her no opportunities for leadership or administrative professional development.

Chapter 10

DESCRIPTION OF WELLINGTON-HARRISBURG PUBLIC SCHOOLS AND

EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATOR PATRICE HOVDEN

District and Site Description

Patrice Hovden is employed by a consolidated public school district serving two

Midwestern communities of 4,263 and 920 residents respectively (U.S. Census Bureau,

2008,

http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFPopulation?_submenuId=population_0&_sse=o

n). Her school district educates approximately 1,200 students across four school sites.

For the 2007-2008 academic year, the school district's K-12 student population is higher

than the state average for students categorized as Limited English Proficient (9%),

students receiving special education services (17%), and for its high school graduation

rate (94%); and lower than the state average for students receiving free or reduced price

lunch (28%) and student identified as racially diverse (16%). Sixty students from other

school districts open enroll to Patrice's school district as 122 students living in the school

district attend another district, including home schooling and charter schools (Minnesota

Department of Education, 2008, http://education.state.mn.us/ReportCard2005/index.do).

Patrice is responsible for a small, rural Early Childhood Family Education and

School Readiness program along with being the coordinator for the district's school

census. Patrice's ECFE program encompasses programs for infants through preschoolers,

traditional and specialized parent education and parent/child classes, and sponsors

community-wide events focused on the community's youngest learners. The School

Readiness program is a public school preschool for children age 3-1/2 (as of Sept. 1) to

kindergarten enrollment. School Readiness provides preschool and other early childhood program opportunities to all children regardless of family income.

ECFE and School Readiness programs are offered at both K-5 elementary sites in the two communities within the school district. Within each school site, there is a dedicated ECFE classroom that is shared by other community-based organizations such as Head Start. Patrice's office is housed in the Adams Learning Center that is the home to the district's Alternative Learning Center and offices of various programs of Community Education. Patrice's staff includes 3 licensed early childhood teachers, 2 licensed parent educators, and 4 childcare assistants. Patrice notes that her staff is "part-time – very part-time" ranging from 2 to 25 hours per week. A summary of Patrice's district and site demographics is shown in Table 10.1.

Table 10.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools	
District:	
Student Population	1,225
Limited English Proficient	9%
Special Education	17%
Free and Reduced Price Lunch	28%
Graduation Rate (2008)	94%
American Indian	1%
Asian	1%
Black	1%

Table 10.1: District and Site Demographics Summary: Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools	
Hispanic	13%
White	84%
Site Responsibility:	
ECFE/School Readiness Student Population (Wellington and Harrisburg sites)	100
Part-time Licensed Teaching Staff (Parent Educators and Preschool Teachers)	5
Part-time Paraprofessionals	4

Organizational Hierarchy, Role, and Responsibilities

The ECFE program in Wellington-Harrisburg is classically positioned under the auspices of Community Education. Within Patrice's district administrative structure, there is one elementary principal, one high school principal, and two assistant principals who provide supervision for the small community's elementary building and the larger community's middle school, attached to the high school facility. The principals and assistant principals report directly to the superintendent and serve as coordinators of assessment, special education, and curriculum along with traditional responsibilities of a site principal. The Director of Community Education reports to the superintendent and is responsible for the supervision of coordinators in the following programs: ECFE/School Readiness, Adult Basic Education, Community Recreation, and Driver's Education.

Patrice reports directly to the director of Community Education, but indicates that she has

full-access to the superintendent whenever she needs.

Patrice states that 2008 marked the first year that the ECFE and School Readiness

preschool staff have been introduced, as part of the elementary schools' faculty, at the

district back-to-school rally. Patrice offers that the building principals are taking greater

ownership of the preschool staff than ever before, and have the advantage of being dually

supervised.

> I'm the overseer of them - of the actual staff. But Mr. Quenten and Mr.
> Anders are the overseers of their buildings. My staff is in their building,
> and they need to follow the procedures that happen in those buildings.
> And I do encourage them, my staff, to be a part of that staff. If they feel
> that they can, to attend staff meetings once or twice, just so that they can
> be 'in the know.'

At this point, she notes that the supervision partnership is working effectively, and there

is open communication and respect between she and the two site principals. Patrice

describes,

> They don't really have anything to do with our actual children that are in
> our preschool. But because it's their buildings, they are the overseers. So
> if they have an issue with something that's going with our program then
> they come to me. Which there really are very few issues. Very few issues.
> We're very lucky. We get along very well - our programs, that is. We are
> coming up in the world in status.

Patrice summarizes her responsibilities of being the administrator of the

ECFE/School Readiness programs as follows,

> Many times this is a position that most of the public has no clue what I do.
> I like to say I'm the 'behind the scenes person' who makes the program
> work. I'm backup to the teachers. I do the things that they would never
> imagine have to be done.

Patrice finds her key responsibility is hiring the very best teachers and assistants, along

with providing them quality mentoring. Patrice suggests,

Hiring is critically important. You have to have qualified staff. You have
to have staff that your families are going to feel comfortable with. It's
huge.

As her staff is "very part time," she finds the only time to convene them all together is

over the supper hour, four to five times per year, where she plans for a combined staff

meeting, training, and dinner. As the early learning curriculum leader within ECFE and

School Readiness, Patrice provides staff development during these "training nights" for

the planning, implementation, and assessment of early childhood curriculum using the

Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress rubric as an evaluation framework,

and provides continued training in the assessment of student learning and communication

of student progress to parents using the *Indicators of Progress Domain Framework.*

Since Patrice's staff is very small, Patrice serves as a substitute teacher within the

preschool or as a parent educator whenever needed. She remarks that a large part of her

job is "public reassurance" to parents. As Patrice is physically onsite in the preschools

within both communities, at least every other day, she engages with families regularly to

answer their questions, and specifically talk about child development concerns that they

have. Patrice finds public relations to be a significant component of ECFE/School

Readiness, and suggests that it "sets the stage for a family's engagement with schools

ever after."

Patrice "does everything from paperwork to janitorial work," but recognizes that a

significant amount of time is allocated to planning program budgets along with

accountability reporting to the state of Minnesota. As the district's school census

coordinator, a significant amount of time, at specific times of the year, is spent "finding

children," coordinating with county and local agencies to triangulate child-count data. As

Patrice reflects on her role, she comments, "Some days I feel like an administrator. Some days I feel like I'm a coordinator. And some days I feel like I'm the whole program."

Educational Background and Career Path

Patrice knew that she wanted to teach from the time she graduated from high school. She enrolled at Minnesota State University where she earned a Bachelor's degree in elementary education with an emphasis in kindergarten and preschool education. Her professional career began in Le Cherese, Minnesota where she taught in a private preschool setting. Following a career change by her spouse, Patrice and her family moved to Dobbin City where she became employed within the school district as an elementary teacher. While in the Dobbin City district, Patrice taught kindergarten and grades 1, 2, and 4. As Patrice's spouse received the opportunity to take over his family's business, it allowed their family to return to their native home of Le Cherese. Patrice says that at the time of this move, she was not looking to immediately reenter the workforce as she felt the need to be home to raise their three children, and "settle the family after a number of moves in a fairly short amount of time."

As Patrice's children grew and entered high school, she engaged more in community activities. One such activity, the Brenden Foundation Community Leadership program, created the opportunity for Patrice to meet a neighboring city's superintendent. As they became acquainted, the superintendent expressed his interest for her to begin substitute teaching in his district, but also to consider applying for a vacant ECFE preschool teaching position. As the position was only part-time, Patrice felt it was the right kind of context to transition from staying at home to reengaging with the schools professionally. Patrice pursued and received the preschool teaching position. Following

her first year, the director of ECFE/School Readiness resigned her position to pursue a private early learning consulting business in the Minnesota Metropolitan area. The director, without reservation, recommended Patrice for the position that she subsequently was offered. Patrice has served as her district's ECFE/School Readiness Coordinator for the past three years.

Professional Development as a Teacher

As Patrice reflects on the professional development she received as a teacher, she acknowledges the vast majority was aligned with district curriculum implementations and behavior management programs while she taught as an elementary teacher in Dobbin City. She took graduate level courses from a private university where the professors facilitated professional development for teachers in the schools. Patrice comments that the courses were focused on educational trends – "what the latest 'buzz' in research was saying." When Patrice worked as a preschool teacher for the one year in her school district, she was provided in-service in "work sampling." This was her one "true early childhood" professional development experience.

As a novice ECFE/School Readiness Coordinator, Patrice labels herself as an "infant" in the world of administration, and has been overwhelmed at times by her lack of clarity for professional development. She describes,

> Now going into this position for my professional development there's a lot of different directions to go. Am I concentrating on early childhood children? Am I going to go on, you know, more for educating parents? How do I make them fit together? I could be out every day of the week at a workshop or a seminar. And every one of them would be incredibly interesting.

Professional Development as an Administrator

As Patrice has entered the administrative role in ECFE's modern history within the state of Minnesota, she indicates there has been no "New Coordinator" trainings within a face-to-face format, but has been referred to the state department's website to access the downloadable "Coordinator" manual. Patrice finds the information rather voluminous to get through, but appreciates the fact that there is "something out there." Patrice comments that her "saving grace" was a document left to her by her predecessor. The document includes a month-by-month "what to do" task list outlining deadlines for various reports, budgets, ongoing grant renewals, marketing and publicity pieces, and a roster of key individuals to connect with (along with why and when). Patrice states that she was welcome to call the predecessor as often as she needed to bounce ideas off of, ask questions, and serve as her unofficial mentor.

Patrice has not received any district-sponsored new-administrator professional development, but is encouraged by her supervisor as well as the superintendent to "network extensively." Patrice indicates that one of her best sources for early learning/administrator professional development has been the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MnAFEE) Leadership Conference. Patrice comments,

> For me, I feel like I'm still an infant administrator. So just connecting
> with other coordinators and doing the listening and learning piece . . . it is
> so important.

Introduction to the PDS Learning Community

Patrice says that one of her most recent professional growth experiences was participating in a Professional Development School learning community focused on early childhood and school readiness. She indicates that her participation with this group could

not have come at a better time since she was "oh, so very green." She fondly recalls that

her predecessor even had the learning community written down in her "big document of

what to do." Patrice's mentor, her predecessor, encouraged her to get connected with the

group right away, and since the superintendent of the district was an active member of the

PDS partnership, her mentor thought he could make the right connections for her to

receive an invitation to the learning community. Patrice states, "I needed to get out and

network and get to know my neighboring colleagues right away. That was probably one

of my strongest feelings was the need to network."

Reflection on Most Challenging Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

Patrice, like Terri, Christine, and Diane, finds working with part-time staff to be

one of her greatest challenges. Patrice finds it is hard for her teachers to remain

committed to the job when there are no benefits and few hours. Given the unique hours

that an ECFE or Parent Educator works, many teachers find the job not occupationally

parent-friendly as many are parents themselves.

Patrice finds that marketing and promoting programs with the community and

families is also challenging. She questions, "How do we get the word out there? How do

we let people know that we're here? What avenues do we need to go down in order to

get people to know that we're here?" She does contend, however, that communication of

programs may not be the only factor that plays into low program enrollment. Patrice is

very concerned about the levels of stress and high activity that families face today.

Patrice disappointingly states,

> Bluntly. I think that parents get home from work and they're exhausted.
> And they don't have the energy to go out and do something with their
> children. Or they don't think they need to.

Reflection on Most Gratifying Experiences as an Early Learning Administrator

As Patrice reflects on the most gratifying aspect of her role as the coordinator of

ECFE/School Readiness, she describes the direct one-to-one communication with

families.

> Just talking. Talking kids. Talking parenting. Listening to them. They're
> just exciting to be with. It is so much fun to see young families and how
> excited they are. And just watching these really little ones as they bloom
> and blossom. And that's a piece that we get to see in a district this size.
> Because I'm not stuck in my office. I get to go out and be with my
> families. I'm the person that my teachers call and say, 'I've been up all
> night. I am so sick. I have a 103 degree temp.' I'm the person who takes
> over for them. Yes. I get to know our families. And our families get to
> know me. There's a lot to be said about a smaller school district rather
> than a larger one where you maybe don't see your programming as
> directly. Whereas chances are I get to know all of my families. It is so
> exciting.

Patrice, although only in year three of her administrative role, is filled with pride to work

with early learning programs and the coordinators who lead them. She beams,

> I think that early childhood administrators are the best-kept secret. They
> are the most phenomenal people. They give more time and more energy,
> more of their souls to their programs I think than anybody else in the
> school district does. And you don't know that unless you've seen an early
> childhood program in action.

A summary of Patrice Hovden's education and career path is shown in Table 10.2.

Table 10.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools	
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	5,000
Years of service in education	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Bachelors+
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	No

Table 10.2: Education and Career Path Summary: Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools

MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	No
MN Community Education Director Licensed	No
Initial MN Teaching License	P-K-1-6
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	Yes
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	18
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	No
Direct Supervisor	Director of Community Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	1
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	No
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	No
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No

Notable administrator/professional development reflections by Patrice Hovden are shown in Table 10.3.

Table 10.3: Notable Administrator/Professional Development Reflections: Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools
As a novice Early Childhood administrator, she has received no formal administrative or leadership training from either the state of Minnesota nor her district; however, she has found the MnAFEE Leadership Conference to be helpful.
Works effectively in a collaborative, co-supervisory partnership with elementary principals as her staff is housed in the elementary sites.
Finds her role as the "public reassurance person" to families with young children to be gratifying, important, and significant in setting the stage for positive family engagement with the K-12 system.
States that "networking" has been one of the critical factors that has helped her survive her first years in the role of Early Childhood administrator, specifically her engagement with the informal Regional Coordinator's group and the PDS Learning Community.

A summation of participant career and education paths is contained in Appendix I.

Chapter 11

THEMES

In the analysis of the six semi-structured interviews and participant observations, I identified five themes: strength of peer network, rich resources, tangible results and activities, role of top leadership within early childhood, and collaboration across the greater community.

Strength of Peer Network

The administrators interviewed in this study found networking with peer administrators to be one of the most critical and important aspects of their participation in the PDS Early Childhood Learning Community.

Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools

Jessica is the only administrator within this study who had prior knowledge of PLCs. During the inception of the PDS Early Childhood Learning Community, Jessica's district was considering adopting the PLC model as one professional development strategy for their K-12 sites. Jessica acknowledges that her participation in the PDS learning community helped broaden her understanding of PLCs in general, provided her a venue to see how PLCs differentiate for audience and context, and reestablished her network within early childhood. Jessica finds the level of sophistication of the conversations and activities engaged in by fellow early childhood administrators to be inspiring.

> I don't think I went into it with any expectations really. Although one of the very first meetings that I attended was the group that made the statement for the legislative report and I thought, "Whoa, things have changed. I mean, I remember writing letters to legislators and stuff but never working on a statement paper. That was very impressive and I thought, 'Okay, I really need step up here. People are making a big

commitment and I need to understand what's going on and try to be a part of that.' So that was very inspiring.

Jessica finds value in listening to the ways that fellow administrators addressed situations and created opportunities within their programs. She comments that the sharing-component of the learning community "equalized large and small programs, for no one had more expertise than another across all areas." As one example, Jessica describes,

> I recall conversations about the ECFE classes in Wellington-Harrisburg and how they were getting all these families from diverse backgrounds and all the issues that it was creating. And it wasn't a year later that the same stuff started happening in Springton and I remember thinking, 'Okay . . . so what did I learn?' You know, they talked a lot about how communication was key and they were experimenting with different ways to contact families and talking about the friends and neighbors daycare kind of situations and how difficult it was to get people like that into centers.
>
> It's uncanny, but that's the way these trends go. Somebody's going to experience it and then it's going to happen to you sooner or later, too. So it was valuable to know, first of all, that there were others out there who had done this kind of thing and then know some of the things they had tried. And then, hey, if I need to, I can call them and say, 'Remember when you were talking about those communication pieces? Can I see what you did?' So that stuff, I think, was invaluable to know other people have those same experiences.

As many aspects of the learning community experience worked well for her learning style, Jessica was most appreciative of the opportunity to engage with others. She remarks,

> Our work was centered on the area of early learning and there was an opportunity for sharing across districts and for receiving current research in the form of articles, and sometimes, speakers but that the best part was really just getting together and hooking up with other professionals. I just think, speaking for myself, that's the way I learned through the best, through the connections, not necessarily from reading a research article or whatever, although we do plenty of that. But it's finding out what was

effective, what's important to somebody else, what's working for him or her.

Jessica recognized that members of the learning community appreciated her participation, and valued her ability to share and network openly. Jessica offers,

> I guess I really felt like my ideas and my opinions were valued. I've gone to the gatherings of all the different PDS groups, and when there's brainstorming done or when the group is asked for their opinion about whatever, I really feel like what I have to say is valued. I think I've always felt like that, that if I was invited to come, somebody actually wanted me there.

Jessica finds that the network established with this group of individuals is representative of how the early childhood field operates, and is contrasting to the types of communities she engages in within K-12. She comments,

> Well, I think the connectedness with the early childhood community is very selfless. It's a style in that community that you don't see anywhere else, or I think with anyone else that I'm connected to.

Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools

Janice finds the learning community experience to have been effective in helping reduce isolationism that she at times experiences in her role. She states, "To get the perspective of a lot of different people coming from different disciplines within the early childhood frame of reference, it was interesting and unique from what I normally experience – cause most of us are fairly isolated in our communities."

Janice also finds the sophistication level of the conversations between members within the learning community to have been rewarding and keenly targeted on early childhood, in contrast to conversations that she has had within her district environment. She acknowledges, "As far as the level of the university atmosphere and the level of expertise that was in the room and the support within early childhood focus, which now

everything I do is in the K 12 realm here and district wide, was refreshing. I don't have as much opportunity to have that level of support in my district."

Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center

Terri, compared with other study participants, works outside of K-12 systems, and finds the learning community experience to have been an effective and enjoyable means of networking and learning with others who were "outside" her usual group of university faculty or early learning center directors. She states, "I loved our little professional development learning community because then I really could dialogue with people from other areas of the early childhood community." Terri comments that the collective expertise shared by the members not only was uplifting for her personally and professionally, but also could be impacting on the lives of children. She describes,

> You know, a group of colleagues who could get together, and learn from each other, and learn about what other programs are doing, and talk about best practice, and take it back. I mean the literature that we had, the richness of the conversations that we had were just wonderful. You walked away from those morning meetings high going, 'Wow! This is such an awesome group of people. I'm taking this back and at the end of the day, it's going to make a difference for children.'

Terri indicates networking was enhanced through the learning community meeting format.

> I loved the setup because we were given literature on certain topics. I liked how we went through and each person shared the different pieces of news that they learned or that they'd come across on early childhood education. And then we were able to dialogue about that new information and the literature that was brought.

Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools

Christine came to the learning community with great hopes of networking with leaders, administrators, and professors across various sectors of early childhood who

could "get things done," and remarks, "It was an opportunity to meet with other leaders at a level of exploration, sophisticated problem solving, investigation, openness, and an environment of trust that people could talk about what was happening." Christine is inspired by the way that learning community members could safely share their questions and concerns about program and administrative decisions that they were each challenged by, and find a safe environment to express their ideas or brainstorm. Christine describes,

> It was very positive and I really appreciated it. It's similar to my relationships with other coordinators in southern Minnesota. It's very trusting, open, truthful, helpful – wanting everyone to improve and advance as an administrator and as a leader, to provide the very best opportunities that we can. And, so, I did sense that. I liked being able to connect with principals and college professors.

Christine values the level of personal support she received from the members of the learning community.

> I appreciated the support, the support of being able to talk to other people that could connect and understand you and you could share experiences and they could easily appreciate those experiences and then say, "Hey, have you thought about this?" It was a real comfortable, non-threatening experience.

Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools

Diane indicates that the learning community became the venue where she was able to network and build professional relationships with administrators from other districts who she admired and had a deep level of respect for, but had never had the opportunity to "get in their circle." Diane confides that an interaction with one "cutting edge" early childhood administrator from St. Matthew was a professional privilege since this leader's program set the bar for what everyone else's should aspire to become.

Conversely, Diane expresses pride in that every learning community member who worked with preschool to kindergarten transition, utilized a PowerPoint presentation that

she shared at one learning community meeting at their district kindergarten round-ups.

She is humbled by all the email and "thank you" calls that she received from her fellow

learning community members who expressed their gratitude for her expertise. Diane says

that the "learning/teaching reciprocation" made their network strong.

Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools

Patrice, who was not the least experienced educator in the learning community,

but who did have the least experience as an early childhood administrator, indicates that

her joining the learning community was a strategy for survival. Patrice comments, "I

knew I needed to get out and network and get to know my colleagues right away. That

was probably one of my strongest feelings right away was to network." For Patrice,

meeting people within her field was the most essential part of her experience. She

describes,

> To become part of the learning community was huge for me. To come in just for the networking piece . . . I didn't necessarily want to have to say anything. I just wanted to be a sponge. Just listening to how other communities and other places worked their programs. And hearing all of what everyone else is dealing with. And going, "Okay, I think I've heard of that. And yeah I think I'm dealing with that too." Because I was so new I really didn't know what to expect from that at all. And it was a wonderful experience to be in a room full of people who were all about early childhood. And that energy is just fabulous. Because early childhood teachers, really, they have a lot of it.

Rich Resources

The administrators interviewed in this study find the professional resources

(literature and research, guest speakers, legislative updates, and technology-enhanced

media) presented to them within the learning community to have been an asset to their

learning and awareness, application, and leadership of professional development for their

own staff members.

Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools

Jessica indicates the models and strategies, shared by other district administrators as well as in the literature, for working with families of English Language Learners to have been particularly valuable and timely to her work. She comments that she still has a "purple folder" from every learning community meeting filed in her desk, and is often able to share these resources with staff and families. Jessica, as her district's early childhood liaison to K-12, distributes the learning community journal articles and research that pertains to kindergarten transition and readiness with other principals within the administrative cabinet.

Jessica is particularly moved by one of the guest speakers who addressed the group on advocacy and his organization's platform for the upcoming legislative session. Jessica describes,

> When Ted Ormsbe came, I just thought that was amazing. I went to hear him speak another time after that. And so that was very inspiring to belong to a group that was important enough for people like him to come and address. I thought that was really neat.

Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools

Janice was not able to attend the first year's learning community meetings in person, but was able to track the ongoing discussion and sharing through receiving the meetings' agendas and folders of resources. These packets subsequently motivated her to prioritize the learning community meetings in her calendar as "must do, must go." She comments,

> The facilitator sent out a really appealing agenda of some things that sounded like things I was interested in and would be wanting to do – I mean after spending all that time learning to become an administrator, realized that I hadn't been – I had sort of neglected my early childhood

background a little bit. And so I thought, "This sounds like a really neat way to get in on some cutting edge research."

Janice indicates that the technology-enhanced media materials, like web-casts, were particularly valuable for her to view and discuss at the learning community, and then use immediately with her staff. She summarizes,

> Well, I think the biggest one that I used in particularly was, and I've done a couple of the webcasts actually, but the significant one that we did at that time was the language development one. It was something! I'd brought together some district experts in the field along with a combination of special education and speech pathology to view the webcast. And that was just the ticket for our building because it showed how to bring the essential components together and it had aspects of all of the programs working together effectively.
>
> And that's what I struggled finding because we have sort of – I don't want to say divisiveness, but there is some regular education versus special education and that kind of thing within the building. And so you do a training that's more general ed focused and then the special ed people are like, "Well, that doesn't apply to our kids," and vice versa. And so that webcast was one that really did bring together the whole staff to look at the issue of language development and speech therapy. So that was a real valuable one.

Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center

Terri finds the learning community materials to be inspirational to her practice and professional awareness, as well as somewhat overwhelming. She comments,

> We learned about new programs, new curriculum programs. We learned about *Ready for K*, which I'd never heard of before. We learned about how important it is to have quality programs so that children are ready for school. It was just, I can't describe the – It's so hard to describe the inspiration that was brought about by the information that was presented in the learning communities. You just gained so much more information than you could possibly put back here in your head.

Terri says the "Investing in Early Childhood" series of readings, videos, and guest speakers to be of greatest worth to her. Like other learning community members, Terri describes the value of one guest speaker in particular,

> When Ted Ormsbe came down and spoke with us, that really sticks out in my mind. I learned a lot more about *Ready for K* and a lot more about the legislative process of getting the *Ready for K* platform really out there, and making the legislators understand the importance of early childhood education so all children would be ready for kindergarten.

Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools

The materials and resources that Christine recognizes of greatest value were those concerned with preservice preparation of early childhood teachers. As Christine leads a large program that hosts numerous teacher candidates and preservice teachers for field experiences, she indicates the information she gleaned from the university faculty learning community members was invaluable for her to "be on the same page." Christine describes,

> I think – 'cause I do feel that one of our challenges is the training of our early childhood teachers coming into this field, they have to hit the ground running. They just have to hit the ground running, just like any other teacher. But, this is early childhood and these are still very little children. We are very aware of developmentally appropriate practices, and what we do in our classrooms, but the teachers are required to be very sophisticated about how they approach learning in their classrooms and the benchmarks, and how they connect with parents, and how they write up lesson plans with objectives, and how they work through a very complex staff development plan. And, how do they find time to gain support with challenging behaviors in those classrooms? And, so, it's just like any other teacher. So, the training continues to be a high priority of our early childhood teachers and parent educators, yeah. And, so it was nice to see and learn more about all of the hard work that the professors are really doing to address these challenges.

Christine says that the monthly learning community materials helped her stay abreast of trends and research within early childhood in an organized, succinct fashion. She concedes,

> I don't have the time to be an expert on reading all of the position papers and I just can't do it, and all of the guidelines on areas like autism or mental health issues, or in the area of curriculums and assessments. We do a lot of work in those areas, but it's nice to have somebody gather and

organize it all. The learning community was filled with rich resources that we received in the area of early childhood research, the different developmental domains, kindergarten transition, communicating with parents, and challenges and opportunities of working with working families.

Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools

Diane finds the professional readings on trends and research to have struck a chord for her professionally. She describes,

> I loved getting that packet of information, because the one thing that we never have time to do is to look through those professional journals, to see what's out there, to see what's being written about programs on a nationwide level, to see what the trends are in early childhood. What's coming? I'd like to know what's coming. You know, what are the trends on a national level? What are the trends on a state level? What is considered quality early childhood experiences? You know, those articles that we got were worth it for me! It was like the professional development I used to get when I took classes on my own - I loved the academic reading.

Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools

In corresponding fashion with Patrice's desire to meet people and be a "sponge" during her learning community experience, she reflects that one of her most memorable guest speakers was when the dean of the school of education at the university addressed the group, sharing context for how higher education was becoming more vested with the interests of early childhood. Patrice says the information was interesting and helped her understand the connection between the university, her district, and the southern part of the state from an early childhood lens.

Patrice describes one webcast, "A Tale of Two Schools," to be particularly unsettling as it showed a case study of how school reform efforts with our youngest learners will either fail or succeed dependent upon two critical variables – the quality and quantity of staff development. Patrice commented,

> It really pointed out the power of professional development for implementing new programs. The school that invested reaped GREAT benefits whereas the other one just got the new program "dumped" on them, and they didn't progress . . . they even went backwards as a school.

Patrice acknowledges that this webcast is one that she has shared with others, and often replays it for herself as a reminder of what not to do as an administrator.

Tangible Results and Activities

The strength of peer networking and rich resources resulted in tangible leadership actions and projects by the administrators interviewed and observed within this study.

Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Public Schools

First, Jessica indicates that her engagement with early learning administrators and university faculty caused a critical questioning of current district practices due to her own beliefs being affirmed or dismantled by the research, resources, and conversations affiliated with the PDS learning community experience. Second, she developed a resource library within her elementary school site for staff and families to use. The resource library first housed all the materials that were provided to her from the PDS learning community, and have subsequently been augmented by additional books and journal articles that Jessica continues to collect. She says that she always was a "collector" of educational materials, but they often would get "dumped on a shelf and never intentionally organized." Jessica is proud that this action step to organize an "Early Learning Resource Center" has proved to be useful to her school community as many parents and teachers have checked-out the materials, and are beginning to add additional materials to the Center as well.

Third, through the learning community experience, Jessica recognized the need to share ideas, strategies, and research with her superintendent more intentionally, and to

become "more proactive with him to increase his understanding and awareness." Fourth, Jessica commented that she was able to re-tell the "Wellington-Harrisburg" experience, first heard at the PDS learning community, to her administrator colleagues as a model for connecting effectively with diverse families as they enter the school district. Jessica says that she became the "official point person" to keep connected with the Wellington-Harrisburg people to ask questions and "continue the dialogue so that we can keep in step with them like an apprentice."

Finally, Jessica reports that her most significant change effort was to intentionally partner with her district's ECFE Coordinator, a fellow PDS learning community member, to "figure out a better system of communication between the early childhood educators and the kindergarten and primary grade teachers." Both Jessica and Christine independently indicate that there has been a lack of seamless connection and understanding of what each division is doing in areas such as curriculum and assessment. Jessica and Christine organized new structures within the district to facilitate cross-memberships to the early childhood staff and kindergarten grade level teams so that each constituent group would be represented, hear and share information, and begin to cross-plan in targeted areas such as "kindergarten round-up." Jessica summarizes,

> I know this action doesn't sound like a big deal, but, the fact of the matter is, it just never has happened in all my or Christine's years in this district . . . so really, it's a huge deal! The learning community just helped nudge us along as we heard about how other districts work to bring their EC and K teacher teams together. If they could do it, so could we.

Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools

Janice comments that the "timing was right" to participate in the learning

community for it helped her considerably with a self-study she was facilitating for the

school district. Janice found the research articles to be particularly informing.

> When we entered into a self study, and that was to actually look at our
> early childhood programming the same as other disciplines within the
> district do to examine what's existing, what kind of resources, what does
> research tell us. Oh my, did I use resources from the PDS at that time,
> 'cause it was at the time when we were doing that – to have the latest
> research on a number of different areas.

Janice offers that as the research articles informed the self-study, subsequent

actions and change occurred within her program based on the recommendations of the

self-study such as standardizing the curriculum for all programs (ECFE and ECSE),

adding "intentional" staff development as part of the redesign, and infusing additional

data collection sources. Janice says that the changes allowed her programs to align more

seamlessly with K-12, and fostered opportunities for combined early

childhood/kindergarten training. Janice describes,

> Through the self-study process, we chose a standardized curriculum for
> the early childhood preschools, some adaptation to ECFE, though it's not
> used as much there, and then our Special Ed program. And then with that,
> comes a plan for staff development as well. The district has a process
> where we have early releases. This coming year, there'll be six of the
> months of the year we have a half a day on a Wednesday afternoon where
> we plan staff development, a couple of curriculum days, and a couple of
> grade level days where the teachers actually decide what their staff
> development will be. So it has really brought us together with the district
> and aligned our programming with what the district is hoping to
> accomplish K-12.
>
> And we've actually now started doing some joint trainings. Last winter
> we did a joint training on vocabulary with the kindergarten teachers in the
> district. We're also doing some data collection that certainly isn't to the
> level of the testing that's required in K-12, but it's sort of the precursor at
> our level to see where our progress is and where we can tweak things with

that curriculum. I would say that we are doing a pretty good job now of leading professional development in this building to help the staff.

Janice not only used the journal articles for the purposes of informing the self-study, but to extend with staff.

> I think I was expecting to learn something, definitely, and to find some resources that I might not have otherwise had an opportunity to learn about or experience, and to get some ideas of – there were several things that we did that I used in professional development in the building here with staff, so that was I felt really valuable to me, both for my own personal growth and then to be able to share it with the staff.

Janice finds the materials she received from the PDS learning community to have been helpful in re-shaping and lifting the quality of the professional development she provided to her staff. She describes,

> It's difficult to find good professional development opportunities for early childhood level. All of our staff here – we have a wonderful staff that have a lot of expertise, and so to – we're kind of beyond some of the basic kinds of things, even though we always have an evolving staff, too, so you have new people. But even often our new people are pretty up and coming on lots of different things. So to find things that really engage the staff – and so we needed to go to a little higher level, and I guess maybe that's it, too, at a university level versus a lot of times when you'd go to workshops and things, they're certainly led by people with expertise in a specific area. But I think a university level pulls together a variety of disciplines as well as just a little higher level of thinking about some topics that really make it valuable.

Janice indicates that as a result of her being affiliated with the PDS learning community, she developed a strong relationship with one university professor learning community member in particular who shared an interest in conducting research within Janice's site. Janice has successfully received grant support, from external funders, to initiate a Pre-LASS project/bi-lingual preschool model at her building, and her university faculty partner has been helpful in designing an evaluation study of the project.

Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center

Terri comments that she was able to take information she gathered from the learning community meeting and extend to a local level as well as a national level. In Terri's role as a university faculty member, she has been able to share materials with pre-service teachers to become part of her lesson planning, and "their critical thinking." Terri says that she infused a number of the journal articles into her weekly staff meetings to "inspire, challenge, and cause a good healthy discussion about our practices in light of what the recent research is telling us."

As Terri serves on the National Board for Campus Childcare Centers, she reports that she has had the opportunity to "mention one item that came out of our learning community at one particular meeting, and the interest grew like wildfire!" As Terri continues,

> You wouldn't believe how many of those articles and things that I shared
> at the national board level. I shared the information on Ready for K.
> People had no idea that that existed in the state of Minnesota.

Terri recalls the time she introduced a new item to the PDS learning community members, and based on their interest, she was encouraged to share the information with a broader audience, and ultimately developed a cross-state collaboration resulting in a national presentation. She explains,

> When I brought the Early Learning Standards from the state of Minnesota
> to the learning community . . . people hadn't heard about that. I took that
> one step further and took it to our national board and said, 'Have you seen
> this? These are our learning standards in the state of Minnesota.' And
> they were going, "Wow." And so actually after that, the colleague on the
> board from California discovered that California had early learning
> standards and the colleague that's on the board from the state of Louisiana
> discovered that they had early learning standards. We presented at the
> NAEYC Professional Development Institute on our different states' early
> learning standards. And that all started from the learning community!

Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools

Christine comments,

> I think it helped me process the direction that we were going, where we
> needed to move in the program, i.e., curriculum, a formalized curriculum,
> assessments, how we could do that, how we can still be developmentally
> appropriate, use research as our guide, and know where to find support for
> it.

One of Christine's original hopes in joining the PDS learning community was to

finds ways of systematically connecting early childhood and kindergarten. She explains,

> My wish was to have an ongoing systematic way to connect with the
> kindergarten teachers, and the principal liaison. We now have established
> that one of our teachers is going to go to a kindergarten team meeting.
> Systematically. And, so Jessica and I, we both talked about it, how can we
> do something without creating a whole other committee or creating a
> whole other meeting. And, so that's what we've come up with is that one
> of our teachers, our school readiness teacher, is going to be going to the
> kindergarten level meetings . . . It's just communicating, problem solving,
> brain storming, finding out what the other person's thinking or what's the
> research saying versus what directives we're getting, those kinds of things.

Christine circulated the materials she received from the learning community to

her staff for their professional development. As Christine describes, convening the many

part-time members together for staff development is challenging, but having the

opportunity to make copies of articles that showcase research and best practice, and place

them in the staff mailboxes, "doesn't guarantee change, but it gives it a fighting chance

rather than doing nothing."

Finally, Christine indicates her interactions with the university faculty members in

the PDS learning community fostered the formalization of new field experiences for pre-

service and teacher candidates. Christine reports that field placements were more random

and occurred in traditional areas in the past, but after the formalization, placements were

made in new areas of their early childhood programs. Christine says this is a step in the right direction for giving the "pipeline of teachers" a sense of the vastness of the ways ECFE and School Readiness serves young children.

Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools

Diane reports that her PDS learning community experience inspired her to push on the "hard changes" that needed to be made in her program to be more accountable. First, she acknowledges that "inspiration without action is just dreaming," so Diane's initial change was making a public commitment to her staff and superintendent about aligning the scope and sequence of curriculum with K-12 which she did. Following the scope and sequence plan, Diane developed a lesson plan framework "template" for her staff to use to ensure coverage of content areas and *Creative Curriculum* domain requirements.

Diane partnered with another learning community member, who worked in a bordering district, to align their newly developed frameworks with appropriate assessments – to merge *Work Sampling* with *Creative Curriculum.* Upon completion of the framework/assessment alignment, Diane and her partnering ECFE coordinator planned numerous joint trainings for their staff members. As Diane expresses, "quality implementation requires quality professional development . . . and lots of it!" Finally, Diane indicates that it was critical to articulate the changes of scope and sequence along with lesson planning to parents – to educate them about the "framework," and how it translates into the daily program. Diane concedes, "These changes were hard, but it was the right time for them to be made. We still have a long way to go, but it feels like we are on the right path."

Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools

As a novice early childhood administrator, Patrice says she is trying to carefully weigh "all that she inherited in her program . . . what was working, what appears to be not working, what should or shouldn't be changed, and how does research inform these potential changes." Patrice remarks that she "modeled what she saw others doing in the learning community – the other PLC members were like mentors to her." Patrice is bolstered to follow their lead since "these learning community members were really well respected in the field – I could trust them."

Patrice, like Jessica and Christine, expressed the need to bridge the understanding and working definition of "school readiness" between two primary stakeholders in the discussion – early childhood teachers and kindergarten teachers. Patrice describes,

> We really wanted to get this early childhood family education, early childhood special education, and kindergarten piece more unified. We wanted them to come together. We want them to all be talking. We need to be on the same page. We're in the same hall. Now let's be on the same page.

A learning community member from her district, who worked as the lead kindergarten teacher, joined Patrice in her effort to begin to connect the audiences more intentionally. Patrice acknowledges that one of the best relationships she developed in the PDS learning community was with someone from her very own district. Patrice laughs,

> It's kind of odd that one has to drive all the way to the university to meet and connect with people from your own district, but good thing . . . the learning community got the conversation started since we both began to see the problem through the eyes of others and the research.

Patrice offers that "bridging" is taking some time to accomplish, but her superintendent is very supportive, and has offered her encouragement to bring the groups together.

Role of Top Leadership within Early Childhood

The participants within this study found their organization's senior leader to be "emerging" in his/her awareness and support for early childhood programs. Among the six participants, none of their senior leaders has a background in early learning. Many of the participants describe, however, that their leaders are trying to learn more about how to support their community's youngest learners, and rely on their expertise as an early learning administrator.

Jessica Slatten, Springton Area Pubic Schools

Jessica describes how her district's business community is concerned about the "readiness status" for incoming kindergarten children, less than 50% deemed "ready" in 2006-2007. She says that if the community at large or even a single sector, like the business community, is concerned, it translates into concern and action for her superintendent. Jessica acknowledges that like many communities in Minnesota, Springton is looking at early childhood through the lens of "investment."

Jessica states that the school district has "yet to find its place within early childhood, but our superintendent is working hard to help cast a vision of how the two systems can work as one." She further describes,

> He's really learning. He's really learning how important the community believes early childhood is. I think that happened with some involvement through Johnson Craft (Johnson Foundation). Some executives there who were saying, "Hey, this is what we're hearing about literacy and whatever and what is the school district doing?" And I think that's one of the best things about Phillip is that he pays attention so well to what the community wants and expects in the district. So yeah, I think he's really tuned in right now. It's a good time to talk to him about early childhood issues because he's very aware. The Ready! for Kindergarten initiative, he's been extremely supportive of helping us get that off the ground. But we've got a ways to go.

Jessica's superintendent was very encouraging of her to participate in the PDS professional learning community. She concludes, "I'm working hard to keep the pipeline of communication open with him, share information and research, and use my expertise to be a positive advocate for change."

Janice Mortenson, Greenleaf Public Schools

Janice has worked for numerous superintendents during her tenure with the Greenleaf Public Schools, and comments on the importance of that role within early childhood,

> Well, it's a key player I think in the whole picture. I've been through, I don't know, four or five – five, six sups, and I can say that the most growth in our programming and our ability to make changes and do things were with sups that were supportive of early childhood, pure and simple. I think we've been lucky to have had superintendents that have had vision and believed the research and did what they could to help.

Janice has experienced, first-hand, the power of a hands-on superintendent within early childhood. Janice indicates that "positional influence" of one of her former superintendents was very effective in melding a partnership with an external agency that continues to remain strong years later. She explains,

> He showed up when I asked him to. You know what I mean? He participated in discussions and in decision making. We developed a one-stop shop kind of operation with Head Start and partnership probably – it's gotta be, what, 12-15 years already. The superintendent had to be a player in that or it wouldn't have happened, and he was very much a presence and believer that it was something we could do and helped to make it happen. Because we did like a "Levy for Lease" and some things that were definitely types that had to go through the school board and get state approval and all those kinds of things . . . so he was a champion of helping to get that to happen.

Janice's "series of superintendents" have been critically important in helping her expand programs, and facilitating the ECFE/ECSE-ownership of a site devoted completely to early learning services. She describes,

> The decision to move here was based on a number of factors within the district and some budgets cuts and things that were going on. But still, to have the vision to see that we could use a facility like this versus where we were at, I mean I thought at the time that we were doing great with three classrooms, and now we have nine and they're all full. If he hadn't pushed us into moving here and figuring this place out, why it may not have ever happened. That kind of leadership is what it takes in order to really help an early childhood program grow and develop.
>
> And then the sup that came after he was here, was also extremely supportive of what was already going on. She helped us to look at how we could expand some or look at other options, and very much participated and directed other directors within the district to support what we were doing. So that was very good.

An interim superintendent currently leads Diane's district, and she comments, "I think he supports early childhood, but he's not going to be the leader of the pack or anything for us. So that's a little different than the past – the last couple of superintendents have been awesome." While Janice engaged in the PDS learning community, her district transitioned through two superintendents; therefore, within this transition, she's not certain whether either superintendent was aware of her participation. Janice's direct supervisor, however, was aware and very supportive of her, especially so as Janice's area was undergoing a district self-study at the time.

Terri Simon, Growing Friends Early Learning Center

Terri reports that the dean of her school of education is "extremely supportive" of early childhood, and meets with him at least monthly to update him on Growing Friends Early Learning Center as well as "what's going on and 'what do I need to know?' types of conversations." She remarks,

He's always said to me, "What is it you need? How can I help you make sure that your program is the best that it can be?" I feel very supported by him.

Terri states that her dean is a champion and supporter of her program's NAEYC accreditation, and has advocated successfully on her behalf to the university's Academic Affairs division to financially support the accreditation as opposed to impacting Growing Friends Early Learning Center budget.

Christine Hess, Springton Area Public Schools

Christine reports that her superintendent is "very supportive, very supportive." She confides that he may not completely understand or appreciate the context of early childhood in its totality, but concedes,

> Honestly, how can we expect him to – there are incredible demands on a superintendent, and there is so much to know and learn about so many areas impacting education. I cannot fault him – I know he's trying.

Christine's interaction with her superintendent is limited within her district structure; therefore, she communicates most directly with her supervisor, Director of Community Education, who communicates directly with Christine's superintendent. Christine summarizes,

> I'd say they've all been supportive, but I think the challenge has been explaining the context that we're coming from and understanding the needs of the program. The directors have a huge amount of responsibilities that are just very, very diverse. And, so, their key is to make sure that they are able to glean information, what they need from each division very quickly, and become astute and quick at knowing where a certain division is at, and what are their needs. And, also to communicate that they do understand but that it's just something that can't always be done very well.

Diane Sumbee, Morton-Redview Public Schools

Diane, like Janice, has worked for multiple superintendents through the course of her career either directly or indirectly when she served in the ECSU. She finds support

for early childhood spans the spectrum from non-existent to full-fledge support. She

explains,

> Many superintendents don't necessarily know how to view early
> childhood, you know? I have found in my experience that some
> superintendents completely embrace what early childhood and community
> ed are all about and definitely feel that they're a very valuable and
> important part of the whole school district package. But, then you have
> superintendents who feel that they're – that they're not a legitimate part of
> public education. That it should be something totally separate apart from
> public schools. You know?
>
> I've been pretty fortunate that I've experienced the middle ground. You
> know, those that understand that community ed and early childhood
> programs are a part of the umbrella, but that middle ground, it's kind of
> like we know that they are part of it and so we'll do what we have to. We
> definitely accept them, but we're not going to go out of our way type of
> thing. So, I've experienced that to the superintendent that totally embraces
> why we're here and very supportive. So, yeah, so, thankfully, I've never
> had to experience the other side of it, because I have certainly heard from
> other coordinators how absolutely miserable that can be.

Diane's current superintendent is a first-time, newly licensed one, and she is

generally optimistic that he will "come to support early childhood fully in the years

ahead." Diane's community recently was awarded a foundation grant to begin a

community-coalition centered on addressing the needs of the community's youngest

learners; therefore, Diane has been able to engage him in this process as a key

stakeholder. She finds a genuine care and support for early childhood by both the

superintendent and school board, but recognizes both are just time-challenged to devote

more attention to the needs of the early learning programs. Diane says, however, that as a

new superintendent, there are so many issues across K-12 to attend to, so she does not

always "see his support as much as she would hope" and further describes,

> I think it's because his plate is full. He's a brand-new superintendent in a
> struggling district. I'm making excuses for him, though – but I do believe
> because I think he would give us more visible support if he had time.

That's the sense that I get. He's a brand-new superintendent in a district with incredible challenges and he's overwhelmed. He really is. I have felt for him many times this last school year. You know, having again been around for a while and seen superintendents – and some of them brand-new as well. I just think he came into a district that had a lot going on. And, so, I get the sense that if time were available to him, he would support us more.

Patrice Hovden, Wellington-Harrisburg Public Schools

Patrice is able to clearly contrast her former district from her current one in terms of support for early childhood from the superintendent. She states, "In the district that I worked in previously, I don't think any of them would have thought, or had too much of a thought about early childhood. I know that." Patrice reports that her current superintendent is interested, engaged, and highly supportive of early learning initiatives. Patrice's superintendent has gone so far as to help establish a "visioning process" for their district's early learning programs. Although Patrice reports to the director of community education, she has direct access to the superintendent as well. She explains,

I'm getting the feeling that our Mr. Richfield, the superintendent, is coming up with a vision of what he's sees for early childhood. I feel very lucky that I have a wonderful boss and that he's very supportive of me. And that the direction that we're going seems to be a direction that he's 'content' with. But I'm getting the feeling that he wants a little different direction. And we've had the very basic discussions on what to do. But I want to get a feel for where he wants to go with this. And I'm not sure where he wants to go at the moment. And it could be quite extensive what he's thinking of. Which is exciting. It's very exciting!

Collaboration Across the Greater Community

The National Staff Development Council's "collaboration standard" states the following:

 Organized groups provide the social interaction that often deepens learning and the interpersonal support and synergy necessary for creatively solving the complex problems of teaching and learning"(NSDC, 2008, http://www.nsdc.org/standards/collaborationskills.cfm).

The early childhood administrators were observed actively engaging in collaborative work with the following:

- Early childhood administrators

- K-12/university administrators

- External agency heads

- Local, state, and national policy-makers

- Private organizations, foundations, or other not-for-profit enterprises

- Families or community members

- Professional Development School (PDS) partnership.

Collaboration with Early Childhood Administrators

All the early childhood administrators were observed interacting/collaborating with administrators within Early Childhood Special Education except for Janice. In Janice's role, she is not only the Coordinator of ECFE, but ECSE as well. All administrators who lead ECFE programs (Janice, Christine, Diane, and Patrice) collaborate with their respective Regional Coordinator's group. These groups are described as informal networks of ECFE coordinators, affiliated with the formerly organized regions of the Minnesota Department of Education ECFE/Parent Educator trainings from the 1980's. The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MnAFEE), however, recognizes these groups. Finally, Terri, in her role of leading Growing Friends Early Learning Center, collaborates regularly with fellow directors of Campus Child Care Centers through her national association.

Collaboration with K-12/University Administrators

Christine and Diane are the only administrators interviewed and observed who do not have regular interactions with their organization's chief educational leader. The other four individuals have direct interaction with their superintendent or dean. All six early childhood administrators interact and collaborate regularly with principals, department chairs, administrators of business services, and human resources. All five of the K-12-based early childhood administrators collaborate with their districts' administrators of curriculum and instruction, special education, and community education. Christine, Diane, and Patrice collaborate with fellow community education program coordinators within their district on a regular basis or as a member of a formal team.

Collaboration with External Agency Heads

Collaboration/interaction with county-based social services, specifically child-protection, is the one common link among the six participants. The four participants who lead ECFE programs (Janice, Christine, Diane, and Patrice) collaborate regularly with their respective community's Head Start programs and Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) regional networks.

Janice, Christine, Diane, and Patrice are also active members (as district-designees) within their respective county's Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEIC). IEICs are composed of parent consultants and representatives from public schools, counties, Head Start, the ARC (formerly the Association for Retarded Citizens), and other agencies serving young children and their families. IEICs are mandated by state and federal law as part of the Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (IDEIA) to: promote the early identification of children with medical or developmental concerns, assure these children receive the care and learning opportunities they need, and

provide support to families of those children (Minnesota Department of Education, 2008, http://www.parentsknow.state.mn.us/age1_2/topicsAZ/index.html#i).

Janice is the only administrator who collaborates regularly with her county's Extension service. Diane and Patrice are engaged with their respective Child Abuse & Prevention County Collaboratives.

Collaboration with Local, State, and Federal Policy-makers

One form of policy-making relates to employment and compensation through collective bargaining. The five K-12-based early childhood administrators are not part of a formalized collective bargaining group, and therefore, advocate for employment and work-condition contractual language in a localized, independent fashion. Jessica and Janice are categorized as "K-12 Administrators" who negotiate their contracts with their job-alike colleagues directly with their school boards, but are not part of collective bargaining associations or unions. Christine, Diane, and Patrice, who have supervisory responsibilities but are not considered "administrators," each negotiate their contract with their job-alike colleagues within community education. They, like Jessica and Janice, are not part of any formal collective bargaining association or union. In contrast, Terri, is a member of the Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty (MSUAASF) collective bargaining group. Terri currently serves as her local association's president; therefore, Terri engages frequently in policy-discussions on a local and statewide basis.

Terri is a member of the executive board for the National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers (NCCCC). NCCCC is a nonprofit educational membership organization that supports research and activities affecting college and university early

childhood education and service settings, family and work issues, and the field of early

childhood education in general. NCCCC (2008) has an active public policy agenda

encompassing supporting funding for early childhood programs, promoting quality

development, and promoting diversity (http://www.campuschildren.org/). Therefore,

Terri is engaged in promoting the positions of NCCCC through an established advocacy

protocol developed by the NCCCC's Board of Directors.

Janice, Christine, Diane, and Patrice are active members of the Minnesota

Association for Family and Early Education (MnAFEE). The mission of MNAFEE is to

promote communication, purposeful networking, staff development and evaluation

activities that strengthen Early Childhood Family Education, School Readiness and other

family and early education programs and initiatives. MnAFEE's (2008) state legislative

agenda includes:

- Advocate for funding increases to enhance the ability of public
  early childhood programs to provide targeted services to families
  in greatest needs
- Modify teaching licensure requirements
- Supporting high quality early childhood programming
- Supporting the development of statewide systems to increase the
  current investment in young children
- To provide adequate guidance and training for programs
- To provide resources for the collection of program accountability
  data
- To increase the availability of direct services to all families with
  young children
- To promote parent choice
- To include adequate and clear governance processes
- To provide for monitoring of programs to assure quality and
  accountability (http://www.mnafee.org/).

The four ECFE coordinators engage in early childhood caucuses, Early Childhood-on-

the-Hill day at the state capital, and actively promote MnAFEE's legislative agenda

within their respective communities and school districts.

Collaboration with Private Organizations, Foundations, or Other Not-for-profit

Enterprises

Four of the six participants have active United Way organizations within the two

communities that they represent, Springton and Greenleaf. The community of Springton

offers a United Way affiliate organization, Success-by-6; all three Springton participants

are active members of the affiliate. Success-by-6's mission is to attain broad, community-

level change by addressing system barriers that negatively impact children and families in

areas such as health, safety, childcare, and early childhood education (2008,

http://www.unitedwaycapitalarea.org/our_work/education/sb6/).

The participants reside within the Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation

(SMIF) region. SMIF (2008) is one of six Minnesota regional foundations established by

the Minneapolis-based McKnight Foundation and regional citizens in 1986. Leaders in

each region establish priorities and work plans. Regional donors and The McKnight

Foundation fund initiatives (http://www.smifoundation.org/). One of SMIF strategic

priorities is early childhood; therefore, they provide structures for collaboration, learning

resources, technical support, and convene early learning community coalition meetings.

All six participants engage with SMIF either through community coalition participation,

or as the chief liaison to SMIF for the "Bookstart" program, "Young Explorer Learning

Centers" program, AmeriCorps program, or "Home Visitation Grant Program."

Terri and Christine are part of a pilot collaboration with the Minnesota Early

Learning Foundation (MELF). MELF (2008) is 501(c)(3) tax-exempt, nonprofit

organization dedicated to the following:

- Identify cost-effective ways of ensuring that Minnesota's children ages prenatal to 5, from low income or challenged families, are ready for success in school
- Support programs and initiatives that educate, inform, and empower parents, particularly in Minnesota's fast-growing immigrant communities and other under-served communities
- Support programs and initiatives that will – through measurement, demonstration, collaboration and evaluation – guide development of an effective early learning system (http://www.melf.us/).

MELF is sponsoring a pilot initiative, the "Parent Aware Rating Tool," that both Terri

and Christine's programs have qualified for participation. The Parent Aware Rating Tool

(2008) is designed to recognize early educators for the quality of care they deliver and

build on this quality by supporting their efforts at program improvement. The three-year

pilot of the Parent Aware Rating Tool will include licensed child care providers/early

educators in five locations: Blue Sky and Nixten Counties, the City of St. Paul,

neighborhoods of North Minneapolis and the Wayzata School District

(http://www.parentawareratings.org/). As Christine and Terri's programs are "four-star

rated" programs for quality, best in Parent Aware's rating system, children whose family

annual income is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Guideline may receive a

$4,000 scholarship to attend their programs specifically. The Minnesota Child Care

Resource & Referral Network serves as the coordinating home of the program in

partnership with the Minnesota Department of Human Services and the Minnesota

Department of Education. MELF and additional Minnesota-based foundations and

corporate partners sponsor scholarships.

Collaboration with Organizations for Families or Community Members

All participants are facilitators and members of parent-advisory boards of the

programs they lead. Janice and Terri are active within their respective community's

Child Care Associations as either an at-large member (Janice) or provider-member (Terri).

Jessica is part of a pilot program, "READY! for Kindergarten," sponsored by her school district and her community's United Way. READY! for Kindergarten (2008) is an educational program for parents that was developed by the Kennewick, Washington School District and is administered by the National Children's Reading Foundation (http://www.readyforkindergarten.org/). The goal of the READY! for Kindergarten program is to provide information to parents about how children learn at each age level, along with essential "tools" and activities that parents can use with their child to make learning easy and enjoyable. Jessica volunteers as a "parent educator" for the program within the school, corporate, and church settings, as well as provides supervision and support for the READY! Coordinator.

Collaboration with Professional Development School(PDS) Partnership

All participants host/facilitate pre-service and teacher candidates from the partnering university. In their role, the early learning administrator helps the university select appropriate placements for students within their programs, and may serve as an official supervisor for teacher candidates in particular. All participants engage in professional development opportunities via list-serve information exchanges and professional conferences and institutes sponsored by the university. Finally, Jessica, Christine, and Terri serve on university advisory boards. Table 11.1 provides a summary of participant collaborations.

Table 11.1: Summation of Regular Interactions/Collaborations Observed						
	Jessica	Janice	Terri	Christine	Diane	Patrice
Early Childhood Administrators						
ECSE	X		X	X	X	X
ECFE Regional Coordinators		X		X	X	X
NCCCC Directors			X			
K-12/University Administrators						
Superintendent/Dean	X	X	X			X
Principals/Dept Chairs	X	X	X	X	X	X
Directors (Curriculum, Special Education, Community Education)	X	X		X	X	X
Business	X	X	X	X	X	X
Human Resources	X	X	X	X	X	X
Community Education Program Coordinators				X	X	X
External Agency Heads						
Head Start		X		X	X	X
CCR&R		X		X	X	X
County Social Services	X	X	X	X	X	X
Interagency Early Intervention Committee		X		X	X	X
Child Abuse & Prevention County					X	X

Table 11.1: Summation of Regular Interactions/Collaborations Observed						
Collaborative						
County Extension Agent		X				
Local/State/National Policy-Makers						
NCCCC Executive Board			X			
Local Collective Bargaining Unit			X			
MnAFEE Caucus		X		X	X	X
Private organizations, foundations, or other not-for-profit enterprises						
United Way (Allocated Agency Program Rep)		X		X		
Success-by-6	X		X	X		
Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation (Early Childhood Initiative Coalition)	X	X	X	X	X	X
Blue Cross Blue Shield		X				
Academies for Deaf and Blind		X				
Jump Start			X			
Minnesota Early Learning Foundation			X	X		

Table 11.1: Summation of Regular Interactions/Collaborations Observed						
"Parent Aware" Program Participant						
South Central College Child Development Program				X		
Target Foundation					X	X
Organizations for families or community members						
READY! for Kindergarten	X					
Parent Advisory Board	X	X	X	X	X	X
Child Care Association		X	X			
Professional Development School (PDS) Partnership						
Research Collaborative		X				
Hosting/Facilitating Field Experience Students	X	X	X	X	X	X
Cooperating Administrator for Graduate Teaching Fellow	X					
Advisory Boards	X		X	X		
Professional Development (In-service)	X	X	X	X	X	X

Chapter 12

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

This purpose of the study was to understand the nature of professional

development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional

Development School (PDS) learning community. The responses to six sub-questions

helped guide the study:

1. What has been the Historical Context of Professional Development for Early

Childhood Administrators?

The participants reported a self-initiated and self-guided approach to professional

development upon entering the role of coordinator/director/administrator, augmented by

memberships in regional/state/national associations. All six participants noted that their

employing organizations do not guide the direction of their professional development, but

allow financial and time resources for them to "find" professional development that suits

their needs. The investment by these organizations ranges from generous support

(multiple state and national conferences and trainings within an academic year) to

minimal (one state conference within an academic year). These findings are consistent

with the literature on contemporary administrator professional development. As Peterson

(2002) noted,

> Currently, many associations, organizations, and groups provide a variety
> of forms of professional development for school principals in the United
> States. Principals often construct a crazy quilt of these offerings to
> enhance their learning and connect to professional groups. Many of these
> (programs) have carefully designed curricula, quality instruction, and a
> clear mission, but fragmentation for the administrator can occur as they
> pick and choose programs and workshops from such a wide array. (p. 217)

Janice, Christine, and Diane reported the distinct advantage they had upon entering into the role of ECFE Coordinator during the initiation of ECFE and the parent educator license within their state. Each commented how invested the Department of Education was in intentionally and carefully designing professional development for "new coordinators." However, during the past 20 years, as ECFE and the parent educator license became mainstream and priorities of training shifted for the Department of Education, new coordinators, like Patrice, are faced with no support or direction being given from the state. Diane, as she reflects on new early childhood leaders, suggests,

> I think just that if we want the next generation to be there for us who are getting grey, I don't know – we've got to get something in place for them. I think, especially after serving on the MnAFEE Leadership Conference Committee the last few years, we, meaning us who have been in it for a while, did not realize the black hole that there is out there for new program administrators. You know, because those of us who have been in it for 20 years had such a great foundation.

Study participants find increased engagement of K-12 staff development being offered for the early childhood teachers; however, Christine, Diane, and Patrice, as the three district-based, non-K-12 principal licensed coordinators, view their districts as well as their Community Education-based affiliation to keep a hands-off approach to guiding their professional development. All three report the annual MnAFEE Leadership Conference to be their singular source for professional development.

Jessica and Janice, as the two district-based, K-12 principal licensed coordinators, also view their professional development to be unstructured and loosely guided by their districts. However, both of these participants are given access to the state's Metro Principal's Academy, but both acknowledge that content germane to early childhood or early childhood leadership is rarely addressed.

Terri, as the only non-district-based participant in the study, comments that she is "on her own" to plan her professional development. Terri, in contrast to the others, has unique opportunities to attend state and national conferences as supported by the university. Terri reports that her executive board memberships to NCCCC and the Minnesota Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (MnAECTE) provide her with numerous growth opportunities to connect with other professionals and stay in the forefront of research and best practice. Terri indicates that the university itself offers her minimal, but increasing professional development as an administrator. She, however, concedes that they invest "very generously" in her to plan her own professional development, continue to be engaged in state and national board seats, and be poised to maintain NAEYC accreditation long into the future. Terri recognizes that as an early learning administrator, the support she receives for professional development, within a university setting, is uncommon compared with her colleagues in ECFE and K-12.

2. What Situational Factors Prompted the Early Childhood Administrators to Engage in a PDS Professional Learning Community?

All participants are active members in their PDS, and each was approached about the opportunity to join the Learning Community focused on early childhood and school readiness in a slightly different manner. Each of the participants received a "personalized" invitation either from their superintendent, the PDS Learning Community facilitator, or from a member of the learning community. Janice was the only participant who did not engage during the first year of the learning community's existence. She, however, became interested over time as she received meeting agendas and resources from the facilitator, resulting in the "hook" for her. All participants indicated a desire to

"connect" and learn with others who shared common professional interests and

experiences. A linking thread for each of the participants was the need to "fill the void"

of conversations with others focusing on early learning and the leadership of early

learning. This need is consistent with the literature. Larkin (1999) surmises,

> Specialized professional development for directors should address the
> issue of isolation. Without membership in a larger educational system, a
> peer, or the tools and recognition of formal credentials, a director is
> singulary vulnerable to isolation and to the erosion of his or her
> confidence. The participative style of management that directors espouse
> may be not only due to an ethic of care but also a natural response to
> circumstances causing loneliness. There is a bond, and a measure of
> reassurance, in knowing that you are not alone in the important and
> sometimes stressful process of caring for young children (p. 31).

3. What was the Experience of the Early Childhood Administrator's Participation Within

a Professional Development School Learning Community Focusing on Issues of Early

Childhood and School Readiness?

The early childhood administrators report positive experiences from participating

in the PDS learning community. As the findings indicate, study participants report

strength in peer networking, received rich resources to engage their learning at a higher

level, and created tangible change initiatives as a result of their participation. As the PDS

learning community sunset within its third year as part of the overall strategic planning

design, participants expressed sadness that the experience ended. Jessica explains,

> I was really disappointed that we weren't going to be getting together
> anymore. And I know Christine was too. Because it is, like I said, it's
> really hard to connect - I don't have another opportunity to meet with those
> people. I sit with a few now, some of those same people are on Success
> by 6, so I get a chance to see them in that context too but yeah, I have to
> say, I was disappointed not to have that group to belong to.

Patrice, who joined the learning community within its final year, also expressed her

disappointment for the closure of the experience. She remarks, "I was very sad that it

didn't continue. That I had come in on the end of that. And it was - I was just kind of figuring it all out and it was over."

4. What Changes in Administrative/Leadership Practices were noted by Early Childhood Administrators following their PDS Learning Community Experience?

The early childhood administrators reported at least one "tangible, significant" change that impacted their administrative/leadership practices. As each of the six outlined various activities and change efforts, the most common change centered on "alignment" – alignment of professional development with K-12; alignment of curriculum and assessment with K-12; alignment of "readiness" philosophies between preschool, kindergarten, and primary grades; alignment between early childhood and special education; and alignment of early learning standards across the nation. The participants indicate that the discussions, literature, web casts, and guest speakers, bolstered and prompted them to enact such alignment changes.

5. What has been the Worth and Value of the PDS Learning Community Experience?

The PDS learning community experience lessened the sense of isolation for many of these administrators. They were able to look forward to monthly gatherings focused on the literature and research guiding practices in early childhood. The were able to share challenges and opportunities within leadership and administration, and have a unique support system provided that is not common within their employing organizational environment. Janice surmises,

> The level of the university atmosphere and the level of expertise that was
> in the room and the support within early childhood focus . . . which now
> everything I do is in the K-12 realm here and district wide . . . and so I
> don't have as much opportunity to have that level of support.

The value of the PDS learning community was articulated by a number of the participants. The expressed the following:

- Disappointment for the experience ending

- Hope and optimism for the change efforts engaged in such as alignment with K-12

- Encouragement for new professional development delivery systems being created and jointly planned with other early learning administrators

- Engagement in advocacy for early childhood

Terri expressed the value of her experience with the learning community as its impact on her daily practice. She remarks, "I know that the learning community for those years that I was in it has affected the way that I teach students, the way that I lead, the way that I invest in children. It affects my work every single day."

6. How do these Discussions with Early Childhood Administrators Reflect the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development?

The early childhood administrators reflect the NSDC standard for "collaboration" (*staff development that improves the learning of all students provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate*), "resources" (*requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration*), and "family involvement" *(provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders appropriately)* at a very high level. Table 11.1 illustrates the myriad of collaborations/interactions that the participants engage with in order to improve the learning and quality of life for the children and families that their programs serve. These administrators were observed or documented through interviews as engaged with the following:

- Early childhood administrators

- K-12 administrators (superintendent/dean, principal, or director)

- External agency heads (i.e.: Head Start, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R), County Social Services, United Way, Minnesota Department of Education)

- Local, state, or national policy-makers

- Private organizations, foundations, or other not-for-profit enterprises

- Families and community

- Professional Development School partnerships.

The administrators reflect the NSDC standards for "research based" *(prepares educators to apply research to decision making)*, "data-driven" *(uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement)*, and "evaluation" *(uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact)* at a high level. Each is engaged in curriculum and assessment reviews as they incorporate the research-based "Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress" (early learning standards) or the Minnesota K-12 Standards, in the case of Jessica's site. As these participants focus on issues of alignment, research and best practices are shown to be the compass guiding their decisions, and each are focused on data collection as a means of validating alignment changes.

The participants reflect the NSDC standard for "learning community" *(organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district)* at an emerging level. As these leaders work to align various aspects of curriculum or philosophy with K-12, special education, or within a national context of

early learning standards, the participants do so in a more independent manner. As half of the participants' staffs are part-time to very part-time, convening them to work and learn as a "learning community" is fairly limited. Jessica, Janice, and Terri are observed having more formalized "learning communities" established through grade level meetings (Jessica's elementary site), or via weekly team meetings with staff (Janice and Terri) as their professional staff are full-time employed.

The participants showed a high commitment to the following NSDC standards through their "passing along" of the resources and information received at the PDS learning community meetings to their staff and colleagues, either through formal trainings, informal conversations about best practice and research, or by making copies of materials to distribute to staff:

- Leadership *(requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement)*

- Design *(uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal),*

- Learning *(applies knowledge about human learning and change)*

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

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

Recommendations

This study provided data to illuminate the "current state of affairs" for early childhood administrator professional development. The context for the study's participants continues to be congruent with historical trends in that administrator professional development is isolative, patchwork in design, and dissimilar to local organizational vision and strategic planning. However, the study also illuminates the positive impact of Professional Development School learning communities as an effective innovation for administrator continuous growth and renewal. The following are recommendations based on the themes generated from this study.

Recommendation 1: Engage Professional Development Schools More Intentionally with Early Learning Programs and Professionals Affiliated with Them

Professional Development Schools are one means of offering new structures and approaches for deepening and sharing knowledge for teaching and leading. Early childhood administrators are encouraged to take the lead for emphasizing professional development within learning communities whereby growth is stimulated by choosing challenging topics for professional development and making every activity an opportunity to learn.

Based on the reports of these findings, Professional Development School partnerships are encouraged to assist early childhood administrators in the formation and facilitation of learning communities by:

- Providing adequate time for administrators to meet and exchange ideas
- Locating administrators physically close to one another so that they can interact with peers

- Creating partnership-wide communication structures, including regularly established meetings that are devoted to leading, learning, and other professional issues

- Employing methods, such as position paper crafting, that require administrators to reflect and advocate together

Recommendation 2: Offer Early Childhood Administrator and Leadership Training for all New Administrators

Two of the six early childhood administrators hold a formal administrative license. The four who do not hold such a license, are in roles that require them to act in manners congruent with those of licensed administrators; however, none of the four have had formal administrative training from an accredited administrative or leadership program to guide them. Two of these four administrators, who did not have the benefit of the Minnesota Department of Education specialized training for new coordinators of ECFE in the early 1980's, specifically report that the transition from teaching to administration was "baptism by fire." One experienced coordinator within this study shared grave concerns about the lack of training that accompanies the entry into leading an early learning environment. Diane states,

> I mean, we've known about it now for a few years, but that black hole of administrative training has been there longer than we've realized, and we didn't really know that until we started visiting now with the new people coming on who come to the annual conference or call us just desperate for information. "How do I do this? How do we do that?" And, again, it's just the nuts and bolts stuff. "How do we do budgets? How do we do state reports? How do we hire staff? How do we set salary schedules?" I mean, those things aren't even covered at our annual conference. And, it's like how can we expect them to be able to handle the bigger picture things like curriculum and assessment and program quality if you can't even get past the nuts and bolts stuff?

Janice, a licensed K-12 administrator, encourages an exploration of the need and viability for a formalized early childhood administrator training, especially for individuals leading large programs with many staff to supervise. She offers,

> I think I would be supportive of that. I think that to have teacher licensed people doing direct supervision of others for one thing – in tiny districts where they only have three or four staff people - that could probably work. But any system where you get a larger number of staff when you start having to be responsible for a number of people as well as facility management, any of that kind of thing, then I think you really need some background like what I received through the education leadership program.

As early childhood programs continue to grow in size and scope of programs offered, as national trends suggest, sophisticated leadership will be needed and will encompass the following abilities:

- Lead and supervise staff

- Manage financial resources

- Secure external funding

- Communicate and market/promote programs within the greater community

- Utilize data and research to inform decision-making, and advocate at state, local, and national levels

To address the learning and performing gaps that now exist as early childhood professionals make the transition from teacher to administrator, school districts, university leadership preparation programs, and the Department of Education need to jointly conduct an exploration of the viability of offering an Early Childhood Administrator training or certificate program. Many novice K-12 administrators indicate they, too, were "baptized by fire" when they entered the role of administration; however, in the state of Minnesota, the K-12 baptism is supported with a minimum of sixty-four

graduate credit hours in leadership and administration by an accredited preparation program.

Recommendation 3: Engage K-12 Leaders More Intentionally in Early Childhood, Specifically Elementary Principals

Compulsory education in the state of Minnesota is mandated for a child by the time he/she turns 7 years old. This mandate has allowed for Minnesota school districts to have the choice of offering optional kindergarten programs facilitated in a variety of delivery systems:

- All-day, every-day supported by local tax-payers or subsidized through Title I funds, and funding by the state of Minnesota

- Half-day, every day funded by the state of Minnesota

- All-day, every-other-day programs funded by the state of Minnesota

As these programs are facilitated within the K-12 district, under the supervision of a K-12 licensed principal, there is often a severe "disconnect" between the early childhood programs, teachers, and leadership and those of the elementary setting. Kindergartens are often caught in the middle. Elementary principals may or may not have any early childhood, kindergarten, or primary-grade educational or experiential background; therefore, these principals may or may not realize the value or need for bridging the early learning programs offered in the school district to those of the elementary programs. As the participants in this study indicate, "alignment" is becoming critical to serve the needs of young children more effectively; therefore, it becomes imperative for early learning administrators and elementary principals to engage in professional conversations,

administrator professional development, and district-wide strategic planning in a "joint"

approach.

One strategy for "bridging" is the orchestration of a professional learning

community composed of early learning and elementary administrators. The first activity

that this learning community should engage in is a book study featuring *Getting It Right*

From the Start: The Principal's Guide to Early Childhood Education by Marjorie

Kostelnik and Marilyn Grady. The learning community format would foster and

personalize this text for comparison/contrast to the current practices within the district,

thereby, bridging understanding and awareness, and creating mutual advocacy for young

children.

Recommendation 4: Explore the Viability of New or Expanded Licensures for

Administrators

In 2009, a number of states are preparing their elementary settings to include four-

year olds as part of a "universal preschool movement." As site preparations are made,

leadership preparation becomes a critical point of implementing this movement. As this is

not a pervasive argument in Minnesota at this time, it does, however, prompt the notion

of change for how administrators will be licensed to accommodate the entry of four-year-

olds in the public schools. Two routes should be explored: one, establish a Birth-Grade 3

Administrative license, likened to the Birth-Grade 3 teaching license thus allowing

leaders to supervise and evaluate staff of infant care providers through primary-grade

settings; and two, to modify existing K-12 administrator licensure preparation to include

at least a three semester credit hour course that encompasses early childhood history,

child development, early learning environments, early learning curriculum and assessment, and supervision and evaluation of early learning teachers.

Recommendation 5: Encourage and Support Mentor-Mentee Relationships Between Early Childhood Administrators

Jessica, Terri, Diane, and Patrice indicated the involvement or influence of an informal "mentor" or "network" as a valuable component to their professional growth and "survival." The professional literature burgeons with research showing the value mentoring and induction have for teacher quality and retention. The literature is emerging, by contrast, regarding the benefits and value of mentoring and induction for principals. The Education Alliance at Brown University and the National Association for Elementary School Principals (2003) state,

> Mentoring programs connect principals with people who can help them test ideas, reflect on their own practices, model effective practices, navigate tough situations, and affirm their approaches. Much is known about the value of principal leadership as it relates to the success of teachers and students and how effective leaders create school communities where both students and adults are learning. There is an unquestionable connection between the principal's ability to lead learning and the support they themselves receive in their everyday work. Mentoring supplies the necessary support as effective job-embedded professional development (p. 6).

As the roles and responsibilities of the early childhood administrators mirror principals in a number of ways, K-12 districts should seek ways to ensure that new administrators of early learning programs be offered the same opportunity to be mentored as new K-12 principals receive. If a district, however, does not have a formalized mentoring program for administrators, senior leadership should assist new early learning administrators in making contact with neighboring district early learning administrators, or in the case of Minnesota, to ensure they become affiliated with the Minnesota

Association for Family and Early Education, thus providing an opportunity to engage with regional coordinators.

The National Association for the Education of Young Children concurs with the benefits of mentoring to grow new leaders within the field. In *Young Children (YC),* a publication of NAEYC, Dina Clark Rodriguez commented on the merit of mentoring and outreach in an interview with YC interviewer, Denise M. Scott, stating, "One of the most important things we can do to nurture leaders is to create an atmosphere that encourages mentoring and learning. Seasoned professionals need to reach out to those entering the field" (2005, http://www.journal.naeyc.org/btj/200501/scott.asp).

Chapter 13

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

A discussion of six methodological issues identified during the study will be presented as follows: interview protocol, interviews and observations considered a point of pride by participants, sample attrition, unclear confidentiality protocols and observation, what was not said spoke volumes, and importance of member checking and external auditor.

Interview Protocol

Prior to beginning my study, I was concerned that the interview protocol was too rigorous and potentially exhausting for participants to complete during a single session. I learned, however, that the manner in which the questions were sub-divided actually created "mental breaks" for the participants. As I completed one series of questions, I would tell the respondent what topic the next series pertained to, but was always careful to ask if they would like a break or if we should continue. Every participant seemed to "pep up" for the next series, like a change of channel on the television or radio. They were able to refocus, leave the past series of questions behind, and had an eagerness to move on to a new topic.

The sequencing of the questions was also a point of success for it allowed the participants to gradually build upward from providing more factual information to more analytic and evaluative responses. The later questions proved to be ones that caused more visceral and animated reactions as responses were given. As the participants grew comfortable being interviewed, their responses lengthened and they became eager to engage me in their discussion.

As the middle series of the interview protocol was the most demanding of the participants, the final series provided an appropriate closure. The participants were generally 75-90 minutes into the interview before the final series began – I previously anticipated this would be the maximum number of minutes the participants could sustain. I learned, however, that the final questions in the series, all focused on their career path and reflections about their work in general, reinvigorated them. Many of them expressed their joy in walking back in time to retrace their career path, an activity some had not done in a very long time. Others poetically "made their stand" regarding the challenges they face, as well as the joys and opportunities presented to them. One participant declared at the closing of her interview, "Wow! That felt really good. It was nice to talk-out this stuff. I can't believe how much I had to say!" The average interview length was approximately 120 minutes.

Interviews and Observations Considered a Point of Pride by Participants

My research design was completely dependent on the willingness and cooperation of my intended sample pool. As these early childhood administrators have had hundreds of pre-service and teacher candidates, collectively, interview and observe them as part of pre-service education, I was shocked to learn that upon their entry into the role of administration, the requests for interviews and observations dramatically dropped off. In some cases, they had never been asked. One participant expressed that she is always the field experience coordinator between the university and her teachers, but since there is no early childhood administrator license or early childhood leadership degree program, she never has the opportunity to work with pre-service teachers or K-12 principal candidates – she is caught in a "no-woman's land." Therefore, during the observation sessions,

every participant introduced me to everyone they encountered, proudly noting that I was

a student researcher working on my doctorate – studying . . . them! Many of the

participants expressed their genuine pride for being included in this study, and

commented on how they hoped their voice would honor and respect their fellow early

childhood administrator colleagues. A number of the participants expressed their interest

in being included in future research studies that advance the cause of early childhood and

its future leaders.

Sample Attrition

One research design concern I had was the small sample size. As the sample was

purposeful, there were six individuals I targeted for my study. In the event that any of the

six would be unwilling or unable to participate, I prepared a list of alternate participants

that would be in keeping with the sample parameter. Within the first weeks of the study,

I was unable to make contact with Suzette Denn, the early childhood administrator for the

St. Michael Public Schools. After numerous unreturned emails, voice-mails, and postal

correspondences, I learned that Suzette was diagnosed with a serious illness that

prompted her to initiate early retirement from the district and move to northern

Minnesota to be near family. As this news was troubling and personally disheartening, I

also realized that the loss of her voice was a significant setback to the study since Suzette

is considered, informally by all the participants in the study, as a "leader among leaders"

in early childhood. The research design, however, guided my decision as to who should

be invited to replace Suzette in the study. Though the study does not contain Suzette's

actual words, the program she led, along with her capable leadership was highlighted by

one participant directly during an interview.

Unclear Confidentiality Protocols and Observation

During one of my observation sessions with Patrice Hovden, I was invited to accompany her to a county Interagency Early Intervention Committee (IEIC) meeting. As this meeting followed a strict protocol facilitated by a Public Health professional, a confidentiality form was circulated for attending members to sign as part of public record. However, even before the confidentiality form began circulation, the group needed to make a decision regarding the appropriateness of my presence during particular sections of the meeting. As IEIC meetings involve collaborative sharing of information on a strict need-to-know basis, following the protocols of both the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), it was deemed that I would be permitted to observe some portions of the meeting and would need to leave the meeting during others. I was permitted to observe approximately 30 minutes of a 90-minute length meeting. Patrice was extremely apologetic about the situation, and conceded that this group has never had an observer ask to join them and, therefore, the rules were unclear as to the appropriateness of my participation. Patrice was gracious in spending an additional 60 minutes with me to help explain the purpose and role of the IEIC, the relevance of her participation with respect to her role, and the outcomes that have been seen as a result of this county collaborative. To observe the interaction among the various stakeholders of the IEIC would have enriched my understanding of the role and importance early childhood administrators play in representing the school district within a larger community/county context, and how they effectively advocate for individual children and families.

What Was Not Said Spoke Volumes

As participants would candidly share their delights and disgusts with various aspects of the early childhood field, there was always a recanting or minimalizing of the disgust after a perceived negative comment was made. The participants would quiet their negative comment by offering hope and optimism for the individuals or environmental contexts that may be standing in their way of progress. Their protective nature toward those they teach and lead extends to those who supervise them. I could see that being "too honest" was not a place of comfort for a number of my participants. During the interviews I could sense that there was much more that the participants wished to share on particular topics, but constrained themselves to answer carefully and accurately, and at times chose not to elaborate where the content could be construed as negative, mean-spirited, or with a complaining disposition.

Importance of Member-Checking and External Auditor

Within the research design, I believe two strategies were critically important to the verification and trustworthiness of my study: member-checking and use of an external auditor. Each participant was pleased to learn that her interview would be professionally transcribed resulting in a spiral bound interview booklet that she would be free to edit. This act alone seemed to reassure them that their words would be portrayed accurately, that they would know what to anticipate in seeing the study in final form, and gave them a sense of ownership in the research process.

To ensure greater reliability of the study, an external auditor examined both the process and product of the inquiry, and evaluated the trustworthiness of the study (Appendix J). As the research design called for the use of an external auditor, it

prompted me to create an organizational structure of the materials and data early in the study.   I have learned that careful organization of qualitative data, as it emerges in a study, is essential to the "making sense of it" process. Following the pilot interview, I was concerned about the immense amount of data generated from one single interview. I recognized that six interviews and accompanying observations would result in an overwhelming amount of unmanageable data if not immediately structured into the protocol outlined in the data analysis procedures.   As I followed the analysis protocol, I was cognizant of creating a well-organized and transparent audit trail from start to finish. These steps resulted in the external auditor verifying the process and product of the study "trustworthy and grounded in the data."

Chapter 14

IMPLICATIONS

The contribution resulting from this study, to the existing body of knowledge on

early childhood administrator professional development, is the exploration of the unique

challenges and opportunities that faced six administrators of early learning environments

within a Professional Development School partnership. A discussion of five additional

implications will be presented as follows: quality leadership = quality programs, the

connection to special education, career choice, partnerships to improve practice, and

challenging factor for early childhood administrators.

Quality Leadership = Quality Programs

"A substantial and compelling body of research demonstrates that high-quality

early education programs have positive long-term effects on children's school

performance, educational attainment, and adult earnings" (Mead, 2008,

http://www.washingtontimes.com/news/2008/dec/28/solutions-mead-obama-10-billion-

pledge/). As the participants in this study emphasize, "quality leadership" is an essential

component to providing high quality early education programs. The findings point to the

urgent need for legislators, K-12 school districts, and departments of education to

facilitate the careful structuring of professional development for early childhood

administrators similar to the opportunities of K-12 administrators. The call for

investment in K-12 administrator professional development, as a means to raising the

quality of leadership, has been so strong that in 2007 the Investment in Quality School

Leadership Act (H.R. 1156) was introduced. This bill was subsequently referred to the

Subcommittee on Higher Education, Lifelong Learning, and Competitiveness. The bill

never became law during the 110th session of Congress; however, the Congressional

findings continue to be compelling and warrant further E-12 discussion and action,

> The ability of a school or district to improve teaching and raise student achievement is greatly dependent on the quality of leadership. Quality leadership can only be achieved if potential leaders are provided with the necessary support, professional development, and resources"
> (http://www.govtrack.us/congress/bill.xpd?bill=h110-1156).

The Connection to Special Education

The discussions with participants illuminate the vital partnership between the

early childhood communities and special education communities. In the state of

Minnesota, Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE), Early Childhood Family

Education (ECFE), School-Readiness, and Preschool environments often intersect, as was

also observed in the study. A brief overview of the history and present-day context of

ECSE is provided as follows to give the reader additional understanding of these

community intersections:

> In 1986, P.L. 99-457 leveled a mandate to the states to provide service to children with disabilities from age three to five and provided incentive monies to support services to infants and toddlers and their families. Federal funds are funneled through the Minnesota Department of Education based on the school districts' federal child count of the previous year. The development of Individual Family Service Plans (IFSP) for each child enrolled in Early Childhood Special Education programs was also provided for in the law.

> Services for children with disabilities were mandated for children birth through age 21 years in May 1987 in Minnesota. The law was implemented in the 1988-89 school year. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA 97) Amendments of 1997 were signed into law on June 4, 1997. This Act strengthens academic expectations and accountability for children with disabilities and bridges the gap that has too often existed between what children with disabilities learn and what is required in regular curriculum. Section 301 and 303 in the Act address infant, toddler and preschoolers. Within these sections funding to maintain and implement a state wide interagency system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities and their

families are outlined, as is the enhancement of the State's capacity to identify, evaluate, provide, expand and improve quality early intervention services.

With these components of Federal and State legislation established, Early Childhood Special Education programs have evolved to include the following array of services for families of children with disabilities and children from ages birth to five years:
- Referral and Screening
- Comprehensive Evaluation
- IFSP development and Interagency Service Coordination
- Home-based Intervention
- School-based Intervention
- Community-based Intervention
- Interagency Planning
  (http://ecse.mpls.k12.mn.us/ECSE_Introduction.html)

The implication for prospective and current early childhood administrators is for:

- Awareness and understanding of the unique special needs of young children

- Awareness and understanding of the scope and responsibilities of various ECSE service providers and ECSE coordinators/directors

- Development or maintenance of collaborative structures such as IEICs

- Awareness of policy and funding issues associated with early childhood special education

- Awareness of the early childhood administrator's role within the Individual Education Plan (IEP) process, especially within transition points as required by law

Partnerships to Improve Practice

Minnesota Department of Education

The participants cite partnerships that effectively enhanced their growth as early childhood administrators. Three of the six participants find the former Minnesota Department of Education's ECFE "New Coordinator" training to have been the most

helpful and customized professional development during their induction as a new early childhood administrator. As participant Diane Sumbee comments, "I don't know how I would have survived in the role if it wasn't for that training. We learned everything – all the 'nuts and bolts' of the job." Patrice Hovden, a new early childhood administrator, states that MDE no longer provides training and professional development for new ECFE administrators, but rather refers them to a training manual that is available on the MDE Early Learning Division website. Patrice finds the manual to be vast, impersonal, and impractical to use. The implication of these findings is to encourage the Minnesota Department of Education to revitalize their ECFE "New Coordinator" training program to include face-to-face gatherings of regional coordinators on a quarterly basis, and supplement with webinars or pod casts on a monthly basis to engage the next generation of early childhood administrators.

Universities and Colleges

The participants in this study are located within a 90-minute radius of a higher education partner, and members of a Professional Development School partnership. All participants cite the influence, access, network, and resources that a higher education partner provided to help inform and improve their practice. The participants also comment on the role of "convener" that the university played resulting in sharing of ideas, research, resources, and advocacy. The implication of these findings is to encourage early childhood administrators, K-12 school district leadership, and university faculty and administration to expand partnerships to foster professional development, and encourage the creation of learning communities that focus on the unique issues of early childhood leadership and administration. The implication of these findings for

stakeholders who are not conveniently located near a university or college is to explore "virtual partnerships" where webinars, pod casts, wikis, and other digitally enhanced mediums are offered to connect long-distance partners.

Career Choice

The interviews reveal that none of the study participants intentionally chose early childhood as their initial career. One of the six participants was encouraged to earn her Minnesota ECFE license as a "back-up career" option to accompany her teacher degree from North Dakota, while the other five earned first degrees in elementary or physical education, or family consumer science. Upon review of the participants' formal education, one is struck by the fact that none hold formal degrees in early childhood. However, this is not an uncommon phenomena as early childhood administrators often begin their careers in K-12 or Community Education, as the study participants did, and secure the administrative role two or three steps past their initial career role. In the case of four of the study participants, a spousal career change was the impetus for moving into the early childhood administrator role – timing and job availability were key factors. None of the participants "aspired" to be an administrator, but rather grew into one.

The implication for state departments, colleges of education, and policy makers is to legitimatize the role of early childhood administrator in similar fashion as K-12 principal. Numerous states are reporting administrator shortages across all levels – they do not have the luxury to wait for someone to "grow into" an administrator, but rather one who aspires to be one now and is willing to continue their career education to realize their aspiration. As the role of early childhood administrator becomes instituted in

licensure, advanced degree, and title, we will see a shift of graduates who "aspire" to pursue this career, ultimately advancing the early childhood field as a whole.

Challenging Factor for Early Childhood Administrators

The discussions with the participants indicate that one of the most challenging factors they face as early childhood administrators is the high degree of staff turnover. The participants cite the following reasons for the attrition:

- Part-time, hourly employment (2-20 hours per week is typical)

- No fringe benefits

- Unfriendly work hours impacting their own families (evening work)

- Lack of professional development

- No career aspiration for early childhood, often seeking full-time employment in K-12

As a number of study participants indicate, there is a growing need to increase program choices to accommodate the needs and interests of families, a shrinking revenue base from limited state appropriations, and a rising use of sliding-fee scales or free child participation. This combination produces significant financial challenges with limited options to address staff attrition. The implication for legislators, state departments, and K-12 district leadership is to explore options to cluster the available talent/licensure pool into an E-12 system to provide equitable and appropriate staffing models. Leadership within these sectors should consider conducting a cost analysis study regarding the implementation of a flexible, full-time staffing model of Birth-Grade 3 licensed staff to serve both early childhood and K-3 programs.

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Appendices

APPENDIX A

Organization Permission

Nebraska
UNIVERSITY OF
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

P-12 School District Superintendent's Name/University Official
Organization Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
City, State, Zip code

June 13, 2008

Subject: Permission to conduct study.

Dear <Insert Name of P-12 School District Superintendent's Name/University Official>

As a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I am conducting a study to understand the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership. I have purposely selected six early childhood administrators, five from partnering school districts and one from The Children's House at Minnesota State Mankato, to understand their historical professional development as administrators of early education programs, experiences of participation in a Professional Development School (PDS) learning community focused on Early Childhood/School Readiness, and their personal assessments of what early childhood administrators need for continuous improvement and renewal. This information will be of value to P-12 school central administrators, practicing early childhood administrators, university faculty within Early Childhood Education and Leadership preparation programs, and to those working within PDS contexts.

I am requesting your permission to conduct participant observation fieldwork and an interview with <insert name of participant>. I would like to send a formal letter of invitation to <insert name of participant> and request her to reply directly to me as to her willingness to participate in the study.

A summary of the results will be mailed to you upon completion of the study. You may contact my supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, at (402) 472-0974 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln should you have any concerns about my study. **It would be most appreciative if you will mail a letter confirming permission to proceed to me directly at the following address: Ginger L. Zierdt, University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Seleck Quadrangle, 600 North 15th Street, Lincoln, NE 68508-1296.**

Thank you in advance for your cooperation in this matter.

Very sincerely,

Ginger L. Zierdt, Ed.S.

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (42) 472-3726 / FAX (42) 472-4300

APPENDIX B

Participant Invitation

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

Name of Participant
Organization Name
Address Line 1
Address Line 2
Address Line 3
City, State, Zip code

August 1, 2008

Dear <Insert Name of Participant>

As a doctoral student at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, I am conducting a study for my dissertation to understand the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School (PDS) partnership. This is the sole purpose of the study. The results should be of interest and value to P-12 school administrators, practicing early childhood administrators, university faculty within Early Childhood Education and Leadership preparation programs, and to those working within PDS contexts.

Your ideas are important for those who plan and lead professional development for early childhood professional development. First, I invite you to spend between 90 minutes to answer interview questions that will be captured through audiotaping. I will keep your identify and the identify of your school district confidential. I intend to use a pseudonym to conceal your identity. Second, in the fall, I would like to spend three separate school days observing you within your work context as an early childhood administrator at times convenient for you. You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska.

I will provide you with a copy of the transcript of the interview before I begin to analyze the data. This will give you an opportunity to clarify the meaning you provided and verify its authenticity. I will contact you later to confirm the accuracy of the information you provided. On completion of the study, I will share a summary of the findings with you.

You may contact my supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, at (402) 472-0974 at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln for further clarification or should you have any concerns about my study. If you agree to participate in this study, please sign/date where indicated below, and return the letter in the self-addressed, stamped envelope included in this mailing. Upon receiving your signed letter, I will contact you to schedule an interview along with the observations at a time convenient for you.

I thank you in advance for agreeing to participate in this study.

Very sincerely,

Ginger L. Zierdt, Ed.S.

I agree to participate in this study under the above conditions:

_____   _____
Name
                                                                                  Date

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (42) 472-3726 / FAX (42) 472-4300

APPENDIX C

Informed Consent

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

COLLEGE OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN SCIENCES
Department of Educational Administration

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

IRB#
8965

Title of Project:
Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators within a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community

Purpose of the Research:
The purpose of this case study is to understand the nature of professional development for Early Childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development school partnership. You must be 19 years of age or older to participate. You are invited to participate in this study because you have been a member of the Professional Development School Early Childhood Learning Community.

Procedures:
Participation in this study will require 90 minutes of your time for the interview. You will be asked to participate in an interview with the study's principal investigator, Ginger L. Zierdt, who will audiotape with your permission. You may ask that the tape be turned off at any time during the interview. The tape will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and will be sent to you for review. At that time, you may clarify your responses or give the researcher other information. You may select a place with the researcher for the interview.

Participation in this study will require 3 school days of your time for participant observation fieldwork by the researcher at a time convenient to you.

Risks and/or Discomforts:
There are no known risks or discomforts associated with this research.

Benefits:
Researchers have found that when people are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, they often develop new insights related to those experiences that are personally or professionally meaningful. Thus, you may gain some personal benefit from participating in this study.

Confidentiality:
Any information obtained during this study which could identify you will be kept strictly confidential. The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the investigator's home. The data will only be seen by the investigator during the study. The information obtained in this study will be published in scientific journals or presented at scientific meetings but the data will be reported as aggregated data. The audiotapes will be erased after transcription verification is deemed accurate.

Compensation:
None

Opportunity to Ask Questions:
You may ask any questions concerning this research and have those questions answered before agreeing to participate in or during the study. You may call the investigator at any time, office phone (507) 389-5444, or after hours (507) 327-9844. You may also call the investigator's advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, office phone (402) 472-0974. If you have questions concerning your rights as a research subject that have not been answered by the investigator or to report any concerns about the study, you many contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board, telephone (402) 472-6965.

141 Teachers College Hall / P.O. Box 880360 / Lincoln, NE 68588-0360 / (42) 472-3726 / FAX (42) 472-4300

Freedom to Withdraw:
You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigators, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, or your school. Your decision will not result in any loss or benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Consent, Right to Receive a Copy:
You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to participate having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

_____ Check if you agree to be audiotaped during the interview.

_____ Check if you agree to be observed.

Signature of Participant:

_____   _____
       Signature of Research Participant   *Date*

Name and Phone number of investigator(s):

    Ginger L. Zierdt, Ed.S., Principal Investigator   *Office: (507) 389-5444*
    Marilyn Grady, Ph.D., Secondary Investigator   *Office (402) 472-0974*

_____

APPENDIX D

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol

Interview Protocol: Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators within a Professional
Development School (PDS) Learning Community

Time of Interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer: Ginger L. Zierdt
Interviewee Code Number:

I N T R O D U C T O R Y	Proposed Research Questions Used for Pilot
	Describe your job as an early childhood administrator. *Prompt:* What do others see you *doing* during the course of the day? What work do you do that others *do not* see?
	Please share or draw-and-describe how you/your role fits in your district's/university's organizational structure. *Prompt:* Who is your supervisor? Who do you supervise?

1	**Research Question:** **What has been the historical context of professional development for Professional Development School (PDS) partner Early Childhood administrators?**
	When you served as an early childhood *teacher*, describe the vehicles of professional support you received? *Prompt:* Describe the activities you engaged in to continuously grow as a teacher (professional development)?
	Describe who or what entity was responsible for facilitating/leading those activities within your organization?
	When you moved from the teacher-role to the administrator-role, describe the activities you engaged in to grow professionally as an early childhood administrator?
	Describe who or what entity is responsible for facilitating/leading these activities within your organization?
	Describe your professional development experiences as an administrator compared to those when you were in the teaching role.
	When you were a *novice* early childhood administrator, describe the topical areas you struggled with the most?
	Describe the most worthwhile professional development *activities* that you've experienced in your role as an early childhood administrator?
	As an experienced administrator, describe the topics you feel are the most relevant and important for early childhood administrators within their professional development?
	Describe the topics that you find highly important but rarely offered for early childhood administrator professional development?

2	**Research Question:** **What situational factors prompted the PDS Early Childhood administrators to engage in a PDS Professional Learning Community?**
	As an administrator working within a Professional Development School partnership, describe the nature of your involvement with the partnering university PRIOR to becoming a member of the PDS Early Childhood/School Readiness (ECSR) Learning Community?
	Describe how you become aware of the PDS ECSR Learning Community?
	As you were considering joining this PDS ECSR Learning Community, describe factors that prompted you to attend the first gathering?
	As you made the choice to commit to the PDS ECSR Learning Community, describe your involvement in other concurrent professional development pursuits?
	Describe the support given to you from your organization to participate in this PDS ECSR Learning Community?
	Describe your hopes and expected outcomes for joining the PDS ECSR Learning Community?

Interview Protocol

3	**Research Question:** **What was the experience of the Early Childhood administrator's participation within a Professional Development School Learning Community focusing on issues of Early Childhood and School Readiness?**
	Describe what happened at the PDS ECSR Learning Community meetings? *Prompt:* Describe the structure or protocol followed? Describe opportunities for discussion (free-flowing or guided)?
	Describe expectations of your and other members for participating in these meetings?
	Describe your experience regarding working with early childhood administrators and leaders from other districts or community-based organizations.
	Describe what you did with the materials gathered from the PDS ECSR Learning Community experience?
	Describe the most memorable discussion, reading, web-cast, guest speaker that vividly stands out in your memory from the PDS ECSR Learning Community meetings.
	Describe how your participation in the PDS ECSR Learning Community afforded you other opportunities to engage in the PDS partnership.

T R A N S I T I O N	Describe the nature of your superintendent's/dean's role in early childhood. *Prompt:* Describe the level of interaction you have with this individual.
	Describe the support that you receive from your district/college for your professional development.
	Describe the nature of interaction you have with other district administrators (i.e.: principals, directors, and coordinators) in joint professional development experiences?
	Describe the nature of professional development within your organization for administrators. *Prompt:* Describe the framework that the professional development operates from (i.e.: PLCs, workshops/in-services).

4	**Research Question:** **What changes in administrative/leadership practices were noted by the PDS Early Childhood administrators following their PDS Learning Community experience?**
	Describe the opportunities there were for you to share your learnings from the PDS ECSR Learning Community with other fellow administrators and those you are responsible for supervising?
	How would you describe the PDS ECSR Learning Community experience to another early childhood administrator?
	Describe the opportunities you had to discuss your PDS ECSR Learning Community experience with your supervisor(s).
	As a participant in the PDS ECSR Learning Community, describe changes you noticed in your administrative practices that were informed or influenced by the readings, the dialogue with other administrators, or other PDS ECSR Learning Community activities?
	With the sunsetting of the PDS ECSR Learning Communities, describe aspects you miss the most?
	Describe the professional development you have engaged in within the last year?

Interview Protocol

5	Research Question: **To what extent do PDS Early Childhood administrators find the PDS Learning Community experience to be of worth and value to their growth as an administrators?**
	Describe the topics of greatest value to your growth as an administrator/leader in early childhood during your PDS ECSR Learning Community experience?
	Describe topics or focal area of discussions you found detracting from your learning during the PDS ECSR Learning Community experience?
	Describe the features of the PDS ECSR Learning Community you found most comfortable for your learning style?
	From your perspective, describe how a Professional Development School partnership can do more to enhance the continuous growth and renewal of early childhood administrators?
	If given the opportunity to join another Professional Development School Learning Community, would you? Describe why or why not.
	Describe how you have been transformed as an early childhood administrator through your PDS ECSR Learning Community experience.
	Describe how the PDS ECSR Learning Community experience is still evident within your practice.

C L O S I N G	Describe your career path?
	Describe your educational preparation?
	Describe what has been frustrating/challenging for you in your role as an Early Childhood administrator.
	Describe what has been the most professionally gratifying for you in your role as an Early Childhood administrator.

(Thank the individual for participating in this interview. Assure him or her of confidentiality of responses.)

APPENDIX E

Observation Protocol

Participant Observation Protocol

Participation Observation Protocol: Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators within a
Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community

Time of Observation:
Date:
Place:
Participant Observed:
Observer: Ginger L. Zierdt
Position of Participant Observed:

Research Questions Addressed by Observation Protocol:
4. What changes in administrative/leadership practices were noted by early childhood administrators
following their PDS Learning Community experience?
5. To what extent do early childhood administrators find the PDS Learning Community experience to
be of worth and value to their growth as an administrator?
6. How do these discussions with early childhood administrators reflect the National Staff Development
Council Standards for Staff Development?

Length of Activity:		
Contextual dimensions that define the situation observed [Spradley (1980), Hatch, (2002)] – "map of the social setting": • What are the places where social activity occurs? • Who are the people involved in the social action? • What individual activities are people engaged in? • What are the objects people use? • What is the sequence of activity that takes place over time? • What things are people trying to accomplish? • What emotions are expressed?		
Areas to attend to:	Descriptive Notes:	Reflective Notes:
Interaction / collaboration with fellow early childhood administrators (NSDC Standard 9):		
Interaction / collaboration with K-12 administrators (principals and/or superintendent) (NSDC Standard 9):		
Interaction / collaboration with external agency heads (i.e.: Head Start, CCRR, County Social Services, United Way, Minnesota Department of Education – Early Learning Services) (NSDC Standard 9):		
Interaction with local, state, or national policy-makers (NSDC Standard 9):		

Participant Observation Protocol

Interaction / collaboration with private organizations, foundations, or other not-for-profit enterprises (NSDC Standard 9):		
Interaction / collaboration with families or community members (NSCD Standard 12)		
Engagement with the Professional Development School partnership (NSDC Standard 9):		
Evidence of the utilization of research within practice (NSDC Standard 6):		
Evidence of a "learning community" model led by administrator (NSCD Standard 1):		
Administrator as "leader of professional development for staff": planning, organizing, securing of necessary resources, or implementing activities for those they supervise (NSDC Standard 2, 3, 4, 5)		
Nature of professional development led by administrator: curricular, special needs of children, parent-teacher relations, child outcomes on achievement indicators, inclusiveness and culturally competent practices, (NSCD Standard 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12)		
Advocacy (Decker, 2001, definition:) (a) Having a long-term plan, (b) reaching beyond the early childhood care and education community, (c) finding opportunities to move the issue forward, (d) making use of supportive data, (e) developing new advocacy approaches, (f) deciding on priorities of many worthy issues, (g) "hanging tough" but knowing when to compromise, and (h) supporting new leaders.		
Professional development FOR the administrator (type and focus, initiated by)		

APPENDIX F

Institutional Review Board Approval

Nebraska Lincoln

University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (IRB) 312 N. 14th St., 209 Alex West Lincoln, NE 68588-0408(402) 472-6965 Fax (402) 472-6048 irb@unl.edu	FOR OFFICE USE ONLY IRB #: 2008068965 EXIRB Decision Date: 06/24/2008 Date Received: 06/22/2008 Code #: IRB Project ID: 8965 Form ID: 8965 Status: Approved by the IRB

IRB New Protocol Submission

Project Title: Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators within a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community

Investigator Information:

Principal Investigator:	Ginger Zierdt	Secondary Investigator:	Marilyn Grady
Department:	Department of Educational Administration	Department:	Department of Educational Administration
Contact Phone:	507-327-9844	Contact Phone:	(402)472-0974
Contact Address:	109 Viking Court, Mankato, MN 56001	Contact Address:	128 TEAC UNL 68588-0360
Email Address:	ginger.zierdt@mnsu.edu	Email Address:	mgrady@unlserve.unl.edu

* Student theses or dissertations must be submitted with a faculty member listed as Secondary Investigator or Project Supervisor

Principal Investigator Is: Graduate Student
Type of Project: Research

Does the research involve an outside institution/agency other than UNL? Yes

If yes, please list the institutions/agencies:
Faribault Public Schools, Faribault, Minnesota
LeSueur-Henderson Public Schools, LeSueur, Minnesota
Mankato Area Public School, Mankato, Minnesota
Montgomery-Lonsdale Public Schools, Montgomery, Minnesota
St. Peter Public Schools, St. Peter, Minnesota
Minnesota State University, Mankato, Minnesota
(Institutional approval letters - see attachment.)

Where will participation take place? (e.g., UNL, at home, in a community building, etc)

NUgrant

Faribault Public Schools, Faribault, Minnesota
LeSueur-Henderson Public Schools, LeSueur, Minnesota
Mankato Area Public School, Mankato, Minnesota
Montgomery-Lonsdale Public Schools, Montgomery, Minnesota
St. Peter Public Schools, St. Peter, Minnesota
The Children's House, Minnesota State University, Mankato

* Note: Research can only begin at each institution after the IRB receives the institutional approval letter

Project Information:
Present/Proposed Funding Source: Personally funded as an expense of my graduate school education.
Project Start Date: 07/14/2008
Project End Date: 05/01/2009

| 1. Does the research involve prisoners? |
No

| 2. Will the research only be conducted in schools or educational settings? |
Yes

Does the research study involve only normal education practices (such as research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or research on effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods.)?

Yes

| 3. Does the research involve only the use of educational tests, survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior? (The use of pre-existing data does not fall into this category.) |
Yes

Does the research involve children (under 19 years of age)?

No

Does the research only involve the observation of public behavior where the investigator does not intervene or interact in the activities being observed?

N/A (or no answer)

Is the information recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects?

No

Could any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to their financial standing, employability, or

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reputation?

No

Are the subjects elected or appointed public officials (e.g. senior officials, such as mayor or school superintendent, rather than a police officer or teacher)

No

Does any Federal statute require without exception that the confidentiality of personally identifiable information will be maintained throughout the research and thereafter?

N/A (or no answer)

4. Does the research involve only the collection or study of existing data, documents, records, pathological specimens, or diagnostic specimens?

No

Are these sources publicly available?

N/A (or no answer)

Will the information be recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the subjects cannot be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects?

N/A (or no answer)

5. Does the research involve only studying, evaluating or examining public benefit or service programs?

No

Is the research or demonstration project conducted or approved by the Department or Agency Head?

N/A (or no answer)

Does the research or demonstration project involve only the study, evaluation, or examination of:

Public benefit or service programs:

N/A (or no answer)

Procedures for obtaining benefits or services under public benefit or service programs:

N/A (or no answer)

Possible changes in or alternatives to public benefit or service programs or to procedures for obtaining benefits or services under public benefit or service programs:

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N/A (or no answer)

Possible changes in methods or levels of payment for benefits or services under those public benefit or service programs:

N/A (or no answer)

Does the research or demonstration project involve only the study, evaluation, or examination of the previous 4 categories?

N/A (or no answer)

6. Does the research involve only a taste and food quality evaluation or food consumer acceptance study?

No

Are wholesome foods without additives consumed?

N/A (or no answer)

Is food consumed that contains a food ingredient, agricultural chemical, or environmental containment at or below the level found to be safe by the Food and Drug Administration or approved by the Environmental Protection Agency or the Food Safety and Inspection Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture?

N/A (or no answer)

7. Does the research present more than minimal risk to human subjects?

No

For each category, please mark if it is a part of the project:

1) Clinical studies of drugs and/or medical devices?

No

2) Collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture?

No

3) Prospective collection of biological specimens for research purposes by noninvasive means?

No

4) Collection of data through noninvasive procedures routinely employed in clinical practice, excluding procedures involving x-rays or microwaves?

No

5) Research involving materials (data, documents, records, or specimens) that have been collected, or will be collected solely for non-research purposes (such as medical treatment or diagnosis)?

No

6) Collection of data from voice, video, digital, or image recordings made for research purposes?

Yes

7) Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior (including but not limited to, research on perception, cognition, motivation, identity, language, communication, cultural beliefs or practices, and social behavior)?

No

8) Research employing survey, interview, oral history, focus group, program evaluation, human factors evaluation, or quality assurance methodologies?

Yes

Does the research involve only procedures included in the previous 8 categories?

Yes

Could identification of subjects put them at risk of criminal or civil liability, or be socially or economically damaging?

No

| 8. Does the research involve clinical studies of drugs and medical devices? |
No

Is FDA required?

N/A (or no answer)

| 9. Does the research involve collection of blood samples by finger stick, heel stick, ear stick, or venipuncture? |
No

from healthy, nonpregnant adults who weight at least 110 pounds? (amounts drawn may not exceed 550 ml in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week)

N/A (or no answer)

from other adults and children considering the age, weight, and health of the subjects, the collection procedure, the amount of blood to be collected, and the frequency with which it will be collected. For these subjects, the amount drawn may not exceed the lesser of 50 ml or 3 ml per kg in an 8 week period and collection may not occur more frequently than 2 times per week.

N/A (or no answer)

Description of Subjects:
Total number of participants (include 'controls'): 6

Will participants of both sexes/genders be recruited? No
    If "No" was selected, please include justification/rationale.
    The early childhood administrators within the Professional Development School partnership are all female.

Will participation be limited to certain racial or ethnic groups? No
What are the participants' characteristics?
Participants are all Professional Development School (PDS) early childhood administrators (coordinators/directors) from the following organizations: Public Minnesota school districts of Faribault, St. Peter, Mankato, Montgomery-Lonsdale, and LeSueur-Henderson; The Children's House at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

Type of Participant: (check all appropriate blanks for participant population)

X	Adults, Non Students		Pregnant Women		Persons with Psychological Impairment
	UNL Students		Fetuses		Persons with Neurological Impairment
	Minors (under age 19)		Persons with Limited Civil Freedom		Persons with Mental Retardation
	Adults with Legal Representatives		Persons with HIV/AIDS		

Other (Explain):

Unique Research Methodology or Data Sources
Will your project involve audio taping? Yes

How long will tapes be kept? Where will they be stored? Who will have access to the tapes? If transcriptions are required, how will transcriptions be handled? Who is doing the transcriptions? Please attach a copy of the confidentiality agreement that transcriptionists will sign.

Prior to the interview, the narrator will be asked to sign the informed consent letter. I will keep the identity and the identity of the school district/university division confidential. I intend to use a

pseudonym to conceal the narrators' identity. I will label the tape(s) with the name of the narrator, the date, and number each tape (1 of 1, 1 of 2, etc.). I will make a copy of each tape and label that as well, making certain to note which is the master tape and which is the copy.

I will store the tapes in a locked cabinet within a dry, climate-controlled environment within my home [109 Viking Court, Mankato, MN]. I will keep the tapes in their plastic containers to reduce exposure to dust and abrasion. I will remove the small tabs on the top edge of the tapes to prevent recording over the interview. The audio tapes will be destroyed as soon as transcription is complete.

Transcriptions of the taped interviews will be required. Before transcription work begins, the principal investigator will discuss with the transcriber which software package will be used. If possible, both the original transcript and the final version should be in the identical program. If that is not possible, then the most compatible program will be used. In adhering to the best traditions in transcription, the Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office recommends that "all original transcripts should be audited by the interviewer (principal investigator) and an external auditor to ensure that the transcript accurately reflects the narrator's words and meaning. Generally, this series of interviews done in conjunction with this project should be edited by the principal investigator to ensure a consistent editorial style. Most importantly, each interview should be tracked through the process, from the original interview to the transfer to the audio-visual collections." The tape will be transcribed by a professional transcriptionist and will be sent to the interviewee for review.   At that time, the interviewee may clarify their respective responses or give the researcher other information in keeping with the procedure of member-checking. (Confidentiality Form-Transcriptionist and Confidentiality Form-External Auditor - see attachment.)

Reference:
Minnesota Historical Society Oral History Office (n.d.) Oral History Project Guidelines.   Retrieved June 111, 2008, from http://www.mnhs.org/collections/oralhistory/ohguidelines.pdf

Is this project web-based research? No

Is this study utilizing Protected Health Information (PHI; e.g., information obtained from a hospital, clinic, or treatment facility)? No

Does this project involve genetic data/sampling/analysis, illegal drug use, or criminal activity that places the participant at risk for legal action? No

Does this project involve photography? No

Does this project involve videotaping? No

Does this project involve archival or secondary data analysis? No

Does this project involve biological samples? No

Project Personnel List:

Please list the names of all personnel working on this project, starting with the principal investigator and the secondary investigator/project advisor. Research assistants, students, data entry staff and other research project staff should also be included. For a complete explanation of training and project staff please go to http://www.unl.edu/research/orr/index.shtml.

Name	Role	UNL Status	Is Involved In Design/Supervision	Is Involved In Data Collection
Ginger Zierdt	PI	Graduate Student	Yes	Yes
Marilyn Grady	Secondary Investigator	Faculty	Yes	No

Project Description

1. Describe the research purpose of the project.

What is the purpose of the study? (Please provide a brief 1-2 paragraph explanation in lay terms, to include a brief literature justification.)

The purpose of this case study is to understand the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School partnership.

Research on leadership and professional development in the early childhood sector is limited. As increasingly the traditional roles of early childhood providers, which previously focused on direct care and education, has expanded to include management and leadership responsibilities. Increased accountability and financial constraints in this sector, as well as greater competition and frequent changes in government policy that need to be negotiated, all require quite sophisticated leadership and management skills along with quality professional development (Muijs, et al, 2004). One unique model of professional development for these early childhood administrators/leaders is the Professional Learning Community.

The Professional Learning Community model flows from the assumption that the core mission of formal education is not simply to ensure that students are taught but to ensure that they learn (DuFour, p.32). The quality of teaching, learning, and relationships depends on the quality of leadership (Sparks, p. 10). "Profound change in leaders results from and is revealed through deeper understanding of complex issues, beliefs that are aligned with quality teaching and high levels of learning for all students, and 'next action thinking' that moves learning into action and sustains the momentum of change over time" (Sparks, p. 10). The major purpose of the PLC is the learning in which the adults in the school (organization) engage.   When the professionals learn new practices, leading-edge instructional strategies, explore new leadership and management techniques, and find collective advocacy outlets, they become more effective with the staff they lead - and, then, students learn more successfully. Thus an important aspect of the PLC is not only how well the PLC is functioning as an infrastructure or way of working, but how well the administrator puts into practice what he/she decided to learn (Hord and Sommers, p. 117).

References:

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., & DuFour, R. (2005). On Common Ground – The Power of Professional Learning Communities. Bloomington, IN: National Education Service.

Hord, S. and Sommers W. (2008). Leading Professional Learning Communities: Voices from Research and Practice. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.

Muijs, D., Aubrey, C., Harris, A., and Briggs, M. (2004) How Do They Manage?   A Review of the Research on Leadership in Early Childhood. Journal of Early Childhood Research. 2 (2). pp. 157-169.

Sparks, D. (2005, Spring) The Final 2%. Journal of Staff Development, 26 (2), pp. 8-15.

2. Description of the Methods and Procedures.

Describe the data collection procedures and what participants will have to do.
Methodology:
Case Study utilizing interview and participant observation fieldwork

Purpose Statement:
The purpose of this case study is to understand professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School partnership.

Research Questions:
1. What has been the historical context of professional development for early childhood administrators?
2. What situational factors prompted the early childhood administrators to engage in a PDS Professional Learning Community?
3. What was the experience of the early childhood administrator's participation within a Professional Development School Learning Community focusing on issues of Early Childhood and School Readiness?
4. What changes in administrative/leadership practices were noted by early childhood administrators following their PDS Learning Community experience?
5. To what extent do early childhood administrators find the PDS Learning Community experience to be of worth and value to their growth as an administrators?
6. How do these discussions with early childhood administrators reflect the National Staff Development Council Standards for Staff Development.

Procedures:
In keeping with best traditions of case study, interviews will be conducted with individuals within the study sample as one means of data collection. I will follow the following steps as recommended by Creswell (2007) for interview data collection: 1.) Identify interviewees based on the purposeful sampling strategies of intensity and criterion, 2.) Determine that one-on-one interviews are most appropriate for this project, 3.) Use digital recording device for interviews, 4.) *Design an interview protocol form that is about 4-5 pages in length, with approximately five grand-tour themes and approximately 20 questions and ample space between the questions to write field notes as from the interviewee's comments, 5.) Refine the interview questions and the procedures further through pilot testing, 6.) Determine the place for conducting the interview, 7.)After arriving at the interview site, obtain consent from the interviewee to participate in the study. Have the interviewee complete a consent form for IRB. Go over the purpose of the study, the amount of time that will be needed to complete the interview, and plans for using the

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results from the interview (I will offer a copy of the report or an abstract of it to the interviewee.) (*During the interview, interviewees will have the option to draw responses to address interview questions wherever they deem appropriate.) (Interview protocol - see attachment.)

As with best traditions of case study, participant observation fieldwork will be conducted with individuals within the study sample as the second means of data collection. Each participant will be observed a total of three school days. There will be no recording of identifying information about students. During the observations, only field notes will be taken following a participant observation protocol. There will be no audio taping within the observations. I will follow the following steps as recommended by Creswell (2007) for observation data collection: 1.) The observation will take place at an agreed upon location. Obtain the required permissions needed to gain access to the site, 2. At the site, I will identify who is to be observed (Early Childhood Administrator) and determine the duration of the observation, 3.) I have determined to use the role of "complete observer" within my fieldwork, 3.) Design an observation protocol as a method for recording notes in the field. I will included in this protocol both descriptive and reflective notes, 4.) I will record aspects such as portraits of the informant, the physical setting, particular events and activities, and my own reactions, 5.) After observing, I will slowly withdraw from the site, thanking the participant and informing them of the use of the data and their accessibility to the study. (Participant observation protocol - see attachment.)

As pseudonyms will be used on the interview and participant observation protocols, a list will be maintained by the principal investigator that links the names of the participants to their pseudonym. This list will be kept in a locked cabinet within my home [109 Viking Court, Mankato, MN], and maintained for 7 years before the list is destroyed.

Data Analysis:
Data analysis will follow a format that is in keeping with best traditions of case study methodology according to Creswell (2007):
1. Create and organize files for data.
2. Read through text, make margin notes, form initial codes.
3. Describe the case and its context.
4. Use categorical aggregation to establish themes or patterns.
5. Use direct interpretation.
6. Develop naturalistic generalizations.
7. Present in-depth picture of the case using narrative, tables, and figures.

Reference:
Creswell, J. (2007) (2nd Ed.) Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design: Choosing Among Five Approaches. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

How long will this take participants to complete?
The one-to-one interviews will take 90 minutes to complete.

The participant observations will take 3 school days to complete.

Will follow-ups or reminders be sent?
No

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3. Description of Recruiting Procedures

How will the names and contact information for participants be obtained?
The six participants have all engaged in a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community focusing on early childhood/school readiness whereby their names and contact information have been known, and is considered public information.

How will participants be approached about participating in the study?
The participants will receive a letter of invitation to participate in the study. (See attachment.)

4. Description of Benefits and Risks

Explain the benefits to participants or to others.
Researchers have found that when people are given the opportunity to talk about their experiences, they often develop new insights related to those experiences that are personally or professionally meaningful.

This study will add to the growing body of literature concerning the need for professional development of early childhood administrators along with the value/benefit from early childhood administrators participating in Professional Development School Learning Communities. The interviewing data will provide participants, as well as the general public, with an understanding of the nature to which PDS early childhood Learning Community members transfer their learning from their Learning Community experience into their work environment.

Explain the risks to participants. What will be done to minimize the risks? If there are no known risks, this should be stated.
There are no known risks.

5. Description of Compensation

Will compensation (including money, gift certificates, extra credit, etc.) be provided to participants?
No

6. Informed Consent Process

In certain cases for children over the age of 14, such as UNL students who are 17 or 18, waivers of informed consent can be granted.

Would you like to request a waiver of consent?
No

7. Description of How Confidentiality will be Maintained

How will confidentiality of records be maintained?
No one except the researchers will have access to the surveys. Participants will not be identified in any way; their real names will not be used if they are quoted - a pseudonym will be issued for each participant.

Will individuals be identified?
No

NUgrant

How long will records be kept?
Hard copy records will be maintained for 7 years before they are destroyed.

Where will records be stored?
Records will be kept in a locked file cabinet in my home [109 Viking Court, Mankato, MN]

Who has access to the records/data?
The principle investigator, Ginger L. Zierdt, and the secondary investigator, Dr. Marilyn Grady.

How will data be reported?
Data will be reported in the primary investigator's doctoral dissertation.   [Dissertation Advisor: Dr. Marilyn Grady, Department of Education Administration].

8. Copies of Questionnaires, Survey, or Testing Instruments

Please list all questionnaires, surveys, and/or assessment instruments/measures used in the project.
Interview Question Protocol
Participant Observation Protocol

9. Uploaded Attachments

FPS District Permission.pdf - 285006 Bytes - application/pdf
LSH District Permission.pdf - 550948 Bytes - application/pdf
MAPS District Permission.pdf - 284645 Bytes - application/pdf
MLPS District Permission.pdf - 234466 Bytes - application/pdf
St.P. District Permission.pdf - 330974 Bytes - application/pdf
Minnesota State Mankato Permission.pdf - 285253 Bytes - application/pdf
Confidentiality Agreement - External Auditor.pdf - 65113 Bytes - application/pdf
Confidentiality Agreement - Transcriptionist.pdf - 64974 Bytes - application/pdf
Study Participant Invitation Letter .pdf - 67941 Bytes - application/pdf
Study Permission Letter - Organizational Heads.pdf - 71725 Bytes - application/pdf
Zierdt HRP Determination.pdf - 33709 Bytes - application/pdf
Zierdt EX Determination.pdf - 36016 Bytes - application/pdf
REVISED Interview Protocol-06_23_08.pdf - 108171 Bytes - application/pdf
REVISED Participation Observation Protocol.pdf - 50748 Bytes - application/pdf
REVISED Informed Consent Form06-23-08B-Approved.pdf - 110348 Bytes - application/pdf

Comments:
PI Comments

URC Comments

ORR Comments

APPENDIX G

Confidentiality Form - Transcriptionist

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – TRANSCRIPTIONIST

I_____, hereby agree that I will maintain
       (name of transcriptionist)

confidentiality of all tape-recorded interviews that I have been contracted to transcribe for the

following research project: **Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators**

within a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community.

This means that I will not discus nor share any tape-recorded nor transcribed data with any

individuals other than the researcher, Ginger Zierdt, or her supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady.

When the transcriptions are complete, I will return all audio tapes to the researcher and will

transfer all electronic files to the researcher. Upon confirmation of receipt of these files by the

researcher, I will destroy the originals.

_____   _____
  (Signature of transcriptionist)   (Date)

APPENDIX H

Confidentiality Form – External Auditor

University of Nebraska–Lincoln

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT – EXTERNAL AUDITOR

I_____, hereby agree that I will maintain
        (name of external auditor)

confidentiality of all data that I have been contracted to audit for the following research project:

Professional Development of Early Childhood Administrators within a Professional Development School (PDS) Learning Community.

This means that I will not discus nor share any tape-recorded nor transcribed data with any individuals other than the researcher, Ginger Zierdt, or her supervisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady. When the audit is complete, I will return all data to the researcher and will transfer all electronic files to the researcher. Upon confirmation of receipt of these files by the researcher, I will destroy the originals.

_____   _____
        (Signature of auditor)   (Date)

APPENDIX I

Summation of Participant Education and Career Paths

Participant Name	Jessica	Janice	Terri	Christine	Diane	Patrice
Community size (rounded to nearest thousand)	50,000	20,000	14,000	50, 000	3,000	5,000
Years of service in education	20 or more	20 or more	20 or more	20 or more	20 or more	20 or more
Highest Degree Earned	Education Specialist	Education Specialist	Masters	Bachelors+	Bachelors+	Bachelors+
MN K-12 Principal Licensed	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No
MN Early Childhood Special Education Licensed	No	No	No	No	No	No
MN Parent Educator Licensed	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No
MN Community Education Director Licensed	No	Yes	No	No	Yes	No
Initial MN Teaching License	P-K-1-6	Home Economics Education	K-12 Physical Education	P-K-1-6	Home Economics Education	P-K-1-6
Spouse-related career change prompted new career change for participant in Early Childhood	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Stopped mid-career to raise children	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Staff size (supervised personnel)	42	37	86	42	17	18
Responsible for Physical Sites Affiliated with Program	Yes (2)	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Direct Supervisor	Superintendent	Director of Special Education	Dean, College of Education	Director of Community Education	Director of Community Education	Director of Community Education
Years as Participant in PDS Early Childhood Learning Community	3	2	2	3	2	1
Received Minnesota Department of Education "New ECFE Coordinator Training"	No	No	No	Yes	Yes	No

Participant Name	Jessica	Janice	Terri	Christine	Diane	Patrice
Considers current role to be "administrative"	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Employing organization considers role to be "administrative"	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Employing organization provided "new administrator/coordinator" mentoring/induction	No	No	No	No	No	No
Employing organization holds ECA accountable for professional development as aligned with organization's goals and strategic plan.	No	No	No	No	No	No

APPENDIX J

External Auditor Report

External Audit Findings
by Lisa St. Clair, Ed.D.

Upon the recommendation of her advisor, Dr. Marilyn Grady, Ginger Zierdt requested that I complete an external audit of her qualitative dissertation titled: <u>PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL (PDS) LEARNING COMMUNITY</u>. This audit was carried out between December 23 and 30, 2008. The role and general purpose of this audit was to carefully examine both the process and product of the inquiry, and ultimately to evaluate the trustworthiness of the study.

Numerous materials were reviewed and are outlined in this report. The materials submitted to me included:

1) Two canvas tote file boxes, each full of hanging file folders containing various data. The boxes included:

- Folder 1: A flash drive containing all associated study information (detailed under Electronic Documents) and a summary print out of the roster of files.

- Folder 2: Confidentiality agreements signed by transcriptionists Sharon Cooper and Jill Ryan.

- The next six hanging folders contained information from participants in the study. Each contained completed Interview Protocol documents, Interview Transcript Drafts, Informed Consent forms, and folders containing information specific to each participant's school.

2) Electronic Documents stored on flash drive: this included folders labeled Dissertation Proposal, Participant Invitations, Dissertation Chapters, IRB Proposal 6-20-08, and Research Design. Each folder contained the expected files given its label. Subfolders are noted. The folder Dissertation Chapters included all chapters and one subfolder (Chapter 4). The folder Research Design included subfolders labeled Confidentiality Agreements, Interview Transcripts, Observation Transcripts, and Recorded Interviews in MP3, as well as expected files.

3) In the second canvas tote box, in addition to the hanging folders noted above, there was one small box containing a complete print

out of Zierdt's dissertation.

Summary of External Audit

1) I noted and reviewed all materials submitted for the audit, and developed conclusions as I reviewed all materials.

2) I had previously read chapters one and three of the dissertation proposal when they were submitted to me via e-mail, but re-read them again to ensure there were no differences. I focused particularly on the purpose of the study, research questions, design, data collection and analysis methods, verification strategies, the researcher's role in the study, and the interview protocol.

3) I reviewed the introduction and all sections of the dissertation that presented the data, themes, frameworks, connections across cases, and conclusions.

4) I analyzed data, coding, and findings of the study to ensure that the all were consistent.

Conclusions

1) The focus of the dissertation—understanding the nature of professional development for early childhood administrators within the context of a Professional Development School learning community--was consistent with the original proposal.

2) Generally, only minor changes were observed in the final dissertation compared to the proposal design, in line with the nature of qualitative research as an evolving, emerging design.

3) The central question of this study and the six specific research questions remained the same as in the proposal. Participants were interviewed following the interview protocol form which contained five grand tour themes and 44 questions, as well as an observation protocol of the early childhood administrator/participant.

4) The use of purposeful sampling remained consistent.

5) The data collection methods that the researcher proposed were consistent with the methods she used in the study.

6) The researcher followed several steps to verify the trustworthiness of the study. These included:

    a. Transcriptions were digitally recorded (reviewed by External Auditor).
    b. Each digital file was transcribed by a professional transcriptionist (reviewed by External Auditor).
    c. Each transcript was reviewed by the researcher and the participant, with edits noted by hand (reviewed by External Auditor).
    d. The researcher maintained separate field and protocol notes, noting her reactions and reflections, providing further substantiation of the transcripts (interview outcomes).
    e. Thick, rich description was used to encapsulate and support study findings and recommendations.
    f. The researcher provided for an external audit of the process as a further and final verification step.

7) The data analysis methods the researcher proposed were consistent with the methods she used in the study (based on Creswell, Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing among five approaches, 2nd edition, 2007). The materials reviewed by the external audit clearly documented the analysis procedures used by the researcher. Files were well maintained and organized for each participant, beginning with the request for interview, consent, the interview, and coding process. This researcher demonstrated a rigorous research process ultimately resulting in the dissertation reviewed by the External Auditor. Tables made the presentation of data easier to follow. The data included in the dissertation are accurate and credible.

Summary of the External Audit

After auditing both the process and product of this researcher's study, I believe it is trustworthy and grounded in the data. Numerous verification strategies were used to ensure the credibility of this study, including participant verification and external auditing, to name just two.

The results of this external audit validate that the researcher preserved an appropriate data and audit record. Numerous materials were submitted for the audit. The materials were complete, extensive, and very well organized. All materials arrived together in one delivery, and necessitated no follow up with the researcher. This points to the

high level of organization and meticulous planning which went into this study.

In summary, as the External Auditor of this study, I attest to the trustworthiness of the process and product of Ginger Zierdt's work contained in the dissertation titled PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF EARLY CHILDHOOD ADMINISTRATORS WITHIN A PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOL (PDS) LEARNING COMMUNITY.

Attested to by Lisa St. Clair, December 30, 2008.

Lisa St. Clair, Ed.D.
Munroe-Meyer Institute
University of Nebraska Medical Center
Center for Interdisciplinary Evaluation

APPENDIX K

Abbreviations and Definitions

Abbreviation	Organization or Definition
AACTE	Association for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
ABE	Adult Basic Education
ALC	Alternative Learning Center
B-3	Birth through Grade 3
CCR&R	Child Care Resource & Referral
CEED	Center for Early Education and Development
ECFE	Early Childhood Family Education
ECSE	Early Childhood Special Education
ECSU	Education Cooperative Service Unit
FCAPE	Franklin County Academy of Physical Educators
HRD	Human Resource Development
HRM	Human Resource Management
IEIC	Interagency Early Intervention Committee
IFO	Interfaculty Organization
K-12	Kindergarten through Grade 12
LEP	Limited English Proficient
MDE	Minnesota Department of Education
MELF	Minnesota Early Learning Fund
MnAECTE	Minnesota Association for Early Childhood Teacher Educators
MnAFEE	Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education
MSPDS	Multi-school Professional Development School
MSUAASF	Minnesota State University Association of Administrative and Service Faculty
NAESP	National Association of Elementary School Principals
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NAPDS	National Association for Professional Development Schools
NCATE	National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education
NCCCC	National Coalition for Campus Children's Centers
NCLB	No Child Left Behind
NSDC	National Staff Development Council
P-12	Pre-school through Grade 12
P-20	Preschool through Post-secondary (Graduate Level)
PDS	Professional Development School
SAC	School Age Care
SB6	Success By Six (United Way)
SDA	Staff Development Association
SMIF	Southern Minnesota Initiative Foundation
YC	*Young Children*
UFARS	Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting System