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A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Staff Development  
In Three Public Northeast Tennessee Elementary School Districts

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A dissertation

presented to

the faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis

East Tennessee State University

In partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

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by

Rebekah Barnard

August 2004

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Dr. Louise MacKay, Chair  
Dr. Cecil Blankenship  
Dr. Terrance Tollefson  
Dr. Russ West

Keywords: Staff development, in-service, professional development

## ABSTRACT

### A Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Staff Development in Three Public Northeast Tennessee Elementary School Districts

by

Rebekah E. Barnard

This study serves as an insight into teachers' perceptions of their staff development experiences. With the constraints under the *No Child Behind Act*, teachers, schools, and school systems are faced with the challenge of meeting extremely high standards with students. Although standards such as these expectations have never been met, it remains that teachers are faced with attempting this task. Teachers shared their perceptions of the staff development experiences they have received. Student achievement and its relationship to staff development was explored. Teachers discussed perceived factors that influenced staff development training. Also, included in the study was teachers' perceptions of the need for staff development with proven applications.

A qualitative research method used interviews from 25 veteran and apprentice elementary teachers ranging in experience from 2 years to 30 plus years of service in the educational profession. All interviews were recorded, transcribed, and transferred to the NUDIST program. This allowed all transcripts to be coded and analyzed. This process allowed themes to emerge from the data.

This study could be of interest to school systems into the insights and needs of apprentice and veteran teachers. The results of these data could assist school districts with information to evaluate their current staff development programs and determine if changes should be made.

## DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to my family. Words can never express the gratitude that I owe each of you. Thank you all for your patience, kind words of encouragement, and support. Completing this journey was not just made by me, but my all of us. Thank you for always encouraging me to do more than just what was expected. When I walked on to the college campus some odd years ago, I never dreamed that I would be where I am today. For that I owe all of you a tremendous debt of gratitude. I am so proud to call each of you a part of my family.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Today educators are expected to be knowledgeable of their profession, maintain high academic standards, teach all types of learners through a variety of teaching strategies, and be accountable for each student's academic progress. Society places lofty expectations upon its educators. Public schools are entrusted by society with the challenge to educate the masses of children. These children bring with them a variety of socioeconomic backgrounds, family histories, and cultural beliefs. It is the teacher's daily obligation to educate the students to the best of his/her ability. In today's society a school's worth is often judged by students' results on state- required testing. It is through these testing statistics that the public is provided with a partial picture of each school and its value. Statistics cannot relate that some children come to school every day without breakfast or that there was a family crisis at home the night before the test. Society is rarely informed of the challenges associated with educating children in today's culture. Educators often feel the heavy burdens of trying to meet individual student personal needs, preparing for state testing, maintaining adequate discipline in the classroom, meeting state academic standards, and providing students with the joy of learning.

Just as new state standards and state testing requirements have brought added challenges to the education profession, testing requirements, state standards, and the student population are ever changing which means the education profession must transform itself to meet the needs of today's students. Through effective and quality staff development programs, teachers can be provided the training needed to educate each type of learner who enters their classroom.

The *No Child Left Behind Act* states that in 2005-2006 all teachers should be highly qualified in their subject area (Weaver, 2004). Hirsh and Sparks (2000) commented that improving student level focuses on teachers' knowing their subject matter and being able to convey that subject knowledge to their students. Often teachers are prepared with the appropriate credentials to teach a specific grade levels. However, many times they are not equipped to teach the new standards for learning. This new law provides schools with many new demands. The definition of "highly qualified" has yet to be fully clarified for the education profession. School systems are wondering how these changes will impact their current staff. However, this law is aimed at improving student learning. For teachers, this could mean additional staff development. This is the first time in history that staff development has been identified in legislation. The *No Child Left Behind Act* states that staff development should be high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom focused in order to have a positive impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance (Richardson, 2002). In addition to this specific definition of staff development, the law further clarifies staff development in terms of activities. Staff development activities are not "one-day or short-term workshops or conferences" (Richardson, 2002).

Meeting federal requirements designed by the *No Child Left Behind Act* has also created lofty goals for the education profession. By the year 2014 teachers are required to have all students proficient in math, language, and reading. This goal seems unattainable when faced with the difficulties that come with teaching in today's public schools. States now are expected to disaggregate assessment results by ethnicity, language, socioeconomic level, and special education needs (Guskey, 2003). Schools

must attain Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). This simply stated is the progress of a school's students from year to year. Schools are evaluated in nine subgroups: all students, special education students, students who have English as a second language, socioeconomic status, and race; white, black, Asian, Indian, and Hispanic. Schools should attain adequate yearly progress (AYP) for each subgroup. If AYP is not met in any category, a school is identified as a target school. A school that is labeled as a target school has one year to improve or face becoming a "high priority" school. Each year the criteria for meeting AYP are increasing. In 2014 all children should be proficient in math, language, and reading. The federal government has taken what could have been positive legislation and created a nightmare for educators.

We have long invested large portions of our resources in the training of our educators. Measuring whether a staff development session was successful is a rather difficult task. Often staff development sessions are rated on whether the attendee "liked" the program. However, we should be measuring the success of the program through the amount of knowledge gained by the students as a result of teacher involvement in the program (Hirsh & Sparks, 2000). Although we can document the attendance of the educators at the training session, it is challenging to measure or evaluate whether the knowledge gained through staff development reaches the students. Concentrating on the end in mind, student achievement should be the focus in planning staff development. Wong (2002) stated that the best investment that school systems could make in teachers was staff development. Teachers need to be knowledgeable of their respective areas of placement and the content of the curriculum that encompasses their subject area.

Haycock and Robinson (2001) reported that teachers who get the most out of their students know their subjects and how to teach them.

If this is an accurate account, then school systems need to know the teachers' perceptions of staff development and how it affects their classroom performance. Staff development will only be implemented if teachers realize its relationship to their subject area. It should be a priority of school systems to ensure that a process by which students receive maximum benefits from staff development is in place. Only by providing teachers with the necessary tools to teach do we see that academic gains are made.

#### *Statement of the Problem*

Dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, teacher institutes of staff development were often plagued with conflict and criticism (Guskey, 1986). In the past, teachers were often skeptical about attending staff development programs. Jones and Lowe (1990) described these staff development sessions as representing a "one-shot in the dark" approach. Burke (2000) noted that teachers often related professional development to in-service days. Early in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, in-service mainly consisted of remedial sessions to overcome teachers' deficiencies (Orlich, 1989, p.2). In 1931, 30 schools participated in the Eight-Year Study. This study allowed teachers to move from the "remedial" to "creative in-service education." This process developed into the workshop format. However, during this time the country was in distress from WWII and staff development fell by the wayside. Following WWII, in-service became focused on curriculum development. Exposing teachers to new programs and trends became the format for most in-service sessions (Orlich, p.3). New purposes for in-service have continued to emerge over the years. Rapid changes in society make changes in in-service education even

more vivid. Jones and Lowe and Burke stated that in-service sessions often consisted of an expert who would present material that had very little impact on a teacher's teaching strategies or classroom management skills. Burke (2000) described teachers as feeling frustrated and resentful at being required to attend "inservice" days that did not benefit them or their students. School systems have invested thousands upon thousands of dollars funding "inservice" workshops that have benefited no one.

There are numerous definitions of effective staff development. However, many of the researchers tended to arrive at the same conclusions. Staff development is an ongoing, in-depth, and intensive program. Staff development should be research- and data-driven. Designed with the teachers and students in mind, staff development should bring a significant change within the educational program resulting in teacher growth. Through this added teacher knowledge, student achievement should be evident. Despite these numerous definitions of staff development the terms professional development and inservice will be recognized as equivalent to staff development for the purpose of this study.

Darling-Hammond (1999) addressed the need for society to realize that the greatest investment of education dollars was when they were spent educating the teachers. As a society we have wasted thousands of educational dollars and teacher hours from the numerous workshops that educators have attended. These hours and dollars could have been allocated to finding effective and quality professional development opportunities that would have benefited everyone involved. Darling- Hammond (1998, 1999), Novick (1996), and Wenglinsky (2002) stated that a teacher's knowledge promoted high student achievement. This teacher knowledge should be gained through

effective, planned, ongoing staff development sessions designed to improve school personnel (Burke, 2000).

Today many ideas abound regarding ways to rectify the apparent problems associated with staff development. A review of the literature revealed many new ideas aimed toward promoting effective and quality staff development programs. For example, Novick (1996) suggested teacher- university partnerships to engage teachers in research-based practices. Guskey (1986) addressed the need for follow-up sessions after the initial training and noted that change in teacher behavior is a gradual process. He proposed developing a planning committee comprised of Central Office administrators and building- level teachers to formulate staff development goals. These goals would reveal what staff development needs are present at the school level. Sparks (1997b) suggested providing teachers additional time to converse with their colleagues after an interview with Darling-Hammond. Novick (1996) recommended additional funding for staff development programs and teacher time to participate in these opportunities. In planning and evaluating staff development programs, one must consider both the audience and the program. Stansberry and Zimmerman (2002) stated that approximately 1.7 million to 2.7 million new teachers would be hired in the next few years. Thus, it is obvious that staff development coordinators should focus their efforts on induction programs for beginning teachers. With over half of new teachers leaving the profession within the first three years of entering the profession, an induction program could provide an appropriate staff development for beginning educators.

Despite what current research suggests regarding effective staff development programs, teachers are often still reluctant to participate in more “in-service”

opportunities. It is unclear whether this attitude was derived from past experiences with ineffective staff development activities or from uncertainty about what specific types of staff development individual teachers need to improve the instructional program in their classroom. Also, staff development programs are effective only to the degree that the participants are able to follow the original model. A problem that teachers often face is that they have not learned the skill or behavior adequately enough to implement the technique with any degree of success in their classrooms. Feedback is critical if teachers are to improve in new skills. They need to receive specific information as to when a particular technique is most likely to be successful. Research has shown that teachers who work on projects together, discuss them, and evaluate their efforts show a higher rate of success than teachers in isolated in-service programs (Orlich,1989).

The purpose of this study was threefold. First, it was to collect and report teachers' perceptions of staff development programs in elementary schools. Second, the study was designed to determine whether or not staff development programs are perceived to provide valuable knowledge to educators that promotes student achievement. Third, this research should provide insight into the different staff development needs of apprentice educators as compared to veteran educators. The results of this study should provide school districts with data to evaluate their current staff development programs and determine if changes should be made.



### *Research Questions*

Staff development programs in Northeast Tennessee school systems should be ongoing. This research study should provide useful information to staff development coordinators and educators who are planning staff development programs. The identification of teachers' perceptions and the degree to which they perceive current staff development content is implemented into the classroom should be beneficial to many school systems for future staff development planning. The research questions guiding this study were:

- 1.) What are teachers' perceptions of current staff development programs in three elementary schools?
- 2.) What are teachers' perceptions regarding whether or not, or the degree to which, current staff development programs provide added knowledge and skill to their teaching that impacts students in their classrooms?
- 3.) Do teachers perceive that school systems are providing adequate staff development for apprentice teachers as compared to veteran teachers?

### *Significance of the Study*

Within the last 10 years there has been a great emphasis placed on staff development programs from state agencies, school boards, and central office staff. With the additional emphasis placed on staff development programs, it is vital that teachers' perceptions of these programs be taken into consideration. It is vital that teachers' perceptions have an effect on whether or not they choose to implement the latest theory or concepts being provided in staff development sessions. If teachers recognize the importance of the staff development as it is applied to the curriculum and their

classrooms, they are much more likely to implement these new techniques into their programs. If teachers believe that these new strategies will affect student achievement, they are more likely to be willing to devote the necessary time to incorporate these staff development ideas into their own teaching.

#### *Limitations of the Study*

- 1.) Teachers have a variety of ideas, perceptions, and background knowledge when referring to staff development. This prior knowledge may affect the way participants view and respond to the questions in the interview.
- 2.) Teachers may fail to respond to the questions candidly for fear that their school system might be portrayed in a negative manner. Efforts will be made to ensure that individual responses will be kept confidential.
- 3.) The interviews may have taken place during a time in the year when the teachers had prior professional duties that made the interviews an additional burden to them.
- 4.) This study is limited to three elementary school systems in Northeast Tennessee and the data should not be generalized to other populations.

#### *Organization of the Study*

Chapter 1 includes the introduction, purpose of the study, background of the problem, research questions, significance of the study, and limitations of the study. Chapter 2 includes a review of the literature that relates to the topic being researched. Chapter 3 is a presentation of the methodology and procedures used to gather data for this research. Chapter 4 contains the findings from the interviews with the participants.

Chapter 5 includes a summary of the research findings, conclusions, and recommendations for practice as well as recommendations for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Educators of today face many challenges within the education profession. They have been asked to educate every child to the best of his/her ability, maintain high academic standards for every student, understand and perform skillful teaching, and realize the accountability implications for their teaching. These requests tend to overwhelm even the most veteran educators. In a time when classrooms have become so diverse that the typical classroom is continually changing, teachers often bear the sole responsibility of educating the masses. If our society continues on this course, teachers will need to be equipped with even more tools to truly educate the ever growing diverse classes of children. These beneficial tools of teacher knowledge can only be acquired through intensive, ongoing staff development. For teachers to receive the greatest rewards from staff development, they must first realize the importance of staff development.

When teachers hear the term “in-service”, several thoughts often come to their minds; “presenter”, “training”, and “wasted time”. Twenty years ago teachers were exposed to a variety of opportunities of so called “in-service”. Burke (2000) commented that districts often hired an outsider to provide a motivational speech or an awareness session on policies, state requirements, or new educational theories. Willis (2002) stated that this type of professional development was often generic. In this respect, the in-service had been designed to work for all teachers without reference to the subject matter being taught nor was it research-driven. Guskey (1990) commented that the staff

development activities that were provided for the educators appeared isolated from each other without any continuity among them.

Proven unsuccessful in the past, this type of inservice had not been beneficial to the instructional curriculum needs of the classroom teacher. The feelings of frustration were experienced when the teachers returned to their classrooms and nothing was implemented from the workshop or if such practices were tried they did not lead to a significant change in practice in the daily routine (Burke, 2000). Thousands of educational dollars and teacher hours have been wasted on the workshops that educators have attended. These hours and dollars could have been allocated to finding effective and quality professional development opportunities that would have benefited everyone involved. Despite the past experiences with professional development, today's teachers are exposed to a more rigorous and in-depth type of in-service: staff development.

This chapter is divided into six sections. Each of these sections deals with a major theme in staff development. The first section pertains to the various definitions of staff development. The second section explores the history of staff development. The third section focuses on the vital importance of teacher knowledge and how staff development fosters this knowledge within educators. The fourth section looks at effective models of staff development programs within the literature. The fifth section addresses the need to prepare and retain good teachers in the field of education. The sixth section reflects on the challenges for future growth in the area of staff development.

### *Definitions of Staff Development*

According to Stout (1996) staff development- sometimes called continuing education, in-service training, or professional development-as a central tool for altering teacher behaviors. In the educational profession, educators have often interchanged the terms professional development, in-service training, and staff development. Jones and Lowe (p.8) also referred to “staff development as a continuing process that changed a teacher’s practice. It should involve examining assumptions about teaching, learning, and the subject matter. Educators must look at ways to explore transferring research - based knowledge into classroom practices” (Jones & Lowe, 1990). Jones and Lowe stated (p. 8) “Staff development should offer practices that provide new techniques, strategies, methods, and approaches with feedback in a non-threatening environment”. Mizell (2003) suggested that staff development is a process in which learning opportunities are created for teachers, resulting in students receiving the benefits from the teachers’ new knowledge. He stated that the more challenging process would result in a higher quality of staff development. However, this will require staff development coordinators to take a holistic approach to staff development to ensure achievement of both students and educators. If this approach is taken seriously and staff development is looked at as a sequential process that starts with educating teachers, then student achievement should follow (Mizell, 2003).

Guskey (p.5) described staff development programs as “a way in which to alter the professional practices, beliefs, and understanding of school persons toward an articulated end”. He cited the end as being student learning. Therefore, staff development programs should bring about change in a teacher’s classroom and beliefs,

thus resulting in added student learning (Guskey, 1986). Wanzare and da Costa (2000) contended staff development programs should be grounded in research and best practice. Thus, staff development should result in school improvement and a conducive school climate for change and reform. According to Uranga (1995), staff development should be used to improve and refine teachers' knowledge and skills. Staff development programs should be an integral part of the school program and not just a supplemental in-service (Uranga, 1995)

Burke (p. 29) stated "Professional development from a school system's point of view is a planned, comprehensive, and systemic program designed by the system to improve all school personnel's ability to design, implement, and assess productive change in each individual and in the school organization". Jones and Lowe (1990) stated that all activities for staff development must relate to a larger program goal. Many teachers resent sitting through all day in-service training and not receiving any educational benefits. Information presented in such all day sessions is rarely used. It is valued by some but rarely implemented into their classrooms (Burke, 2000). Districts often experience frustration by wasting thousands of dollars on workshops and conferences that fail to lead to significant change in practice when the teachers return to their classrooms.

The National Staff Development Council (2001) defined staff development "as including high-quality training programs with intensive follow-up and support, but also other growth-promoting processes such as study groups, action research, and peer coaching. The NSDC also believed that staff development was fundamentally people improvement" (NSDC).

Norton (2001) commented that staff development creates many diverse opportunities for teachers: workshops, study groups, conferences, school visits, analyzing data, and collaborating with colleagues. Prior to designing staff development activities, the program director should take in to consideration the educators' needs. Jones and Lowe (1990) suggested that developing a meaningful staff development program required a "bottom- up" process rather than a "top-down" one.

In reviewing the literature, the most common definition of staff development suggested an on-going, in-depth, and intensive program. Staff development should be research- and data- driven. Designed with teachers and students in mind, staff development should bring a significant change within the educational program resulting in teacher growth. Through this added teacher knowledge, student achievement should be evident.

### *History of Staff Development*

The road to successful staff development programs has not been an easy path to follow. Staff development efforts have been plagued by disorder, conflict, and criticism (Guskey, 1986). Guskey stated that staff development could be traced back to the "teacher institutes" of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, even though there was a strong need for effective staff development for educators much of the "inservice" was not effective. Showers, Joyce, and Bennett (1987) pointed out that in 1957 there were only about 50 studies that focused on staff development. Despite having minimal experimental designs to foster research from 1957 to 1977, the research has broadened considerably. The findings of these studies have demonstrated that many educators were displeased with in-service. However, educators seemed to be in agreement about the need for in-service to



improve educational practices. Even though there was added research on staff development, only a small percentage of these studies were experimental in design. During 1970 to 1980 many studies were conducted that added to our understanding of effective staff development (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Through these research studies several effective practices in staff development were revealed. Some of the findings were: staff development programs should be conducted in schools and tied to school reform. Teachers should participate as helpers in staff development programs. Training opportunities should be diverse for educators. Teachers should play an active part in determining their goals and staff development plans. Supervised trials, feedback, and demonstrations should be concrete and ongoing. When teachers request assistance, it should be readily available (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Finally, in the 1980s, state legislators and local school districts recognized staff development as a major component of school improvement efforts. Based on this support, many staff development programs were initiated (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

During this time period school systems were researching and establishing teacher centers. Teacher Centers were to provide all teachers at various stages in their professional careers an opportunity for staff development. These centers were to provide staff development activities that would impact the teachers' classroom skills and techniques (Pendergrass, 1980). Pendergrass further stated that teacher center managers were to encourage teachers to make a commitment to staff development. In 1996 Junior High School 8 in New York City was singled out as needing a complete restructuring in staff and many other reforms that effected the school's curriculum. When a school was determined as needing a complete reform, it became home to a Teacher Center provided

by the district. Based in the school, the Center was managed by an experienced teacher who ensured that a learning community was being developed using the policies and procedures designated by the school district. This Center was to provide staff development for all teachers who were at various stages in their careers. The Teacher Center provided a variety of resources to the school's teachers that included: in-classroom support, individual and small group training, action research, how to use assessment data, and study groups. Allowing the Teacher Center to be based within the school allowed the teachers to meet with the Teacher Center instructor over an extended period of time (Gentile, 2000).

In 1987 Showers, Joyce, and Bennett performed a meta-analysis of approximately 200 research studies. This report focused on areas where research in staff development was lacking and compared it to previous research which had been done.

In 1988 Smylie stated that staff development programs helped teachers integrate new knowledge and concepts into their classroom. He studied 56 elementary and secondary school teachers who participated in The Effective Use of Time Staff Development Program (EUOT). Teachers spent approximately two hours after school participating in workshops during a semester. The program was designed around four components: research on effective use of class time, detailed observations of teacher performance, guided practice, and feedback of performance. Information for this study was gained through the use of teacher surveys, interviews, classroom information questionnaires, and classroom observations. His findings revealed that school-level values made little significant difference in teacher change when dealing with this type of

staff development. This was a contradiction to the literature focusing on issues in staff development.

In 1999, McInturf conducted a research project that focused on teachers' perceptions of staff development and the characteristics of systems with successful staff development programs. This study involved teachers working in the 17 school systems of the First Regional Service Area of the Tennessee State Department of Education. One central office staff supervisor from each participating system was also included in the study. Seven hundred eighty-six teachers participated in the study. Each teacher was provided a questionnaire developed by the National Staff Development Council. This survey was designed to assist schools in the planning of effective staff development. The findings in his study revealed that teachers in these systems had a high perception of the staff development programs being offered. McInturf's (1999) study found that systems that devoted 1% to 3% of their total operating budget to staff development had high teacher perceptions in all areas being studied.

In 2001, Milligan performed a qualitative study that explored teachers' perceptions toward gifted students prior to staff development and after staff development. Teachers were involved in staff development sessions that emphasized the characteristics of giftedness and the enrichment of gifted children in rural areas. This year-long study revealed that several teachers' perceptions of gifted students changed through staff development sessions. Teaching strategies were altered to include activities for enhancing creative thinking and enrichment activities.

### *Importance of Teacher Knowledge*

Tennessee was one of the few states that provided their educators with “teacher effect data”. William L. Sanders designed the Tennessee Value Added Assessment System. This system produced data that define the teacher effectiveness. Haycock (1999) stated that teacher effectiveness remains with a student for a number of years. Darling-Hammond (2000) noted that students who were assigned teachers who were found to be ineffective in their teaching consecutively they would have significantly lower achievement than those students who were assigned to several highly effective teachers.

In the report in 1989 “What Matters Most: Teaching for America’s Future” the nation’s governors developed a set of education goals. These goals stated that by the year 2000, all of our students would come to school ready to learn; they would learn in a drug-free environment; the majority of them would graduate with the high academic skills necessary for higher education; and the students would rank first in the world in the field of mathematics. Despite valiant effort, we, as a society, are still a long way from reaching these goals. All American children are not coming to school ready to learn. More children are living in poverty and student achievement has only slightly increased.

Despite trying many reform models and initiatives by the government, our society is still falling short of these lofty goals. Most schools cannot produce these results. However, society should remember that educators remain as the answer to the problem. Through effective teaching, educators should be able to move closer to the goal of educating all children. Darling-Hammond (1999) mentioned that the Commission on Education stated that an investment in teacher knowledge and skills would provide a

greater increase in student achievement than any other use of the education dollar.

Teachers want to improve their classrooms. However, not all educators know how to improve and what aspects of their classroom need improvement. Mizell (2003) stated that some teachers did not have the necessary skills to bring their below average students to grade level.

In 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act*. This law was the largest nationalization act of education policy in history (Elmore, 2003). NCLB was meant to help improve the nation's elementary and secondary school and prevent any child from being left in a failing school. Elmore (p. 7) stated, "NCLB judges a school's performance by the distance between its current performance level and the performance standard for which the school is being held accountable." He also noted, "The law requires more or less equal increments in growth- disaggregated by type of student-each year, a requirement that had no basis in empirical evidence about how schools improve their performance(Elmore, p.7)." This law included greater accountability for states, stronger emphasis on reading, and increased flexibility for parents and students for those attending failing schools. By the year 2014 all students in the United States are to be proficient in reading and math. At the current time no school in the United States nor in the world has ever achieved this goal (Harvey, 2003).

This bill has forced states to increase accountability. Students in grades 3-8 have to be tested annually. The test data should be disaggregated by poverty level, race, limited English proficiency, special disabilities, and ethnicity to ensure that no child is left behind. Schools that fail to meet the minimum standards will be forced to enter into a school improvement process. Title I eligible schools who receive federal funding and

have failed to meet the state standards for three of the four preceding years must allow students in these schools to use Title I funds to receive supplemental educational services. Also, these students should be allowed the opportunity to attend a better school while the district provides transportation. The *No Child Left Behind Act* also stated that every child should be able to read by the end of third grade. With increased accountability and challenges set forth on educators by the nation the need for focused staff development has increased more (Richardson, 2002).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* requires all teachers to be “highly qualified.” This term “highly qualified” seems rather inappropriate when teachers must have completed all the appropriate course work to earn a college degree and passed the necessary state testing requirements in order to become teachers. Now veteran teachers as well as beginning teachers are required to achieve the “highly qualified” status (Richardson, 2002).

The *No Child Left Behind Act* is the first federal law to include staff development. This has placed added accountability upon the leaders of staff development programs. Now the *No Child Left Behind Act* requires that the program be scientific, research based with greater emphasis on accountability in terms of student performance (Guskey, 2003). Thus, staff development is even more crucial now than in prior years.

As teachers we often plan what we want our students to do rather than what they need to achieve. This is often true of staff development sessions as well. Staff development leaders often plan what they are going to do rather than what the teachers and students need. This will have to change. *No Child Left Behind* focuses on the students’ needs. Teachers must focus on how children learn. Rethinking how subjects

are taught, what is taught, and how subjects will be assessed should be considered when preparing for the daily classroom (Bransford, 2000, p.13). Mizell (2003) noted that teachers now must think what specific learning needs students require and tailor their staff development needs around their students.

In Bransford's (2000) book *How People Learn: Brain, Mind, Experience, and School*, he stated that learning should be centered on four concepts: learner centered, assessment centered, community centered, and knowledge centered. These concepts are intertwined to create a holistic approach to reaching all learners. Teachers should be aware of these four areas of learning. Also, when planning staff development sessions, these four areas should be taken into consideration.

For educational practice to change and staff development sessions to make a true impact in the lives of our students we must incorporate Bransford's principles of learning. His principles apply to children's learning as well as adult learning. Learner centered activities take the learner into consideration. The background and prior knowledge each learner brings with them plays a tremendous role in the learning process. Working with others who possess cultural differences can affect a person's comfort level. Bransford (2000) stated that staff development sessions should be planned to focus on what the teachers need help with rather than just prearranged workshops.

Activities must also be knowledge centered. For example, teachers who begin their daily lesson with an essential question such as "Why should we know how to count money?" present a purpose to their children's learning. This simple question provides students with a reason for learning. Teachers should be provided with the same

consideration as to why, when, where, and how new knowledge gained through staff development could enhance the learning of their students.

The next principle of learning centers around assessment: “What do we want our students to know and be able to do?” Assessment should be organized in a way to ensure understanding for the students. Various types of assessment, such as formative and summative, must also be utilized in the classroom. When staff development sessions are planned they should provide a time for feedback sessions. After a teacher has learned a new technique and has attempted to implement this new learning into the classroom, a time must be set aside for reflection. During this time teachers should reflect on the teaching technique that has been implemented into their classroom, and using his/her professional judgment decide if successful transfer of the learning has taken place and whether it effected student achievement in a positive manner. Garmston (2003) stated that staff development learning happens 80% outside the staff development learning setting and 20% in the room. Allowing participants to have follow-up sessions are greatly necessary to ensure that transfer has taken place. Keeping a journal for thoughts, questions, or concerns will enable follow-up sessions to be useful and productive. During follow-up sessions, presenters must allow participants to transfer what they have learned into skills that allow them to answer how will they implement the new skills. Deborah Ball (1996) found that follow-up sessions were the most important type of staff development activities. Coaching, interactions with colleagues, and modeling were often mentioned as being among the most effective forms of follow-up activities. Educators often stated that modeling the practices that staff developers were trying to promote was found to be extremely beneficial (Ball, 1996).



The final principle of learning is community. Each individual brings a unique picture of his/her community into his/her learning. Also, as learners we create a community of learners. Often when teachers are provided with the opportunity to participate in staff development sessions they are in isolation. After participating in staff development sessions, an opportunity for future contact to share new ideas and discuss newfound knowledge should be made available to teachers.

Staff development sessions should be planned with a focus on student learning goals (Guskey, 2003). Backward planning should be used in an effort to ensure student success. Staff development planners should gather data on student progress and evaluate this to determine their needs before planning staff development activities. Staff development opportunities ought demonstrate that these experiences lead to specific improvements in student performance. Staff development coordinators will now need to collaborate with school leaders to fully understand what their students need. This is the opportunity for school leaders to help educators fill the learning gaps for their students. Educators should be able to know student needs and allow the staff development coordinator to plan educational opportunities to enhance student learning (Mizell, 2003).

The learning process only begins at this stage in staff development. When teachers receive staff development training on a new theory or technique, it is here that the true challenge begins. When teachers return to their classrooms they must then decide how to implement that new knowledge to their students. Teachers usually make great efforts to fully understand what they have learned and how to apply it in their daily curriculum. Through evaluation of professional development programs it will be

essential to analyze what educators have and have not learned, how they have applied this knowledge to their students, and how it benefits their students (Mizell, 2003).

In the past many staff development sessions were evaluated on whether the teachers liked the delivery of the presentation, the presenter, the accommodations, or the refreshments. These were often determined using a simple Likert scale. Evaluating the staff development sessions in this manner allowed for a quick response as the participants were often leaving the event. The results were often positive in nature and allowed the presenters to feel good about themselves. However, today with the new standards being placed upon staff development programs and the funding constraints on many school districts, added pressure has been felt to ensure that staff development programs are vital to student success (Guskey, 2003). To continue funding, many school boards want to see data on how staff development programs are reaching the low performing students. However, many teachers do not possess the appropriate skills necessary to bring the low achieving students to high levels of achievement (Mizell, 2003).

Improving the evaluation for staff development programs benefits both students and educators. If teachers want staff development programs to succeed, it is important to demonstrate that staff development fosters student success.

In Sparks', (1997a) interview of Susan Loucks-Horsley, she stated that our society should be concerned about a teacher's knowledge. When a teacher is not qualified to teach the current subject matter, often the class is set up to just enable students to learn facts and memorize material. Participating in effective staff development assists teachers to assess and evaluate their current content knowledge of subject matter and effective teaching methods for that content.

Society has the right and privilege to demand highly qualified teachers for its children. One means of ensuring that teachers are qualified to teach in the education system is through the evaluation process. Expected to observe their teachers administrators must decide whether or not teachers have met the appropriate requirements. According to Duke (1993) some systems require their educators to be evaluated every year, regardless of experience within the profession. During the evaluation process the administrator and teacher should develop a growth plan for the instructor. This growth plan directs the teacher's goals for the upcoming year whether that is attending professional development sessions or having a mentor teacher. The evaluation process aimed at improving a teacher's professional career should only improve through such a plan.

Darling-Hammond (1998) stated that contemporary teachers face the enormous challenge of educating the most diverse student body ever assembled. Teachers have also been asked to educate students in forms of teaching that may not be remotely familiar to them. According to *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, a recent study of 1,000 school districts noted that raising student achievements was possible through spending all additional monies on highly qualified teachers rather than any other use of budget funds. Geringer, former Governor of Wyoming, stated that the single most important factor affecting student achievement was the teacher, not the class size or standards (Geringer, 2003). Darling- Hammond (1993) reported that the majority of American schools spent less than 1% of their budget on staff development. She compared the four weeks of staff development time that a Saturn automotive plant in

Tennessee provided its workers to the one or two days a year of professional development that most teachers received.

While most school districts spend less than 1% of their operating budgets on staff development programs, teachers remain the key to student achievement. Darling-Hammond (1999) noted that teachers who participated in professional development activities that were curriculum based reported higher student achievement test scores. Teachers are expected to be knowledgeable of their craft. Darling-Hammond (1998) stated that teachers needed to know their subject matter so deeply that they could help students create and understand misconceptions about topics. Also, educators should be able to relate these topics to previous theories. Being able to understand how a student learns and processes information, a teacher must acknowledge how a child develops (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Darling-Hammond (2000) commented that when teachers have a true understanding of their curriculum they are able to present the material to the students. The teachers are able to utilize a format that relates the current topic to previous information learned and future concepts. For teachers to acquire these skills, effective staff development programs should be in place.

Recent research of mathematics teachers revealed that educators who had the opportunity to participate in sustained professional development programs had higher levels of student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2000). In 1992 and 1994 students who had teachers that were fully certified, possessed a master's degree, and professional coursework in literature scored higher than their fellow students on the reading achievement test (Darling-Hammond, 2000). Research found that these teachers who had

more training in literature were more adept at using a variety of classroom resources in their teaching strategies than just basal readers.

Darling-Hammond (1996) stated that teachers over the years had been underpaid, micromanaged, and had few investments made in their learning. The United States, as compared to countries in Europe and Asia, relies more heavily on hiring teachers who have been better prepared, better paid, better supported, and are allowed to assume more decision-making responsibilities. Teachers in the United States are receiving their educational degrees from universities that are considered as thin, uneven in quality, and under resourced. In 1996 Darling-Hammond stated that approximately 20,000 teachers were entering the profession without a license and 30,000 teachers were entering the profession with credentials that were below the standards.

#### *Effective Models of Staff Development*

Frustrated with the quality of the staff development that many school districts were providing for teachers, many educators became skeptical of the professional development programs. When teachers participated in the staff development activities, it was often with a lack of enthusiasm. Guskey (1990) attributed this feeling to the lack of continuity or long range planning associated with the staff development programs. Teachers viewed these training sessions as “one-shot” approaches to the problems in the classroom. Uranga (1995) described these staff development activities as pertaining to fads in education. These training sessions seldom included follow-up sessions and evaluation. Guskey (1986) stated that educators want to participate in staff development if it enhances student learning.

Sparks and Loucks- Horsley (1989) researched five effective models in staff development: individually guided staff development, observation/assessment, involvement in a development/improvement process, training, and inquiry. As teachers we often learned many tasks independently whether those concepts were self-taught or through the help of a colleague. Using a self-guided approach to staff development allows the individual to determine his/her own goal and the activities that will result in the attainment of that goal. Using this model of staff development often motivates adult learners. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley's (1989) research demonstrated that individuals who selected this model were more likely to achieve their goals. Individually- guided staff development has taken many forms. For example, teachers may read an Internet based lesson plan in applying for a grant. The second model of staff development is observation and assessment. However, when looked at from a different viewpoint it had become beneficial. This model focuses on using peer coaching and teacher evaluation. Also, widely accepted in this model is the need for teachers to reflect upon their own teaching. This practice benefits the teacher as well as the students. Peer coaching allows teachers to visit each other's classroom. This practice promotes the use of individual feedback for teachers (Sparks & Loucks-Horsley, 1989).

To eliminate the possibility of a school district providing an ineffective staff development program, a review of the literature revealed that activities should be designed with the National Staff Development Standards in mind. Content, process, and context referred to by Guskey and Sparks (Gasner, 2000) were a useful outline for a school district's program. Furthermore, to make a successful program all three areas should be present in the planning of staff development programs.

The National Staff Development Council (2001) designed standards to which all staff development activities or programs should use when planning experiences.

### *National Standards for Staff Development*

#### Context Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

1. Organizes adults into learning communities whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district.
2. Requires skillful school and district leaders who guide continuous instructional improvement.
3. Requires resources to support adult learning and collaboration.

#### Process Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

1. Uses disaggregated student data to determine adult learning priorities, monitor progress, and help sustain continuous improvement.
2. Uses multiple sources of information to guide improvement and demonstrate its impact.
3. Prepares educators to apply research to decision making.
4. Uses learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal.
5. Applies knowledge about human learning and change.
6. Provides educators with the knowledge and skills to collaborate

#### Content Standards

Staff development that improves the learning of all students:

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

2. 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.
3. Provides educators with knowledge and skills to involve families and other stakeholders

### *Content*

If we, as educators, want our students to learn then we must involve ourselves in staff development that is grounded in research (Gasner, 2000). The area of content referred to as the “what” of staff development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). Within this model staff development coordinators should provide teachers with new knowledge, skills, and understanding for their staff development activities. The purpose of staff development is to allow educators to maintain a high knowledge level of their field.

### *Process*

While content refers to the “what” of staff development, process refers to the “how” of staff development. How activities are planned, organized, and carried out describes the process section of staff development (Guskey & Sparks, 1996). The history of staff development reveals short “one-shot” workshops without follow-up sessions. Generally, designed as motivational speeches, these sessions were seldom beneficial for all types of adult learners. Also, they did not address problems in the classrooms. When planning staff development activities the teacher should be considered foremost. Teachers should engage in staff development activities that are intense, ongoing, and intellectually stimulating (Guskey and Sparks, 1996). Gasner (2000) states that effective professional activities need to be carefully planned and sustained over a long period of



time. These qualifications allow teachers to receive follow up and support. This type of staff development directly impacts the teachers as well as the students they teach.

### *Context*

The context section of the staff development model refers to the “who”, “when”, and “why”. Guskey and Sparks (1996) describe this section as “the organization, system, or culture in which staff development takes place and where the new understanding will be implemented. When designing staff development, the culture of the school or school district should be taken into consideration. Gasner (2000) said this section was where most of the success or failure of staff development programs occurs.

Anyone who is involved with the education of the students should participate in staff development including assistants and paraprofessionals. Gasner (2000) recommended that professional development activities be experimental in nature. These activities need to engage teachers in concrete tasks of assessment and teaching.

Although staff development programs should incorporate the NSDC standards into their programs, the review of the literature also revealed other avenues as being effective models for staff development. Hamilton and Richardson’s 1995 research found that staff development programs did not succeed unless the beliefs, participant’s knowledge, and understandings were addressed in the program. They stated that teachers do not warmly accept ideas that are not readily similar to their own. Within their study beliefs and understandings were factored into the research design. Hamilton and Richardson implemented two staff development programs that allowed teachers to control the staff development program. This control allowed the teachers to incorporate

their beliefs and understandings into the discussions. Also, the study focused on the school culture within the schools of the educators who participated in the study. As a result of their study they concluded that school culture and participation affected progress toward staff development collaboration and teacher empowerment (Hamilton & Richardson, 1995).

Kelleher (2003) stated that professional development should be focused on student learning. Often teachers are sent to workshops that do not assist them in translating learning into the classroom. Also, these workshops or conferences are not always directly related to the teachers or the school system's goals. Kelleher pointed out that when teacher learning is not directly connected with the schools or the systems goals student learning is not affected. He stated that this practice of professional development seems "to resemble a series of boats floating in different ways" (Kelleher).

Kelleher (2003) suggested that professional development activities should be a "web of closely related activities and goals." He said this "web" of closely related activities and goals may be achieved through the use of SMART goals, a concept that has been taken from the business world. SMART refers to Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Results-oriented, and Time-bound goals. This concept drives the professional development activities. Professional development should be based on the teacher, school, and system goals. Allowing the teacher to reflect, implement new learning ideas into the classroom, assess student learning, and then share this new knowledge with other educators is the foundation of this concept (Kelleher)

When using the SMART model, professional development should be developed in six stages. Different teachers could possibly be at various stages within their

professional development careers. New teachers should be assigned a coach or peer mentor whether that be a principal or another teacher. This individual would work with the new educator to provide feedback and guide the teacher through their professional development goals.

In stage one of the SMART model, Kelleher (2003) suggests that teachers would use the data to drive their selection of professional development activities. Then teachers should set measurable targets to assess student learning. Student learning and achievement should provide the foundation for the teacher's decisions in professional development activities.

During stage two of the cycle, teachers may decide to conduct a session prior to the actual professional development activity. This activity could be a study group of teachers who are going to participate in the professional development. This would prepare the participants for the upcoming learning experiences. This method would allow teachers to predetermine any ground rules for student learning prior to implementing the new knowledge (Kelleher, 2003).

Stage three in the SMART model focuses on the professional development activity itself. Teachers should be exposed to activities that research notes as being the most effective practices. These practices are peer collaboration, individualized professional growth, research, and external experiences. Kelleher (2003) stated that peer collaboration was the most effective of the practices. This is due to the fact that peer collaboration tends to be job-embedded. Teachers learn from one another even if it is just through visiting other teachers' classrooms. Teachers are often involved in study groups or collaborating on curriculum standards (Kelleher).

During stage four teachers are able to reflect upon their specific professional development activities. This stage allows the teachers to share their new knowledge gained with fellow teachers. This knowledge then provides other educators with the best practices that fosters student achievement. Teachers reflect upon their own teaching and when shared with others should facilitate ideas and thoughts in teachers on how to assist students in their learning process (Kelleher, 2003).

Stage five of the SMART model allows the teachers to move from what they learned from the activity to how it will be implemented in their classrooms. Teachers should decide what to put into practice in the classroom whether it is a new writing technique or developing a new rubric for the writing process. Finally, in stage six teachers should assess which professional development activity was selected at the beginning of the process and evaluate their progress by measuring improved student achievement.

Guskey (1986) determined that staff development programs often fail due to the fact that staff developers do not take into consideration teacher's motives and the change process in teachers. Even though many educators are required to obtain a predetermined number of staff development hours, many teachers want to engage in staff development so they can become better educators. Guskey (1986) found that staff development was a way in which teachers could be experts in their field. In his article, *Staff Development and the Process of Teacher Change* (1986), Guskey stated that incentives had little to no effect on the participation of teachers in staff development programs. Guskey contended that teachers participate in staff development programs because they believe that they will foster student achievement. A major purpose of staff development programs is to

broaden teachers' viewpoints and current teaching strategies. Guskey (1986) stated that when teachers observe a new program and the effectiveness that it has on their students' achievement, change in beliefs begin to happen.

Novick (1996) described new and innovative means through which schools and educators could achieve high standards for all students through staff development. She stated that staff development should be an integral part of the daily classroom routine. Teachers should have a choice in determining the most appropriate form of staff development for them and their classrooms. Novick's suggestions for effective staff development activities were partnerships with universities and teacher networks. Through partnerships with universities teachers are able to explore current research on teaching strategies and child development. A teacher network was designed in Montana encompassing three school districts. This network allowed teachers to participate in ongoing professional development that centered on study groups, workshops, courses, and conversation with fellow educators. These staff development opportunities provided each school with time for reflection, conversation, and continuous improvement (Novick).

In 2000, Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet researched the most effective way to implement staff development. After surveying over 1,000 teachers who participated in the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, they identified three structural features that provided the context for professional development and three core features that characterize the process. The structural features were cited as duration, form, and participation. Their research found in the area of form that reform activities were more designed to compliment how teachers learned. Traditional formats often not provide

teachers with appropriate content or time to focus on the activities. Birman et al. research also found that activities that focused in depth on the content were more effective. Also, teachers who participated from the same grade level or subject allowed for sessions of active learning. This study showed that content knowledge, active learning, and coherence were directly related to teachers' increase in knowledge and improved classroom practices (Birman et al.)

At that time some teachers were receiving quality staff development training from their school system. The training was a mix of high- and low quality structural or core features. Seventy-nine percent of the teachers who participated in the Eisenhower Program supported a staff development opportunity that was traditional in form. Sixty-four percent of the teachers participated in a staff development activity that only lasted a week or less. Teachers who participated in group discussions with other teachers were seventy-three percent of the research group. Only 35% percent of the research participants participated in the activities that focused on earlier activities.

However, from their survey of 1,000 teachers the researchers found a small percentage of teachers whose staff development met all six characteristics of high quality staff development. The researchers estimated that it would cost an average of \$512 to provide each teacher with high quality staff development that would encompass all six characteristics Birman et al. (2000)

#### *New Teachers in Relation to Staff Development*

New teachers have often been often very positive and excited about the thoughts of their first year in the classroom. They often view the profession of education through rose-colored glasses in the beginning. However, after a few months of on the job

training, these positive thoughts tend to fade and reality comes into focus. New teachers typically are assigned the most difficult classrooms and extra duties outside the classroom such as coaching sports. Many teachers are hired late in the school year, arriving shortly before the students. Thrust into the school setting, beginning teachers are wondering where to put their desk, let alone what to teach during the first week of school. These teachers often receive limited training and orientation about school procedures before they begin the school year. However, they are expected to maintain the same high standards set by veteran teachers. These new teachers need to learn things that cannot be taught in a one-day in-service workshop.

According to Feiman-Nemser (p.27, 2003), “New teachers need three to four years to achieve competence and several more to reach proficiency.” With this in mind, new teachers need assistance in learning how to integrate the standards into their teaching. Feiman-Nemser stated, “New teachers need to learn how to think on their feet, size up situations and decide what to do, study the effects of their practice, and use what they learn to inform their planning and teaching. (p. 26)” If these teachers are not assisted in some manner from veteran teachers, new teachers are often found teaching using inappropriate methods and not meeting the educational needs of today’s children. New teachers often look to veteran teachers for advice in their new profession.

According to *Survival Guide for New Teachers* (DePaul, 1996), in 1996 North Carolina found that 17% percent of their teachers were leaving the field after the first year. New teachers are deciding to leave the field of education for many reasons that include working conditions, monetary needs, personal reasons, or to pursue other careers (Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). By the end of the third year, 30% of the new teachers

resigned and 36% had left the profession after five years. Ingersoll and Smith stated that the teaching profession has one of the highest turnover rates when compared with other professions. Four percent of the current workforce is teachers. When compared to the number of nurses, the number of teachers is twice as large and five times larger than the number of lawyers. Geringer (2003) stated that the United States is not having a shortage of teachers. He said that more than a sufficient amount of individuals enter the teaching profession. The problem is that many either quit the profession upon entering the classroom or fail to complete the certification process. It is critical that the educational profession provide new teachers with the knowledge and support necessary to sustain new teachers in the beginning of their careers (Geringer).

With the *No Child Left Behind Act* now enacted into law retaining good teachers has become even harder. This law requires that a “highly qualified” teacher teach in all classrooms. Colleges are preparing more than a sufficient number of individuals for the teaching profession. However, this law has created a tremendous problem for rural and inner city school systems. Darling-Hammond (p. 7, 2003) stated, “Since the early 1990s the annual number of exits from teaching has surpassed the number of entrants by an increasing amount, putting pressure on the nation’s hiring systems.” In 1999 approximately 225,000 teachers entered the profession. However, 275,000 teachers left the profession within the same time frame. Within five years approximately one third of beginning teachers leave the profession. In poverty districts teacher turnover is higher than low poverty districts. School systems constantly pour their resources into recruiting new teachers to only have them leave after a short period of time (Darling-Hammond).



Districts faced with the demand of increased student population and the requirements to reduce class size have hired many new teachers. Stansberry and Zimmerman (2002) stated that within the next decade schools will hire 1.7 million to 2.7 million new teachers. Expected to teach the same standards as veteran teachers, new educators should be supported. Often it is too late to begin to help new teachers four months into the school year. Wong (2002) contended that the best way to assist a new teacher is through a teacher induction program. Professional development should begin before the teacher ever sees a classroom. Within the last few years teachers have found that the list of demands being placed upon them have increased dramatically. Effective induction programs help new teachers establish classroom procedures, routines, classroom management plans, and instructional practices. Wong noted that Port Huron Area School District in Michigan wanted more than just a “one-shot” staff development meeting with the new teachers. This school district developed a teacher induction program that began four days prior to the beginning of school. These sessions focus on classroom management, professional standard, and effective preparation for the first week of school. These new teachers meet monthly to discuss issues and effective practices. In addition to the induction process new teachers receive a mentor teacher to assist them throughout the year (Wong). Wong stated if we desire quality teachers in our schools, we should make new teacher training, support, and retention top priorities.

Strong induction programs also teach the veteran teachers the techniques of being mentors. Just because a teacher can teach an impeccable lesson with perfect success and engage students in important ideas does not mean that this teacher is prepared to be a mentor. Veteran teachers should also learn how to educate new teachers on their

teaching techniques. Mentor teachers must be able to convey their teaching strategies in ways that are understandable to new teachers. Strong induction programs provide mentor teachers with more than just a couple of days of training. Ongoing opportunities need to be made available to the mentors to discuss effective methods of teaching and develop ways in which to discuss teaching in nonjudgmental ways. These opportunities not only provide mentors with time to discuss the current situations but also allow them to learn how to discuss educational concerns and become a learning community (Feiman-Nemser, 2003).

Darling-Hammond noted that school systems could enhance the chances of new teachers' continuing employment through using mentor programs. These programs raise apprentice teachers' instructional skills, motivate their personalities, and make them feel secure in the classroom. However, mentoring and induction programs only succeed if they are supported by the school systems. Rochester, New York, and Cincinnati, Columbus, and Toledo, Ohio are districts that have supported mentoring programs. They have managed to reduce teacher turnover by two-thirds. Using expert mentors and providing release time has enabled these districts to successfully support new teachers. By 2002 thirty-three states had implemented mentoring programs available for new teachers. In Connecticut, veteran teachers have been "reborn" in the profession by helping new teachers in their induction program. This program has inspired veteran teachers to share their skills while learning from their new colleagues. These mentor teachers are highly trained in the state's standards and portfolio assessment process (Darling-Hammond, 2003)

Beerer (2002) reported that new teachers in Quakertown Community School District spends an extra fifteen days per year during a teacher's first five years. These extra days spent in a New Teacher Academy. These new teachers experience staff development that is catered toward them, focused on graduate course work, and ways to improve student enrichment and remediation (Beerer, 2002). These teachers also receive trained mentor teachers. Throughout the first year, new teachers are allowed to select staff development needs that meet their personal learning needs. During the second and third years of their teaching careers teachers involved in the New Teacher Academy meet during the summer for a week -long session focusing on student achievement and instructional practices. Throughout the school year teachers receive follow up sessions on effective teaching. Finally in years four and five teachers use their time focusing on specific staff development, graduate course work, and working on their enrichment and remediation program (Beerer, 2002)

This model induction process is designed to assist new teachers to adjust to an existing school system (Feiman-Nemser, 2003). Survival in a new school setting greatly depends on the existing teachers. New teachers are sometimes hesitant to ask veteran teachers for help on classroom matters. However, when new teachers do ask for advice, the suggestions often conflict with their philosophies of education. Feiman-Nemser (p.28) said, "Schools are individual classrooms connected by a common parking lot, keep teachers separated from one another, reinforcing their isolation and sense of autonomy. Without easy access to one another, teachers may feel reluctant to share problems or ask for help, believing that good teachers figure things out on their own." A school system that supports induction programs needs to support them in a productive and ongoing

manner. New teachers still may find themselves alone with their questions if mentors are not taking their role professionally. New teachers need to learn more from their mentors than just where to get their morning coffee.

Johnson and Kardos (2002) notice the need for new teachers to have on site staff development. These new teachers need immediate assistance from a culture that is supportive and reassuring in times of difficulty. A report of a 1997 interview with Darling-Hammond notes that teachers need a time with their colleagues to be reflective, build relationships, and create strategies.

### *Challenges for Future Growth in Staff Development*

In reviewing the current literature on staff development, several authors mentioned barriers to providing effective staff development. Novick (1996), Stout (1996), and Sparks (1997b) focused on a lack of funding for staff development needs. Novick and Darling-Hammond (1999) explored the issue of teacher time to participate in staff development.

The largest barrier to implementing effective staff development tends to be monetary. In 1997, Darling-Hammond stated that even though the Commission on Education recommended that at least one percent of state and local education funding be devoted to staff development, this was just a start (Sparks, 1997b). Stout (1996) pointed out that staff development programs result in direct and indirect costs to local and state agencies. Direct costs occur when consultants provide workshops or training. If substitutes need to be hired to replace the teachers while they attend the staff development activities, this adds to the direct cost of the district. Stout (1996) mentioned that the largest indirect cost that many districts face when implementing staff

development is the compensation systems. If a staff development opportunity provides graduate credit at the completion of the course, teachers may receive a salary increase for the class. In 1986-1987 California estimated \$1700 was spent on staff development per certified staff member (Stout, 1996).

If school districts are serious about providing quality and effective staff development, then teachers need to be provided with flexible schedules to accommodate the time demands. Darling-Hammond (1999) stated that American teachers teach more than 1,000 hours per year. She compared these statistics to the 600 to 800 hours per year that teachers in most other nations spend with students. The remainder of the international teachers' time is devoted to class preparation, meetings with students and parents, participating in study groups, research, or demonstrations. Darling-Hammond (1999) compared this amount of "planning" time to that of an American teacher, who spent only 8.3 minutes in preparation for every hour spent in the classroom. One school tried flexible schedules to support their teacher's added learning time. International High School in New York City allowed their teachers to have half-day staff development time each week while students participated in clubs. Also, teachers were provided with 70 minutes of planning time daily to collaborate with their colleagues (Darling-Hammond, 1999). Teachers then worked together to teach the students in 70- minute class periods. At Hefferan Elementary School in Chicago, teachers work four full days with the children, and on the fifth day teachers utilize this time for staff development while the students are in special classes.

Teachers also place many barriers upon themselves in the area of staff development. Many teachers do not see the importance of staff development. Why

should they grow professionally? Duke (1993) found that with every struggling student one could possibly find a deficiency within his/her teacher. Teachers often blame factors outside their control for their students' lack of achievement.

Veteran teachers often have experienced the latest reform efforts. These efforts are sometimes dropped when there is a transition in administration, funding is lost, or priorities change. Therefore, veteran teachers feel that the long time commitments to the reform efforts are not there. Another reason why many teachers may be resistant to staff development could be the manner in which it is implemented. Duke (1993) found that many teachers refuse to accept the top-down planning of staff development.

Teachers may oppose staff development for personal reasons. After teaching for several years educators possibly will feel that they have mastered the art of teaching. However, the methods that educated children 15 years ago are not as successful for the children of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In addition, committing to growing professionally takes time and effort. Dealing with the demands of work and family teachers are often pressed for additional time. Many teachers are overwhelmed with all the daily activities in today's society (Duke, 1993).

Growing professionally involves a great amount of effort, energy, and risk. Duke (1993) stated that teachers were often hesitant of failure. People associate failure with losing the respect of their professional colleagues. "Rather than risk these reactions from coworkers, they choose to blend in avoiding any initiative that might set them apart from or bring excessive attention (Duke, p.771)."

School systems that are trying to implement new professional development should be sensitive to the fact that not all teachers are ready in their professional careers or

personal lives to commit to staff development. When teachers are forced to develop professional growth goals such goals often lack planning. Reading literature, meeting with other professionals, and visiting different settings should be some activities taken into consideration when planning to promote professional growth

### *Summary*

According to the literature review on staff development many educators have predetermined opinions concerning staff development programs. Whether positive or negative, these judgments affect the attitudes of the educators when they attend staff development activities. Staff development activities once involved mainly setting up one's classroom for the upcoming school year. However, in the last 10 years, staff development programs have become more directed toward the end product of helping students succeed. Veteran teachers often feel that staff development programs are a waste of time and the methods currently being utilized in the classroom are ineffective. However, beginning teachers are often grasping for ideas to allow them to be effective in the classroom. This literature quoted research that staff development is important for promoting student success. Yet, many educators are still skeptical. While some veteran teachers are often unaccepting of the changes that staff development programs often bring, the students of today are not the typical students from the past. The societal changes that have come to schools necessitate that a wide variety of instructional techniques geared toward individual differences of students be utilized in order to teach the curriculum to every student.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODS AND PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to collect and report the perceptions of staff development programs of elementary schools according to teachers. Secondly, the study was designed to determine if staff development programs are providing valuable knowledge to educators' classrooms that in return promotes student achievement. In addition, this research provided insight into the perceived staff development needs of apprentice teachers as compared to veteran teachers. This study could allow school districts to evaluate their current staff development programs and determine if changes should be made.

#### *Design of the Study*

The design chosen for this study was a qualitative method. Focusing on the phenomenological aspect of qualitative research allowed the study to incorporate educators' perceptions, both emotionally and intellectually, about staff development. The qualitative method was selected to reveal educators' stated perceptions concerning staff development programs. These perceptions of staff development were developed from prior experiences during their professional careers. As an educator, this researcher had personal experience and knowledge of elementary staff development programs. This prior knowledge allowed the researcher to be connected with the phenomena being studied and determine the method for the study. Using the qualitative process gave the study the method by which "thick rich" descriptive interviews could occur. Lincoln and Guba (1985) stated that thick rich description occurred when the reader knew everything



in order to understand the findings (p.125). This technique allows the reader to conceptualize the data from both an emotional and an intellectual level.

### *Development of the Interview Guide*

Because I had prior knowledge of the research topic, I selected the interview process to obtain a more comprehensive descriptive understanding of other educators' perceptions of a variety of staff development models. Through the interview process this study provided a wide-range of experiences and knowledge of staff development programs. Broken into various segments, the interviews contained topics concerning the following concepts: current perceptions of staff development, knowledge gained, and the impact on apprentice teachers. This research project utilized both the semi-structured and open-ended interview processes. I asked additional questions necessary to obtain specific aspects of a participant's response. Prior to implementing the research several educators with various backgrounds and experience levels were provided the interview protocol to assess the validity of the interview questions. Educators were asked to read and evaluate each question to ensure clarity and validity. The individuals who participated in the assessment were not involved in the actual study. This study focused on 25 K-4 educators within the school systems of Washington County, Johnson City, and Unicoi County. Additional participants were added until theoretical saturation was achieved. Each participant was interviewed individually for approximately an hour during which each responded to six interview questions and three survey questions.

*Interview Questions for Teacher's Perceptions for Staff Development*

- 1.) Think about your three most favorable experiences with staff development sessions. These sessions may differ greatly in terms of content, format, or depth of subject matter. Think why these sessions were so memorable to you. What made these sessions so effective and memorable?
- 2.) In reflecting on these three favorable staff development sessions how has the knowledge gained in these sessions impacted your student's achievement?
- 3.) What made those staff development sessions successful? Or, what were the best things about those staff development sessions?
- 4.) When looking back on these staff development sessions, how do they compare to other staff development sessions that your school system provides? (timing, location, content, compensation, etc.)
- 5.) Being an apprentice teacher reflect on how the systems' staff development program has impacted the beginning of your teaching career. How have the staff development programs affected your teaching?
- 6.) Now I would like you to think about your three least favorable experiences with staff development. Explain why these sessions were your least favorable activities.
- 7.) In your opinion, what are the strengths of your system's staff development program? How could it be improved?

*Population and Sample*

This study involved the population of elementary teachers employed in the school systems of Washington County, Johnson City, and Unicoi County during the 2003-2004 school year. These school systems were selected to provide the study with variation in school system population, demographics, and funding. Educators selected for this study

encompassed male and female veteran and apprentice teachers. The sampling technique used in this study was a purposeful sampling technique. Maximum variation was used to purposefully pick a wide range of variation along dimensions of interest amongst the participants. Principals were asked to select the participants from their schools.

Principals were given the access to telephone conversation script to be used. This allowed them to make decisions as to which teachers would ensure that the variables requested were met in the research. This technique was selected because the participants were likely to be information-rich in the area that was being studied. Using this technique helped ascertain that subgroups of educators would be represented.

Participants were selected from each school system to total twenty-five individuals taking part in the research study. Only teachers in grades K-4 grade were asked to participate in the research. The amount of teaching experience was taken into consideration when selecting the eight teachers from each school system. The group of teachers selected contained apprentice teachers as well as veteran teachers. This arrangement allowed for two viewpoints of each school system's staff development programs: one teacher who was familiar with the staff development program and one who was new to the system.

The following data was collected from the teacher demographic surveys completed during the interviews.

#### School system demographics

1. School system A: approximately 7,800 students and 450 teachers
2. School system B: approximately 9,000 students and 500 teachers
3. School system C: approximately 2,700 students and 150 teachers

#### Teacher demographics

##### 1. Educational levels

4 teachers: post master's degree

10 teachers: master's degree

11 teachers: bachelor's degree

## 2. Experience levels

10 teachers: 1-3 years experience

1 teacher: 4-7 years experience

7 teachers: 8-15 years experience

7 teachers: 15+ years experience

### *Data Collection*

Data for this study were collected by means of a one-on-one interview with each participant. This method allowed for multiple sources and methods to examine the findings of the interviews on staff development. The participants of the study were involved in interviews that occurred during or after school. Before an interview began, I informed the interviewee about the selection process and guaranteed confidentiality. These interviews were approximately one hour in length and focused on six semi-structured open-ended interview questions and three survey questions. At the conclusion of the interviews, member checking was used. In their book, *Naturalistic Inquiry*, Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that using member checking is a crucial technique for establishing credibility (p.314). This technique allowed the respondent an opportunity to assess intentions, correct errors, and volunteer additional information. After the interview recordings were transcribed, I sent interview transcriptions to the participants through email, fax, or in person. When necessary the participants made the appropriate changes to the interview transcripts and initialed the documents to verify their accuracy. I asked additional questions for clarity and accuracy of the responses. At the conclusion of each interview, I summarized the major focus points covered and provided the respondents ample time to clarify their responses and provide added information as needed. Each participant was assured that his or her responses to the interview questions would remain confidential. With permission from the participants, the interviews were

recorded to maintain accurate findings. After each interview the responses were then transcribed into detailed conversations. The NUD\*IST 4.0, a qualitative analysis program, was used to document the interviews. After each interview was transcribed the file was then imported into the NUD\*IST 4.0 program and coded. The coding of the documents allowed categories and themes to emerge from the data. Following each interview a journal of personal notations about nonverbal cues and personal reflections was kept.

### *Data Analysis*

After transcribing the participants' interviews, the data were analyzed using the interpretational analysis method. This allowed me to determine any themes or patterns within the interviews to explain teacher's perceptions of staff development. After completing the interviews, the data were compiled into the NUD\*IST 4.0 software program. Nodes or categories were then developed to label or categorize the data. This categorizing of the data was essential in determining the correlations between the interviews. This process allowed for further grouping of related information from various participants to answer the research questions. After coding the data, I noted particular themes that were emergent from the various interviews.

### *Trustworthiness*

Within this study every effort was used to maintain trustworthiness of the research. Credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability were four concepts that Lincoln and Guba stated were the naturalist's equivalents to internal validity, external validity, reliability, and objectivity of qualitative research (1985). In terms of credibility, I employed the technique of member checking after each interview.

This method allowed the participant to determine the accuracy of the interviews. Each participant was asked to verify or review his or her statements for accuracy and completeness. Despite having prior knowledge of the research topic, I was cautious to not reveal any preconceived ideas or bias on the topic.

An auditor was also used throughout the study to maintain the accuracy of the study. The auditor examined the process by which the research was conducted and examined the records. Providing the auditor with an audit trail established confirmability of the study. Lincoln and Guba (1985) pointed out Halpern's six categories of an audit trail: raw data, data reduction and analysis, data reconstruction and synthesis, process notes, materials relating to intentions and dispositions, and instrument development. I provided the auditor with transcribed notes or field notes, taped recordings of interviews, theme categories, and my personal research journal. The auditor listened to the recorded interviews and evaluated the transcripts provided as to the correctness of their factual content. The auditor served as a consultant during the research process in terms of responding to emergent themes from the data.

#### *Summary*

In chapter four, the data are presented in emergent themes from the interviews that attempt to answer the research questions presented in this study. Each research question is addressed using data from the participant's interviews. These data are grouped or categorized into relevant themes that are indicative of the participants' perceptions of staff development. Individual school systems will receive an executive summary of the findings of the data for future reference when planning staff development activities in their systems.

## CHAPTER 4

### ANALYSIS OF DATA

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences with staff development in elementary schools. The participants' perceptions were also explored to determine whether or not staff development programs were perceived to provide educators with valuable knowledge that promotes student achievement. Staff development needs of apprentice educators as compared to veteran educators were also explored within this research project. Analysis of these data, school systems should be able to design quality staff development that will provide all teachers with effective staff development opportunities.

#### *Selection of Participants*

As designed, this study involved conducting one-on-one interviews with veteran and apprentice teachers in three public school systems in Northeast Tennessee. Principals of nine schools within the three systems were contacted by phone. When speaking with the school principals all were asked to select three to four teachers in their building who met the desired criteria for the study. Those criteria were to identify teachers within their buildings who were strong participants of the staff development opportunities provided for them. I wanted to talk with teachers who went beyond the systems' requirements for staff development and viewed staff development as a tool to make them more qualified educators. Principals were also asked to identify teachers who were the opposite of the first group of teachers. These were teachers who may or may have not completed their staff development requirements for the school year or perceived staff development as a chore. Consideration was also given to selecting veteran and

apprentice teachers. A phone conversation guide was used when speaking with the principals to ensure consistency between conversations (see Appendix D). This basic format allowed for minimum variation to be achieved within the study.

The school systems selected for this study were diverse in their student population and school settings. School System A consisted of approximately 7,800 students and approximately 450 teachers. School System B was a school system made up of an estimated 9,000 students with approximately 500 teachers in 13 schools. School System C was a small, rural county system comprised of 6 schools totaling an estimated 2,700 students with approximately 150 teachers. Nine schools within the three systems participated in the study. As the systems differed with their characteristics so did the schools. Six schools were K-5, one school was K-4, and two schools were K-8. The smallest school in the study consisted of 243 children in a K-5 setting. The largest school participating in the study was a K-8 with approximately 800 students. All but two schools had over 50% of their school population who were economically disadvantaged. One school that participated in the study had 80% of their student population who were economically disadvantaged.

Twenty-five teachers were interviewed in the study. Both veteran and apprentice teachers were included. To be considered an apprentice teacher, the participants had to have taught 2 or 3 years. Teachers who had only 1 year of experience were not included in this study due to the limited amount of time that they had been exposed to staff development opportunities. Teachers who had taught 4 years or more were considered to be veteran teachers. Teaching experience for this study was divided into four categories within the study, 1-3 years, 4-7 years, 8-15 years, and 15+years. Ten teachers had taught



from 1 to 3 years in the profession. One teacher had 4 to 7 years experience teaching. Seven teachers noted that they had 8 to 15 years of experience. Seven other teachers interviewed in the study reported 15 years plus of service in the education field. Twenty-three participants were female and two were male. All teachers in the study taught in grades K-4. Four of the 25 teachers interviewed had received post master's degrees. Ten teachers in the study had received their master's degrees, and 11 teachers had only bachelor's degrees. During the interview process teachers were asked to provide the number of hours in which they had participated in staff development during the school day and outside of the school day. In total, teachers who were participants within this study participated in 915 hours of staff development training, 295 hours were during the school day and 620 were after school hours.

The interviews of the participants were conducted in a one-on-one format, often taking place in the individual teacher's classrooms. This setting allowed the teachers to be comfortable and secure in their surroundings. Each interview lasted for approximately one hour either during the teacher's planning time, before school, or after school. Prior to the interview all participants were informed of the purpose of the study and provided a consent form. Interview participants also completed a short questionnaire comprised of three questions focusing on level of academic degree received, years of teaching experience, and number of hours of staff development participation.

To ensure their confidentiality each participant was given a pseudonym. These pseudonyms were in no way connected to the participant's race, sex, given name, or school system. Chosen were short last names with first name in alphabetical order. A. Jones, B. Brown, C. Stump, D. Long, E. Smith, F. Ingle, G. Early, H. Marks, and I. Davis

were all Kindergarten teachers. Teaching first grade students were J. Wells and K. Ayers. Teaching second grade were L. May, M. Cox, N. Moore, O. Mise, P. Vines, and Q. Lewis. Teachers in the third grade classrooms were R. Green, S. Adams, T. Tyree, and U. Whit. V. Mills taught fourth grade. W. Black taught first through third grade in a multi-age classroom. X. Laws was a Title I Reading teacher for first through fifth grade students. Y. Dean taught special education students in a resource classroom comprised of third through fifth grade students.

Several themes concerning teacher perceptions of staff development emerged from the data analysis. Themes identified in that analysis are presented below. Impact of staff development on student achievement, staff development's effect on teacher knowledge, perceived factors that influence staff development, and teachers' need for staff development with proven application for their classes. were identified as common themes from the data analysis.

#### *Staff Development's Impact on Student Achievement*

Within the last several years society has placed lofty goals upon educators to meet state accountability standards. Teachers felt even greater pressure after President Bush signed into law the *No Child Left Behind Act*. It was vital that teachers' perceptions have an effect on whether or not they choose to implement the latest theory or concepts being provided in staff development sessions. If teachers recognized the importance of the staff development as it is applied to the curriculum and their classrooms, they were much more likely to implement these new techniques into their classrooms. If teachers believed that these new strategies affected student achievement, they were more likely to be willing to

devote the necessary time to incorporate these staff development ideas into their own teaching.

### *Higher Expectations for Students' Learning*

During the interview process teachers stated that students were being asked to perform at higher levels than ever before. These expectations were often placed on teachers using the top-down method. Teachers were seeing their students perform at levels that were unthinkable five years ago. Skills that had been taught at the first grade previously were now being assessed in the kindergarten curriculum. C. Stump, a kindergarten teacher in a small rural setting, stated that when she began teaching, her philosophy was letting children have life experiences. She explained,

Before I was completely early childhood. I have two children that are teenagers. I was completely early childhood where their first experiences were all life experiences and that is wonderful. Now I see that children are smarter now with the technology that we have. They can do more than just the life experiences that you can give them.

Having high expectations often resulted in higher achievement. If students were exposed to higher levels of learning through daily conversations with peers or curriculum topics, students were more likely to build upon that newfound knowledge. C. Stump further explained that tying students' life experiences to their daily class curriculum allowed students to gain more knowledge. She stated,

There are a lot of things that they are capable of and we are doing more things with them. Basically they're just a lot more advanced than I was as a kindergartener. Kindergarten is a miracle everyday. Everybody learns at their own pace, but now I am doing punctuation in morning message and people can't believe it. If I'm talking about exclamation marks, and I'm using one because I am excited, then if out of my twenty-three kindergarteners five of those get that then why not mention that? Then those five kids can take on with that. That is just like with vocabulary words. If we are talking about our dominant hand and they hear it in the

literature and then they can connect the two. Today's new word was "discussion". Casey wanted to join the basketball team, because his friends in class were on the basketball team I told him he needed to have a discussion with his dad. He came back and said okay what is a discussion. So we had a discussion about the word. They have discussions everyday and it is just a different term for them.

N. Moore, a veteran teacher with 30 years plus in the educational profession, was reflecting on her students' performance in the classroom based on her staff development experiences. Her classroom was overflowing with children's books and charts that were made from literature circles. It was evident that the students had a very hands-on approach to learning in her room. Mrs. Moore was a teacher who had extremely high expectations for her second grade students. She made this evident through her conversations about her students' progress in reading and the students ability to connect real life experiences or other knowledge to various subjects. She explained,

I think it has been very beneficial and very positive. My children are doing much more reading than they did five years ago. It has made me realize that I need to have more books available in the classroom for the children to read- trade books. Although I use the basal reader on a limited basis most of the instruction comes from trade books. I think that they have learned to like reading more and they do read more. They have learned to connect their reading to other aspects of their lives. We can be talking about something and they say, "Oh I remember that was kind of like the character in the other story that we read." I think that it has been very beneficial for them in higher order thinking skills. Their thinking skills have been increased because of the things that we have been doing.

Ms. Black restated the opinions of C. Stump and N. Moore regarding connecting the learning to student's life experiences.

If you are teaching them a concept about the ocean but they have never been to the ocean, they can't take it a step further if they have never experienced it. I think making it real to them and connecting it to their world can really impact their learning.

### *Staff Development Allowed Teachers to Be More Effective in Educating Children*

For many teachers choosing to participate in staff development sessions is based on the knowledge that something from those sessions would benefit their children. Throughout the interview process teachers stated that the staff development sessions allowed them to become better educators whether that was from learning a new method or being reassured that what they were doing in the classroom was appropriate. Teachers reported they felt more knowledgeable of their craft when participating in staff development sessions. W. Black was an apprentice teacher in a multi-age first through third grade classroom. She had previously worked in another state where she received the majority of her staff development experience. Having moved to the area last year she was new to her system. However, she spoke passionately about her staff development experiences. When asked if her staff development experiences influenced her student's achievement, she responded,

I would say tremendously because they have helped shape me as a teacher. A lot of those I have attended as an intern and early on in my teaching career. A lot of them talked about the importance of the learning environment and having a nonthreatening learning environment and that can impact your kids and everything that they do. Also, creating that community and building inclusion and that was what the Tribes Training was all about having the community feeling, family feeling, that nonthreatening comfortable space to share, try something new. Then of course Brain Works that's all about brain compatible learning. That encouraged me to do more hands on activities and connecting it to prior knowledge and making it real to the students. All these ideas that you hear going through college and having someone show you how to implement it into your classroom. It has greatly impacted my students' achievement and shaped me as a teacher.

For apprentice teachers participating in staff development experiences profoundly affected their classroom instructional methods when they chose to implement new skills. Whether that was teaching multiplication tables through using manipulatives or drilling

the students with paper pencil tests, the teacher decided the most effective method for teaching their students. For most apprentice teachers selecting a method to teach a concept to students was often overwhelming. Thus, the teachers assumed responsibility for both their methods selected and the outcomes, whether those were positive or negative. H. Marks, an apprentice teacher in kindergarten at a school with 80% of the student population economically disadvantaged noted that participating in staff development sessions made her a better teacher. She explained,

I have seen much improved reading skills with my students due to these staff development sessions. This is in large part because I feel as if I am a better teacher in the area. The students I have this year seem to be at a point in reading that my students were not at last year at the same time. Letter and sound recognition skills are much stronger, with several children already reading. I realize that part of this is due to the skill level students are at when entering kindergarten, however I also believe that this is due to the methods I have learned through these staff development sessions

R. Green was a kindergarten teacher in a rural, small community. Her school had an enrollment of approximately 230 students. Her own child was playing in the room when the interview was taking place. Receiving her master's degree within the last year she enjoyed the continual learning that college provided her in the classroom. She agreed with the comments that staff development opportunities had made her a better teacher.

I think that I have been a better teacher for having gone to participate in them. The different styles and activities have created a more hands on approach whereas the more children have hands on experiences the more they are going to connect with the ideas in the curriculum. So probably just bringing that back and letting them experience what you have done in a different way. In just the same topic at a different angle will let them connect it with connect the dots.

Veteran teachers as well as apprentice teachers were looking for ways in which to improve their students' achievement. Staff development opportunities had given veteran

and apprentice teachers the necessary tools to educate all students in their classroom. E. Smith, a teacher who had taken 20 years off to raise her family was a teacher who believed in hands-on learning. The morning of the interview I entered her classroom prior to the students. She was busy inflating the space station, a large dome shaped object that allowed students to pretend to be in space. Ms. Smith commented that students could not see the dome deflated. When asked whether her staff development experiences influenced her students' achievement, she stated,

I felt when I was more knowledgeable of the material it allowed my students to be more successful. That was where I was going with that question. I know it is hard to measure their achievement.

Q. Lewis had taught second grade for 30 years plus in a K-4 school with a student population of approximately 700 students. She had a room decorated with student's work that she explained was the results of a Writer's Workshop that she had been attending in staff development courses. She mentioned that students in her class were more confident within themselves as a result of her experiences with staff development. Ms. Lewis noted that exposing students to great literature and encouraging students to read provided them with the courage to excel within their academics. She expanded,

Well, for one thing they have learned to enjoy books so much more. When you pick one author and choose several books usually they are going to have different levels of reading. They are going to say I can read this easy book by this author. Now I am going to read a more difficult one. They are not afraid to try. If they really decide that they like an author like Mem Fox, you start with her very low level reading books and go on up to a fourth grade level. If they really love her they will try so hard, and they are not afraid to try that. The AR reader also helps with that, but it is just that when they find – Well, with the fractured fairy tales we do a lot of that- all the different ways that you can do Cinderella. Then they want to read, and it is more of developing a love for reading and a love of literature. They hunger for it. So they are not afraid to try. It does

help their TCAP test. We work on when you come to things that you don't know substitute a word, don't be intimidated, read on and then try to make sense of it and come back. Read on; think of the sentences before, and the sentences after.

### *Raising Student Achievement School- Wide*

Throughout the interview process one topic that appeared in several conversations when discussing staff development in connection with student achievement was the fact that many schools base their staff development needs from their school improvement plan. School improvement plans should steer a school in the process of achieving predetermined goals set by the school's faculty and staff. These goals focused on weak areas within the school's curriculum. One of the many strategies that teachers mentioned utilizing in attaining these goals was participating in staff development. When I entered the classroom of K. Ingle, a kindergarten teacher in a school that had an 80% population of economically disadvantaged students she was busy completing a painting project as a gift for parents. She talked avidly about her classroom and the school wide staff development opportunities that her school provided to increase student achievement.

When we have staff development we know our needs. We know the things were weak in or the things we need to advance in. So we know those are going to be the things that we're going to talk about or have staff development opportunities. Our principal is going to say okay here is this. What do you think? We come together as a faculty in agreement, which I think, makes a big difference. It's not going to be basket-weaving 609. It's going to make a difference somehow. It's going to be language scores or math scores. It's going to relate to us and to keep our yearly progress keep going forward.

She continued to speak about how her school system and school had brought quality people to work on areas that were in need of significant change.



Our system has been very progressive. We have brought people in to us that are on the cutting edge and not the box that was popular last year, but what is coming for the future. We had Pat Wolfe when Pat Wolfe was just nobody. We had Alfie Kohn, and he really ruffled a lot of feathers, but he's out there. Being on the cutting edge is a strength and being ahead of the game. Looking at what you need specifically at your school and your students and spending time. Not on something that is not applicable. Like if you don't need everyday math, and if you don't need Write From The Beginning then don't spend time there. Like with us we spent time where it was needed and then received follow-up. I think it is two fold the system gives us a chance; the system brings in the highest quality people that they can bring in, and then site based. She gives us that follow-up. Keep asking us what we want. It shouldn't be someone just sitting somewhere saying this year we're going to do this. We have input. I hear these stories of other teachers who have to sit through these things and think oh! I think that is the key to anything, if you don't need or it is not the need of your students. If you don't take your data and look at it, and say we have a weakness in Social Studies. Then spend staff development on English which is a duh. Look at what your kids need. Look at your data. That is where you need to go.

Veteran teacher P. Vines supported what K. Ingle talked about their school philosophy. She spoke about how her principal managed the staff development needs in their school.

She is always out there looking to pull up our pupil achievement. She is a statistics person and always looking at the numbers. She can tell where our weaknesses are and can help us pinpoint. She focuses on the few things that we need to work on. She goes out and hunts staff development for us. For instance in January the other third grade teacher and I went to Atlanta for a two-day workshop on PT Practices That Work in A Classroom. See that is wonderful to be able to do that for two days and feel free to try it. She is paying our way and getting a sub for two days. She is wonderful. A lot of staff development comes back to your administrators and administration and what they expect. I have been in schools where you can get a day here and a day there and say I got that over with. With what we're doing here everything we are doing is very pertinent to pull up pupil achievement. I think our test scores show that we have made very big gains. I prefer these types of workshops over the make it and take it workshops.

O. Mise talked about how her school had selected staff development opportunities in the past and how the current principal handled those decisions. She also pointed out the downfalls of focusing specifically on one subject area.

What I like and our principal does a very good job with this is when we receive in-service training usually geared toward our school improvement plan. A year ago that wasn't necessarily the case. I want it to be geared age- appropriate and then to what our school improvement plan will be. About five years ago we had a math initiative and then, reading and language scores took drops. I think that will be the initiative next year. I would like to see in-service and other workshops not just geared in one area. A variety of things if you concentrate in one area likely the areas that have been high are going to slip even though they have been high before. You need to have equal emphasis on subject areas.

The schools and systems in this study varied greatly. The schools were composed of students of diverse cultures and backgrounds, different philosophies were evident within the classrooms, and administration styles varied among the schools. Therefore, allowing the school improvement plan to guide the school's staff development activities provided schools with specific guidance for their school. School system A was a site based managed system. The school system allowed each school to provide individual school staff development based upon their needs. O. Mise taught in this system. When discussing student achievement and staff development, she stated,

School-wide -I think most of our improvements are geared toward our school improvement plan, and I think system wide that is what they are geared toward, too. Each school has it's own separate improvement plan, and the work is supposed to be on improving that area like one school did not get an A. Of course they have a very different school improvement plan this year with all of the minority students and ESL that kept them down.

K.Ayers added to the comment that O. Mise said.

Pretty much because they are targeting certain things. That has to be a point because whether or not they all meet our grade level. Even though they may not all meet my grade level I have to understand this is what is coming down the pike. I know we don't have a lot of control about these

things. Reading is a big thing right now. Still reading is a big thing for here right now. You may know this too. You may have taught long enough to know that one year, your math scores go sky high. Well, what happens in the mean time? Your reading scores go to the bottom. So the next year you target reading. It just goes back and forth.

### *Staff Development Affects Teacher Knowledge*

Within an individual classroom children are often diverse in their family backgrounds, personalities, and learning needs. However, each classroom is given to one teacher, and it is that teacher's responsibility to educate these students regardless of his/her experience level, materials needed to teach the subject, or the content knowledge of the subject possessed by the teacher. Society has placed lofty goals upon educators in the past trying to ensure that all children were proficient in various subjects. However, society should remember that educators remain as the answer to the to the problem. Through effective teaching educators should be able to move closer to the goal of educating all children. Darling-Hammond (1999) mentioned that the Commission on Education stated that an investment in teacher knowledge and skills would provide a greater increase in student achievement than any other use of the education dollar. Teachers want to improve their classrooms. However, not all educators know how to improve and what aspects of their classroom need improvement.

### *Graduate Classes Offered By the School System*

The teachers in this study indicated that they were searching for ways in which to ensure that all students were learning in their classroom. Reaching all students in today's classrooms has become more difficult through the diversity in the classroom composition. However, teachers were striving to find effective staff development that allowed them to learn new techniques or strategies that would provide them with added knowledge to

educate the variety of students in the classroom. Throughout the research project many teachers in School System B referred to graduate classes that had been provided by the systems throughout the years. These classes had evidently made an impact on the teachers who participated. For the past 10 years these teachers received tuition free graduate classes paid for by the system. The classes were one week long during the summer months and focused on a specific subject such as language arts or math. When asked about her most favorable staff development memories, N. Moore stated the graduate classes. She expanded,

I think that the best ones that I have received are the ones from graduate classes mainly for me those that involved the professors. Lester Laminack has done a good job, also with the ones that we have done. He is kind of at a higher level than the rest of us being a published author. Mrs. Kimzy is pretty much at our level and accepts where we are and knows that we need to go a little bit further. Last week she came to our class and taught a lesson and that was probably the most beneficial of anything seeing her doing what she did to teach the class. It is much better seeing it performed rather than just reading a textbook or someone telling you about it. It was a lot easier that way I think. All the staff development that we have received from Western Carolina has been very beneficial from the math on to everything. We have pretty much a broad spectrum on things that we can do to make education in our classrooms better. Those are the ones that I think. I think that Terry Rose and Norma Kimzy and Lester Laminack are the ones that you are actively involved with helps also. I think that it is a great plus if you take these in the summer you get graduate credit. I think that is a big plus. Along those lines if you take enough then you can get a pay raise. So that is a big plus. It has helped me tremendously with my teaching efforts and has also helped me monetarily. I think that I only paid for three of my classes to get my master's plus 45. So seven classes were obtained and it was over a longer period of time. If you wanted to do it quickly you would have to take your own. I think that I have benefited more those staff development classes than a class that I could have taken at ETSU.

Veteran teacher Q. Lewis restated the same comments that were made by N. Moore concerning the graduate classes. She had participated in all of the graduate classes that

were offered by the school system. Q. Lewis replied that the graduate classes had made an enormous impact on her as a teacher.

Well my three most memorable staff development experiences would deal with the summer graduate classes that we have been able to take with Lester Laminack, Norma Kimzy, and Barbara Bell. All of those combined have made an enormous impact. With Lester I have really learned to read children's books and enjoy them as I never have before. He just of sort of opened the door and turned the light on. I can remember when I started teaching I would read a child's book to children sort of like I would read it. I wouldn't become part of the book like Lester does. Now I am just the silliest I can be and the silliest I am. They love it. Terry Rose I didn't mention her before but she has helped with the math. I have learned to associate books that deal with math and carry them over into the curriculum. I think I have been more than seven years. Every one has been better than the one before. We spend a week working and discussing. He gives us certain books and how to present and all the different aspects. Like synonyms and antonyms books to use with that. Character comparisons and contrast different books that really pin point that and author studies just opening a new doorway.

X. Laws was a Title I teacher in reading teaching grades first through fifth grade. When entering her classroom you felt welcomed and that learning was taking place. In the center of the room, a large overstuffed couch allowed students an area to enjoy reading. Students' work was displayed throughout the room. Students were definitely involved in their reading. It was evident from the array of teacher and student made reading charts and books that adorned the room. Mrs. Laws talked about her decision to stay in her current system primarily because of the staff development opportunities that she was receiving. Having taught previously in her hometown school system she remarked that the staff development opportunities that she was currently receiving far outweighed her past experiences. When asked about her most favorable staff development sessions she stated the graduate courses. She explained further that the

classes allowed for reflection of her teaching. She also agreed with the compensation received in university credit as Q. Lewis and N. Moore.

It has made me want to learn more and grow professionally rather than just become stagnant. The graduate courses really helped you to correlate with the state standards and accomplishments and giving you time for reflection with those people. Having it offered by the school system helps because you really don't have enough money to go back to school yourself. Even the professional study group books were paid through the system. It is like a constant reflection which is what you should do as a teacher anyway. You should reflect on what you taught and where the students are and where you need to go. It is kind of like your map.

Apprentice teachers as well as veteran teachers stated that the graduate classes provided by School System B was one of G. Early's most favorable staff development sessions. All teachers, especially apprentice teachers, were searching for ways in which to ensure that students were succeeding in their classroom. G. Early stated the reasons why the graduate classes have been so effective for her.

The graduate classes that I took with Lester Laminack on reading and writing were memorable. He knows what he is talking about, because he gets out in the class. He gives you useful ideas that work, but stuff that works that you can go back and apply like even the next day. All mine are the professors from Western Carolina. Terry Rose, I took a grad class with her for math and the different in-services that they have done with her. Just to even go back and think like they do. You have to go back and think like they do what is a number. You have to go back with kindergarten. Sometimes it is hard to think that way. For as long as we can remember we have always known what a number is or a shape. You have to go even farther back than that with kindergarten.

X. Laws mentioned her system also provided the materials necessary to implement the new strategies. Many times when teachers were exposed to new innovative methods for teaching at these staff development sessions the materials necessary to implement these methods often expensive. The small amount of money that

a teacher receives annually to purchase consumable supplies would often not cover the materials necessary. School System B took the recommendations from the teachers to purchase these supplies every year when teachers were implementing the new methods.

Q. Lewis expressed her thoughts about the support that her system provided for the graduate class materials that she received.

Our elementary supervisor provides all the materials that we need. Like I told her it is like a revival. It is just like a revival. It gets you all pumped up in thinking this works and this is great. I always get about \$300 worth of books for attending the session and that is part of it. Well, she provided us with all the charts, post-it notes, journals, folders, and dry eraser markers. She has always given anything we have asked and anything we needed in order to carry out what we had learned. This is good follow through. They have presented us with a way to do things, how we should do it, and what will benefit the children. Our supervisor has always said, "Ok what do you need?" It ends up that we get it.

Veteran teacher N. Moore restated the same comments that Q. Lewis made about the materials received.

Yes, that is another thing that is very beneficial. I have gotten journals, sentence strips, markers, chart paper, and all kind of things that you need to teach these lessons. So then I don't have to go out and use my own money or the money that the county provides. I can use that for other things that I have needs for in the classroom.

#### *Follow-up Staff Development Sessions*

When staff development sessions are planned they should provide a time for feedback sessions. After a teacher has learned a new technique and has attempted to implement this new learning into the classroom, a time must be set aside for reflection. During this time each teacher should reflect on the teaching technique that has been implemented into his/her classroom, using his/her professional judgment to decide if successful transfer of the learning has taken place and whether it effected student

achievement. Allowing the information to “sink in” and think about how the material may be applied to the curriculum provided teachers with a time for reflection on the new material learned. X. Laws commented on her experience with follow- up sessions.

I think it is helpful that just having time to reflect on it, collaborate with Other educators, and being able to discuss it. Then having follow- up sessions because I know with the graduate sessions. We have the follow- up sessions during the school year to review what we did in the summer and where we are going in the school year.

When teachers participated in staff development sessions in the summer they stated that this provided a time for reflection on the subject area. Teachers said this timing allowed them to digest the material and decide how incorporating it into their classroom would be most effective. However, since sessions were often taught in the summer follow-up sessions were necessary to revisit the topic to answer questions and repeat the process if necessary. O.Mise, a veteran teacher, commented how staff development sessions with follow-up were handled at her school. She also spoke about how the follow-up sessions were used within the school day.

I start with the most recent. We have started focus learning. We have had workshops on it this summer. It is learning to teach so that it is effective for all children. We have a two day workshop in the summer. What really is nice about this is we are having following up in the school year. Also, our principal pays for each grade level to have a sub like a hour and a half one day a month We can meet as a third grade team to plan around our unit and essential questions that gives us a chance to work together and brainstorm. We really like that. So we can all be on the same page as a third grade. We have a sub that comes in on those days and we leave the classrooms and go downstairs and work.

E. Smith, a veteran teacher, talked about her experiences with follow-up sessions. She commented,

With Math Your Way, they brought in several people in the afternoon after school during the fall. I did participate in those as kind of a



refresher-what are you using, do you see any problems in your class. I think that there were two or three meetings. I'm not sure if I attended all of them. I know it was provided two or three times. That was very helpful.

During the interview process teachers in System B spoke about a staff development session that focused on writing, throughout the year teachers had been attending sessions conducted by a language arts professor. She provided the teachers with knowledge about conducting and managing a Writer's Workshop in their classrooms. Recently, the professor visited two of the schools that had participated in the study. Eventually, she would visit all schools within the system with the exception of the high schools. During this visit the professor would teach a writing lesson with a group of students while the teachers observed. After the lesson teachers had the opportunity to conference with her and ask questions. This session was considered a follow-up activity to the information that teachers had been receiving throughout the year. Q. Lewis described her visit

She came and met with the whole school. She did a demonstration with the K-1 teachers. She did a demonstration for the 2-3 teachers in this classroom and then she did a demonstration for 4-5 teachers. We got to choose one of three topics that we wanted her to do. Mine was to start a story. She met with the entire group of teachers. We discussed what she did, how it was beneficial, what she would have done in other circumstances, and how to follow through. She really didn't have any problems with this group. It was very rewarding and very good.

Prior to the interview the language arts professor had just visited N. Moore's school. Ms. Moore talked about her feelings and reaction to the professor's visit.

She came to my room and she taught a lesson to my students. All of the second and third grade teachers in the building came in and watched her teach the class, which was beneficial for all of us. Some may be doing some of the types of things that she wanted to do, but to see her put it into action and confirm what we are doing or say,"Ah, I can do that."

When asked to expand upon the visit in more detail, she replied,

We have had a class this past summer. I had the first of the classes and she had another session within the summer. This was the first one that I had taken with her and had some staff development sessions with her during the school day grade levels going to the CO and hearing her. We knew that she was coming during the school year, but we didn't know when. Those of us who were really excited about some of the things have already been preparing our room and doing some of the things that we had learned this summer. We were anticipating her coming, but kind of a little nervous about her coming. I think that we were glad that she saw some things that we had learned and were being utilized in the classroom.

Apprentice teacher B. Brown was able to observe the language arts professor teach the writing class. She expressed how the experience impacted her as a new teacher.

I think that was helpful in that she restated everything that she had taught us in the workshop. Even though it is the same material you still learn something new each time that we go over it from a different standpoint. She was working with the children that day and that was the first time that we had seen her do that. I think it was more beneficial to see her actually. I think it actually helped a lot of us. From what she did that day I actually came back that day that next hour and tried what she had done.

Actually, seeing the professor working with the children allowed the teachers to observe how the Writer's Workshop should be presented. Teachers expressed their feelings that this was an extremely helpful follow-up staff development session.

### *New Teacher Programs*

New teachers were often searching for ideas, methods, or suggestions that would allow them to succeed in their classroom the first year. Trying to maintain adequate discipline, teach the state standards, and reach all learners was a tremendous responsibility for new teachers. They were searching for any way in which to assist children in their learning. Wong (2002) contended that the best way in which to assist a

new teacher is through a teacher induction program. Professional development should begin before the teacher ever sees a classroom. Within the last few years teachers have found that the list of demands being placed upon them has increased dramatically. Effective staff development programs such as mentor programs and new teacher induction programs helped new teachers establish classroom procedures, routines, classroom management plans, and instructional practices. Ten apprentice teachers participated in the research study. All of the teachers spoke of participating in some type of new teacher program. When asked of her most favorable staff development experiences kindergarten teacher B. Brown stated the new teacher induction program provided her insight into the first year of teaching.

One that comes to mind is the New Teacher Induction Program. That was a series of three workshops that we went to during our first year teaching. We went through a book by Harry Wong called, The First Hundred Days of School- The First Year of Teaching. In that book it taught us to deal with just different scenarios that would come up in first year of teaching such as dealing with parents, problems in the classroom, dealing with problems within administration, how to deal with other teachers, what to stay out of, and what to get involved with.

When asked to describe the program in detail, she explained,

We had three sessions for two hours each. Everybody in the class was a first year teacher. The first half of the class we would go over different scenarios that may have happened to us recently that year. The teacher would discuss those with us. Also, we watched several of the Harry Wong videos from his conferences.

Ms. Brown expanded upon her knowledge that she had gained through the help of the staff development program in her school system.

I feel very fortunate that we have had these opportunities because I know that a lot of school systems do not have these opportunities to have these classes. Being a new teacher a lot of this stuff I would not have know.

Just in talking with other teachers from other school systems they are not giving these opportunities. So I feel that we are very lucky from that standpoint. When I look back on what I knew coming my first day of work and what I know now I feel very lucky.

Davis, a kindergarten teacher, who had taught for two years, attended the new teacher induction program last year. She pointed out some of the knowledge that she gained from participating in this program.

A teacher from our system led the program. It had some really good ideas in it like meet your kids at the door and make sure that you say hello to them. That is a common courtesy. They're not just your students, but they are people, too. He had some things in there about you're not here to be their friend. You need to make sure that they know that you are in charge. After they know that you're in charge you have fun with them, play with them, and be their friend. They have to know that you are the authority figure. If you don't have that the first two weeks of school, then you won't have that all year and that completely messes up the discipline in your room. The kids should walk in and know exactly what to do. I think that he was a fifth grade teacher. He had their morning work written on the board. That really helped. I did try to initiate some of that after we took the sessions. They have to come in, sign in, put their folders up, put their backpacks away, and either see papers on their desk to do morning work or read a book.

Davis did have a recommendation for the program. One thing that the seminars pointed out was the need to have certain aspects in your classroom in place by the second week of school. Mrs. Davis noted that the classes took place in October, she commented,

They only thing that I remember about timing is doing The First Days of School in October. We did the new teacher The First Days of School with Harry Wong. We did it in October. Well we have been in school for two months. He says you have to set up your classroom from the first days of school. If you don't have this by the first two weeks, you have lost the class. He said some really good stuff in there that I wish I would have known. To have that session a month before school started would have made a complete difference. Timing, like I said it was in October. It stretched from October to November. To have had that during the summer so you can prepare before your class starts, it would make a big difference in your first year teaching.

Teacher induction programs raised apprentice teachers' instructional skills, motivated their personalities, and made them feel secure in the classroom. Other teachers within the study participated in a different aspect of the teacher induction program focusing on utilizing veteran teachers as mentor teachers. This process was found to be very favorable among the apprentice teachers. Second grade teacher R. Green spoke about her mentor teacher experiences.

They assigned me a mentor teacher. We had to meet every two weeks. They assigned a senior teacher. It was the K teacher here. She came in and had a list of criteria to go over that she had to cover with me. It was well planned and organized because it touched on a lot of things that I wouldn't have even thought of. It gave you a good mapping of what you need to cover with each other. She was assigned to me, and I was able to brainstorm with her about or problem areas. It gave me somebody so that I didn't feel like I was the other second grade teacher. I was wearing her out asking curriculum things and plans she was doing. It gave me somebody else so I didn't feel like I was always with my other partnered teacher. I felt that I was asking so much that I overwhelmed. You know you don't want to bother somebody. You don't want to look stupid either. I was able to go to her about anything from discipline to curriculum to just how to handle parents or anything. That was encouraging. We covered a lot of things. We went to a new teacher seminar that included some extracurricular things that we got to do and talk. She was very supportive. It really did help. I miss that this year. We only did that the one year. I wish they would carry that on. New sets of circumstances, and new sets of children, and you're still kind of needing the backup and support. I am still having to ask the other second grade teacher a lot. I felt that I could have broken it up a little more and not been overwhelmed. You're just asking someone to give a lot of their time to you because you are new to the whole thing.

Green expressed her need to have the mentor program carried over beyond the first year of teaching. Her reasons were found to be similar to other new teachers. The support system should not be left behind just because the first year of teaching was completed. Teachers often needed extra support the next two to three years.

Kindergarten teacher A. Jones stated the mentor program benefited her knowledge level and comfort level during her first year in the teaching profession. New teachers tended to not want to “bother” veteran teachers in their grade level. Often new teachers relied on grade level teachers to show them the school procedures and guide them through the curriculum. Having a mentor teacher provided many new teachers with another asset. R. Green also stated that the mentor program was a strength of her system’s staff development program. She stated that when mentor teachers received stipends for their service it relieved some of the pressure from the apprentice teachers in thinking that they were being a bother.

The mentor program would be a strength as far as giving you the support you need and somebody. Mentors are paid a small stipend to do that service. You feel like okay I can bother them where it is just not a volunteer mentor program so they do get a small fee.

A. Jones noted a connection to her mentor teacher from working in her classroom previously as her assistant. This level of comfort was evident in her description of her experiences with the mentor program.

My mentor teacher, I was in her room as an assistant in preschool before I got the job. Any time there was a question or something that I wasn’t sure about I could go and talk to her. She could tell me about the procedure and somebody you could go pull your hair out with.

When asked about her thoughts for improvements for her system’s staff development program A. Jones made a recommendation for the mentor teacher program. She expanded,

The year before I started the mentor teacher program was to video the new teachers teaching a lesson. Then they would have meetings together. They just did that one year. I think that was a good idea to see what was going on in the classroom. They would video a lesson from each one of

the new teachers. Then all the mentors and new teachers would get together and watch the videos and give suggestions. Have you tried this or this might have worked. I think that was a good idea. I would like to see that come back.

### *College Preparation Compared to Staff Development*

With teachers expected to meet the demands of state and local standards teachers need to come to the classroom prepared to teach. Teacher preparation programs are meant to ensure that teachers are ready to enter the work force. However, during the interviews several participants stated they were not prepared to adequately teach their students and meet high standards. Apprentice teacher, I. Davis, said that her undergraduate degree did not fully prepare her to teach children. She stated,

We just weren't taught to teach. We were taught how to observe. We were taught how to do lesson plans. We were taught what was developmental appropriate, but we weren't taught to teach. We weren't taught this is how you get a child to write. This is how you start the foundation for math. We didn't get that in the Early Childhood Program. Early Childhood is PreK- 3. I didn't do anything over kindergarten. I observed in one kindergarten class at the very, very beginning of my undergraduate degree. They kept us mostly in the Early Childhood Center which is birth to age four. So we didn't get the public school these are the standards you have to meet, and this is how you meet those standards. I think that the staff development has really worked with the standards. Okay you have to teach this to these kids, and this is how you do it. In this system it has been really beneficial.

Apprentice teacher, G. Early agreed with I. Davis' statement about the college preparation program that she experienced. Now that she was participating in staff development programs within her system she stated that she was basically learning her craft all over again. She commented,

A lot of it is completely different than what we were taught in college. A lot of it they did not even go into that much detail or that much depth. It is a complete opposite almost. I guess that I feel better prepared and better

–I have more knowledge and know more about what they should be doing. More than that big span that you are going to be teaching K-8, but less talk about preschool, too. It is more specific to the grade level.

Teachers said that the educational training that they received in college did not even break through the surface of being able to teach the students. These teachers often stated they heard the terms whole language, hands on, or inclusion, but failed to be knowledgeable about these in terms of implementation

The number one thing would be the staff development courses that are offered from the university that our school system provides. I think that because they are more practical and walk you through like. I remember at college they would say just do whole language, but they could never tell you what it was or how to do it.

Apprentice teacher, B. Brown, stated the same opinion when comparing staff development courses she was currently receiving in her system with her pre-service training. Ms. Brown had recently participated in the tuition- free graduate classes with follow up sessions offered by her school system. When responding to her most favorable staff development experience she connected the training she was currently receiving to her past college experiences. She stated,

I have learned a great deal about writing and reading and how to incorporate it into the curriculum. Like I said with my college classes we really weren't taught how to actually teach a child to write, how to read a book, or pick good literature for that child.

H. Marks was a kindergarten teacher who had taught for two years. She stated that the staff development sessions that she was receiving in her professional career were extremely helpful. These sessions had provided her with continual training that carried over from her college experiences. When asked how the staff development had impacted her teaching, she replied,



As an apprentice teacher, I have found staff development sessions extremely helpful in my career. Coming out of the training received in college, it is always beneficial to have continuous learning and training. There were often times I felt I was not prepared enough to handle the role of teacher simply because I was new at the job surrounded by teachers with years of experience. Staff development sessions are a beneficial way to continue “on the job” training while working in the field. With each session, I feel as if I am being kept up-to-date on what is new in education. The opportunities in training that have been provided to me have been beneficial and worth my time.

### *Perceived Factors That Influence Staff Development*

Throughout the interview process many participants referred to factors such as the presenter, the timing of staff development sessions, whether or not the sessions allowed the participants to be active learners, and the appropriateness of the sessions. These teachers noted these perceived factors to be an influence whether or not the staff development session in their mind was effective.

#### *Presenter*

One of the most noticeable factors that teachers stated throughout the interview process was the effect that the presenter had on the staff development session. This effect was positive or negative. Within the first 5 to 10 minutes the audience had formed its impression of the presenter. This impression was often a lasting remembrance of the staff development. Therefore, the presenter was perceived as a critical variable in determining the success or failure of staff development sessions. Apprentice teacher W. Black stated that when she was driving home she could rate the staff development session in terms of being energized. She stated,

To me the best type of staff development activities are when you are energized. I can't wait to get back to school. I can't wait to get back in the classroom so I can try this and do this. You just feel refreshed and

ready to go. So to me when you can reflect on the staff development was how you feel when you left. Are you drained and tired? Oh, my gosh that was a long, long day. Wow, I can't wait to try this or do this. This makes so much sense. You have such great ideas. So to me I can tell how effective it is when I leave.

Audience members rated the presenter in terms of effectiveness through their presentation style. When presenters were enthused about their topic, it often carried over to the participants. Teachers wanted to attend sessions where the presenters were passionate about their topics. They stated that presenting should not be considered a chore. Teachers choose their profession based on love of education. They wanted presenters who also loved their profession. Apprentice teacher, H. Marks, was asked how she chose her most favorable staff development sessions. She replied,

There were two reasons why I feel these sessions were successful; one is the enthusiasm of the presenter and the other is the level of knowledge of the presenter. When you sit through a staff development session, it is always encouraging to know that the presenter is trained and knowledgeable in the subject area being discussed. Also, it is a pleasure to know that the presenter wants to be there and is able to share his or her enthusiasm for education. This type of positive attitude is what makes a teacher want to immediately get back to the classroom and begin implementing the things learned.

The enthusiasm the presenter brought to the staff development session often energized the participants. This energy often carried over into the classroom with teachers wanting to implement the methods or strategies taught in the staff development sessions. This type of enthusiasm was contagious for many teachers. Apprentice teacher, W. Black stated that one of her most memorable staff development sessions was instructed by a vivacious and enthusiastic presenter. She described the presenter as being contagious. She described the session.

There is a lady named Jean Blaydes. I have seen her twice and by far the best staff development that I have gone to. The reason is because she is so energetic and enthusiastic that it is contagious. You get excited while you're there. I can sit for eight hours and not get up. She included movement in her staff development. We had to get up and actually move and do what she was talking about. There was a lot of small group discussion. So even if you were reserved, I don't like to share in front of a large group. I was able to share in a small group. She presented using the multiple intelligences. It wasn't just a lecture. We were moving and talking so she incorporated all of the multiple intelligences. She is by far the best that I have ever been to.

Veteran teacher, U. White, also noted that one reason why her most favorable staff development session was so memorable was because of the presenter. She noted that she just had a "bounce" to her and personality. U. Whit also stated that she had attended one session where the presenter did a good job presenting, but she wasn't inspired to teach. Q. Lewis described one of her most favorable staff development sessions as "an educational revival" this was in part due to the presenters. She stated,

They are all so positive so vivacious. Like I told our staff development coordinator it is like a revival. It is just like a revival. It gets you all pumped up in thinking this works and this is great. I don't know it is just his take on books since he is a successful author. He is just very positive. They all are. They are very positive and upbeat. You know they have been in the classroom. You know that they go back and work with the students.

Just as a presenter's energy came across to the participant as a positive factor, it appeared to some as a negative aspect of the sessions. In sessions that were conducted at the end of the school day presenters should take into consideration that teachers have taught all day and need an energy boost. When the presenter did not portray enthusiasm to their audience the session was not often noted as a positive experience. Veteran fourth grade teacher, W. Mills recalled a staff development session that was conducted after school.

Speakers that don't seem to have a lot of energy, especially if we leave school and go to CO for a half-day session. If the speaker is not energizing, it is hard to stay motivated and listen. We are used to being up talking and moving around. When you have to sit down, it is really hard to stay focused.

The presenter's personality often came through in their presentations. This allowed the teachers to enjoy the presentation and make a small connection with the individual. However, the presenter's personality sometimes deterred participants from benefiting from the staff development. Veteran teacher, F. Ingle, remembered a session where the presenter's personality affected the session in a negative way. She stated,

I am going to be real frank here, the material that we learned from the acquisition learning was wonderful. The essential question and how to connect the higher learning was wonderful. The actual workshop itself was awful. It was long. She was not very dynamic. A lot of it we had heard before with a different name. This is like the TIMS Model with a different name. So it was very hard for us to bite that off and they really did not sell it. The presenter's personality had a lot to do with it. She treated us too much like children and we didn't like it. I just am going to be frank there.

Teachers wanted to be respected as professionals in their staff development sessions. When incidents occurred such as F. Ingle described, staff development lingered as a negative experience with the participant. Apprentice kindergarten teacher, H. Marks, recalled a similar incident. When asked to talk about her least favorable staff development sessions, she stated,

Unfortunately I can only reflect on one least favorite staff development session. There are several reasons that I was disappointed in this particular meeting. First, the leader's presentation skills were lacking in enthusiasm and respect. She would often call the teachers down or use methods for "control" that we as teachers are taught not to use. I did not feel she respected our time or our abilities as teachers. These sessions were held during the summer when, unfortunately, as teachers we are tired and in much need of rest. I went into the sessions upset about having to be there because of the timing therefore my attitude was not the best. It was two

long days of training in the summer which made it difficult to remain focused.

Teachers not only wanted a presenter who was energetic but knowledgeable about his/her craft. When teachers were devoting their time and energy to attending staff development sessions, they wanted to ensure that a well-trained individual instructed these sessions. Staff development sessions conducted after school took away the time that educators could have spent with their families. Therefore, it is critical for leaders to make staff development teachers attend valuable. During the interview process teachers noted that having presenters who were knowledgeable about their topics was a factor that they perceived was a major factor in the staff development session. Presenters with classroom experience were perceived favorably among the research participants. Teachers wanted presenters who not only possessed the knowledge necessary to teach the content, but who also maintained classroom experience in order to know that the techniques or strategies they were presenting were effective in the classroom. Veteran teacher, J. Wells, had been teaching for eight years. She stated that from her experience with staff development the presenters that were the most effective were the individuals who possessed classroom experience. She expanded,

The big thing is people coming in and telling us you can do this. They haven't been in a classroom in forever or they have been out of the classroom for so long. The classroom has changed. I've been teaching for eight years and it's different from when I started. That is a big thing. I feel like the ones that are most successful are coming from the classroom right now and going back to the classroom as opposed to those coming from the classroom of the past.

Veteran teacher, M. Cox, had been teaching second grade for 10 years. As one of the two males interviewed in the study he noted that receiving training from a

teacher benefited his classroom teaching more than from a research specialist. He explained,

I did have one thing in mind that I thought was particularly helpful. There was a teacher, Pamela Hack, whom I saw at a seminar and then our school system brought her here to do system-wide seminar. I thought she was particularly helpful because number one she still taught so she had very practical ideas. Also, she did not bore us to death with research that was impractical and ivory tower and pie in the sky stuff. However, she distilled the information and I still remember a lot of it. Almost like sound bites that you can replay and use with parents. You can also use them as you plan things. She said that spelling is a visual skill and kids that can picture the words in their minds and then write them as they see them are much better spellers than those who spell them out. The reading specialist actually used more research, and I'm not sure if she has ever taught in the classroom. . Pamela Hack was a classroom teacher and focused on things that have been working for her for years. These things were simple and did not require a lot of preparation. The reading specialist lady has some interesting things, but the application was a bit thin. I thought it was interesting that she taught about the syntactic, systematic, and decoding. I thought that was interesting. I had heard that before, but kind of forgotten. It was kind of a good review. Her reading diagnostic plan was way too involved. I thought, holy cow, I'm not going to do that! We have some software that does it.

Teachers expected the staff development presenters to be knowledgeable of their subject matter. Attending a staff development session where the participants felt comfortable when the presenters created an environment of trust. When the teachers sensed that the presenter welcomed responses from the audience teachers responded with positive feedback to the sessions. In the interview process some participants stated that current classroom teachers were the best presenters. Veteran first grade teacher, J. Wells, explained that her most favorable sessions were from teachers presenting the material. She stated,

I think the ones that they do at the teacher's center. They have actual teachers. The ones we have here that our school does. They get the teachers in our school here. The ones at central office, they get teachers from the system. I think having someone that you know makes it easier.

If the teacher here is doing one, I know her and feel comfortable with her. I feel comfortable asking questions. After you're back in your classroom trying to do something. I can walk down to her classroom. I can ask her. I didn't understand this. Show me this again. Those are probably the most successful. Probably the very best one I have ever been to was the language one and the others were good. I took more out of the language session than I did any other. Like I said she was a teacher here and any time I had a question I could just ask her.

While teachers presenting staff development sessions tended to be favorable among teachers, veteran teacher, X. Laws, stated that having teachers within your system present often lead to a tunnel vision of experience. She explained,

I went back to when I was in my previous system when there was not any staff development. At the beginning of the year we would have general sessions. I remember when Pamela Hack came, a person that was out there, research person, in the field of education. Teachers presented the rest of the sessions in that system. I didn't feel that it was a very broad view. You were just stuck in a little tunnel vision.

When asked to expand on this thinking more, she continued,

Most of the teachers there have come from the local colleges and have the same way of thinking. Even though I attended the Title I Conference through this system it was still a lot of local presenters. Then when I came to my present system they had the research based graduate courses and professional study groups. They were looking more nationally and looking at systems that are succeeding and raising test scores. Trying to figure out what they are doing and trying to bring in people outside the area. That has been a big – like how I reasoned through staying in my current system. That has been a big determining factor where I worked. I want to grow professionally and strive to be a better teacher.

Other factors that made staff development sessions successful were the effect that hearing well known speakers present tended to motivate teachers. One teacher stated that teachers were often “beat down” in the media and the community at times. Hearing this caliber of speaker up- lifted teachers in a variety of ways. During the interview process teachers noted that hearing well-known presenters speak was motivational for them.

Several teachers spoke about hearing these well-known presenters speak X. Laws

recalled when she attended national conferences that the presenters “lifted her up.” She expanded,

Another thing that just meeting established authors I know that at the Whole Language Conference that I meet Mem Fox. Before that I didn’t like any of her books and just hearing what she had to say as far as education. Professionals again in that area made a big impact on my philosophy of teaching. The National Reading Renaissance Conference was probably for the motivation of it. At times we just get beat down in the newspapers and you don’t feel as though you are worthy of anything. It is just uplifting to hear people outside of the education field to kind of lift you up.

Another teacher who was interviewed spoke about her great admiration for several instrumental individuals in the education profession. F. Ingle stated why she thought these people were instrumental in impacting her career.

Sometimes I have been in national places where the names are like Harry Wong. Some of those folks you just want to see even though you know you are beyond what they are presenting. You go see them just because of who they are and have believed in what they have done and you have used parts of this. Like with Bev Boz I have used her paintbrushes in preschool. I had to hear her. To me it has to be really up there and a name that I recognize other than that I really go by the caption.

Veteran teacher, Q. Lewis, spoke passionately about seeing Patricia Pollaco in person at a national reading conference. She had read her books prior to the conference, but had a new connection to her literature after hearing her speak. She described her experience.

It was when Patricia Polacco was there and Harry Wong. They had several other artists. She was the best. She shared her entire life experiences. She told us that she didn’t know how to read until she was in middle school. Are you aware of that? Thank You Mr. Faulkner was really a true story about her self and at one point she had really considered suicide because she was so frustrated. When she can share that story to educators, then we can in turn look at students and say, I know you have the ability but we are just going to have to find the way to bring it forth. You may not learn a word like everyone else does, but I am going to try to help you and try to find the way in which you can.



Experiences in staff development such as this inspired and motivated teachers to reach all students in their classes. Just hearing well-known speakers in the field of education reaffirmed educator's philosophies and motivated them.

### *Timing*

While the presenter was perceived as a dominant factor in determining the effectiveness of a staff development session, many participants in this study referred to the timing of the event. Understanding that there is little time for teachers to attend staff development sessions few time options are available. When teachers participate in staff development they are often being taken away from something else such as their family or their classroom. Interviewed teachers spoke of participating in staff development after school, weekends, summer months, and during the school day. It seemed as though there was really not a perfect time for teachers to participate in staff development. All teachers preferred something different. Apprentice teacher A. Jones stated this in her interview.

She stated,

To be honest I think that is why we just accept there is really not a good time. When you really think about it, it couldn't be during the day. That would be too many substitutes to bring in and arrange. Our days off you really don't want to come in then. So I think that you just adjust to it and say okay we need to do this. You just kind of just get used to it.

Realizing that something must be sacrificed for the improvement of their school systems, teachers accepted the need for scheduling staff development within their career. Several teachers within the study had received release time from their teaching to attend staff development sessions. The majority of teachers who spoke about this scheduling of staff development sessions responded favorably. Veteran teacher, R. Green, stated that

receiving release time to attend staff development during the school day was the most appropriate time for her. She stated,

If you're going to do the Wilson it is a two or three-day staff development. You're not in school and you have a substitute and you can truly focus on what's going on. This is nice. I think when we teach all day long and then come in and try to do two or three hours in the afternoon and then go home to your family. It is a bit much. I don't worry about what's going on in the class. That's my personality. I've got everything mapped out for the sub. They know what happens if there is a problem and I go and focus.

Release time from teaching was viewed by many teachers as a professional courtesy. Veteran teacher, X. Laws, stated that her system provided follow-up sessions for the graduate classes that were offered in the summer. The professors visited the school approximately two times during the year. Teachers were released from their teaching duties to attend a half-day session at the central office. Teachers in that system based on the interviews agreed that they enjoyed the staff development release time for their learning. Veteran kindergarten teacher, D. Long, would have preferred if her system provided release time from teaching rather than after school activities. She explained,

To me I would prefer if they would give us a day. Like if they would dismiss school for a day. Like one of our in-service days where we are out give that to us for staff development. With Building Blocks they gave us the day I know we have three days with two hours staff development. I don't know if your county does that or not, but I would rather do any with that.

When asked to speak about her most memorable staff development sessions Veteran teacher, O. Mise, talked about the experiences that her school had provided. Her system allowed the school to be site based managed allowing the principal to plan many of their staff development opportunities. When talking about her staff development

experiences she also provided information about the scheduling of the sessions were handled. The following is an account of her most favorable staff development sessions that involved release time from teaching.

We have started focus learning. We have had workshops on it this summer. It is effective for all children. We have a two-day workshop in the summer. What really is nice about this is we are having following up in the school year. Also, principal pays for each grade level to have a sub like a hour and a half one day a month We can meet as a third grade team to plan around our unit and essential questions that gives us a chance to work together and brainstorm. We really like that so we can all be on the same page as a third grade. We have a sub that comes in on those days and we leave the classroom and go downstairs and work.

Another intensive staff development that we had a few years ago was thinking maps. We really like that. The whole school is taking training at the same time. So when children come to third grade they have had thinking maps in grades 1 and 2. It is something that we are doing consistently school-wide. The first couple of years that we did it we also had follow-up. We had a sub. We were at school. The sub came in and kept out kids for maybe a half a day. We went back to the trainer and got follow-up. From that we went right into Write From the Beginning a writing program. Again before we all got really based in it really firm, we all had release time from our classroom duties. She hired a sub to come in and third, fourth, and fifth grade teachers and went over and talked about problems. We had a lot of input on the trainer. So this has been very helpful to have release time.

Unlike O. Mise, some teachers who were interviewed had received release time from the classroom to attend sessions that were not considered positive experiences.

Apprentice teacher, L. May, had attended a workshop that required her to be absent from the classroom for three days. She spoke about that experience.

It is a wonderful program, but we just don't have time for it. They were telling us that it was \$1, 500.00 to just send us. That just floored me most of the stuff I'll never use. We missed three days of school and had a sub. It was just cutting and pasting things that I will never use. To me it was not that beneficial.

Apprentice teacher, T. Tyree, had mixed emotions when it came to receiving release time from the classroom to attend staff development sessions. He stated that the sessions that he attended this school year had made creating a routine for his third grade students difficult. He explained,

Everything this year has been during school. The first one that I went to really didn't affect my kids that bad, because it was so early during school. They really weren't use to me so I don't think that was that big of a deal. I went to a three day one on the Healthy Curriculum and it was just right before Halloween. I hated it because the kids wanted me to be here. Here we have a big Halloween parade; all the kids dress up and go down to the track. The parents come. I had to miss that and I didn't like that. The one now is kind of hard because we just can't get in any type of routine. These kids are just creatures of routine. We don't do the same thing every day, but you get in a pattern with procedures. Third graders are still searching for how do I behave in hall, how do I behave in the classroom, how do I behave in the restroom, and how do I behave in lunch. They get a lot more freedom in K and first grade. A lot of kids are making that decision.

After- school sessions were often difficult for teachers to fully concentrate on the learning taking place. Teachers were often thinking about the day's events, what their family was doing without them, or what the following day would hold. Despite teachers being tired after an event filled day administrators wanted them to stay after school for an additional one to two hours. With this in mind teachers may have entered the sessions with negative attitudes. Veteran teacher, Q. Laws, talked about staying after school or attending sessions on Saturdays in her interview. She stated,

I think that when they offer things after school or on Saturdays you are kind of tired from work. You need a break and to get away mentally to have that time to reflect time to talk when you are not tired and distracted by the day's events.

Apprentice teacher, A. Jones, was interviewed on a day where her school staff was expected to stay after school for staff development. She talked about her feelings on the timing of the session.

Today you think that I have been with the kids. Because of the snow we didn't get the kids until two hours later. However, you think I have to stay here until 5:30 today even after the kids go. Then you get in there and you are actually discussing and you are learning so much that you actually forget. The timing is kind of bad because there are so many other things that you could be doing.

Two schools that participated in the study were on a year round-calendar. This scheduling provided their teachers with both advantages and disadvantages to scheduling staff development sessions. Veteran teacher, J. Wells, taught first grade in one of the year round schools. She commented on her preferences for attending staff development opportunities.

I hate Saturdays. Saturdays during the summer are okay, but during the school year I hate them. I like the ones right after school. If it is a day session or at the end of the school year like the last week, when school is out, or the week prior to school starting. I don't mind after school hours a day or two if it is a two-day a couple of hours. I would prefer Mondays and Tuesdays and not Thursdays or Fridays. The summer is hard because everyone goes on vacations. Also, since we are on an alternative calendar it a little easier because we have two weeks in October that we could use for our sessions- a day or two in those weeks or a couple of days in March. I just prefer not being in the middle of summer because you get out of the mentality of the classroom. I think it is better when you're still in it or when it is just beginning of the school year.

Some of the interviewed teachers stated they preferred staff development training that was offered in the summer. Timing of these sessions allowed the teachers to digest the material and decide how it was to be implemented into their classrooms. Attending sessions in the summer also provided the teachers with a less stressful environment they

were free of classroom duties. Veteran teacher, O. Mise, stated that attending summer staff development sessions were most beneficial for her. She explained why,

Right when school gets out in the summer so if there is any new idea I can follow-up with it in the summer and give me a chance to play with it in the beginning of the year. If we have any problems pull someone back in and help us with it. If you do it right when school starts then you really don't have time really to think about it or to know where your problems are.

Veteran teacher, C. Stump, commented on the most appropriate time for her to receive staff development.

I think the Building Block was at central office in the summer. So it was a perfect time to have an in-service. Our minds were fresh to absorb new material. Staff development the week before school is terrible time to have it because your mind is in a hundred different places. In the summer when you have a little more time and you haven't really thought about school. When you go in for a two-day session you're just like a sponge. Summer by far. Not the week before school starts. We did this program in July and then I went to the beach the week after. Well I took all the literature to the beach and read and studied for a week. If you have more time to completely digest the material you are more familiar and comfortable with it.

She stated that receiving staff development training prior to school starting in the fall was not the most appropriate time to receive staff development training. She stated why,

We need more summer staff development. It seems that the worst staff development that you have is the day before school starts because everybody is chomping at the bit to get into your classroom. It just seems like to me that this is not a good time to be hearing all the things. I know that some of that is necessary like the Terra Nova test and those who don't have a master's making sure that you have all your credentials in. I just don't like that. It is the wrong time to be throwing stuff at people.

Teachers really did not have a solution for solving the issue of scheduling time for staff development opportunities. Teachers preferred receiving staff development at various times for a variety of reasons. Apprentice teacher, T. Tyree, did offer what his system was currently doing to solve some scheduling issues with staff development

sessions. His system was currently offering technology classes on snow days when the school system was closed due to weather. He explained how the process worked.

One thing that we are doing that I really like is starting Jan. 19 on a snow day we are having staff development. If you do choose to go it is like a \$75 stipend just for going. There are four different sessions. There are four different things that they are focusing on. One day there is a Smart Board presentation. Another day they are working with Inspiration. You can make \$300 bucks. The first day that we are out for snow here is what is being offered and the location. 8-3 and they pay for your lunch. It just started this year.

When asked why his system was starting this program, he explained.

I think a lot of it because a lot of teachers only do as much as they have to in staff development. I think the director that we have now- she was a teacher not too long ago and has been a principal. She really understands that we as faculty want to get better. We want to do things that will help the kids. I am 24 single and coaching. A lot of teachers have family at home. When you put in a full day of school and leave here at 3:00- 3:30. When do they find time to do it? On snow days then it is no different than just going to school.

This may not be a solution to the challenge of the scheduling all staff development days, but it did provide an alternative to after school, summer, or Saturday training.

### *Format*

During the interviews a perception that kept recurring was the type of format that teachers preferred. Many teachers said that they received the most benefit from attending sessions that were taught by the hands on methods. This allowed the teachers to be actively involved with the lesson. Teachers wanted to know exactly how to implement the new technique or strategy. Many individuals were considered visual learners. Several participants within the study had participated in the AIMS staff development sessions for integrating math and science in the classroom. This was often referred to as a more favorable session among the teachers because teachers were being active

participants in their learning. Veteran teacher, K. Ayers, commented on why this staff development was so memorable for her.

My favorite one of any that I have done was the AIMS workshop. I have actually done that twice. Science was one of our target areas since our scores were low. I think it was last year or the year before that we did the AIMS. I think I like that because it was hands on materials. I am one that cannot sit and listen all day long. In the AIMS one they always seem to know exactly what you are doing. It was light and fun. The AIMS stuff I've used so many times because it is really just hands on stuff. It had really great material that is what I like about it.

Veteran teacher, E. Smith, also commented on the AIMS activities as one of her most favorable staff development sessions. She responded as to and why she believed it was so effective for her as a teacher.

I took an AIMS class for Science and then Math Your Way. Both of them probably gave me more hands on activity and was not strictly lecture. They gave me activities that I could use with the class that I could see that were very useful for me. In both cases we were able to get materials that went along with it and carry it on in the classroom.

Veteran teacher, P. Vines, noted that being able to practice the activities that her children would be participating in was a strength of her most memorable staff development sessions.

We were doing the activities that we were going to teach our children. That made it able for us to practice the activities ourselves. Then we were able to bring them to the classroom. We made some of the materials ourselves. They gave us some of the materials. The last time I took it I got six magnifying glasses. They're wonderful when your doing seeds with the children. They gave us a book at the end of it that was just wonderful.

Apprentice teacher, W. Black, stated that she needed the same active learning style that teachers found helpful in reaching all students. This active learning style was found to be helpful when teachers were involved in their learning. The following is an



account by Mrs. Black recalling why her most favorable staff development sessions were memorable for her.

I can sit for eight hours and not get up. She included movement in her staff development. We had to get up and actually move and do what she was talking about. There was a lot of small group discussion so even if you were reserved, and I don't like to share in front of a large group. I was able to share in a small group. She presented using the multiple intelligences. It wasn't just a lecture. We were moving and talking so she incorporated all of the multiple intelligences. She is by far the best that I have ever been to. Then I went to a Tribes training for three days. I really like that because I felt like I could turn around the next day and use it in the classroom. They taught us theory and a lot of activities that you could very easily implement. Once again we got to do the activities. It wasn't just "here is what it is" or "here read this in the book." It was here do it. So even at first you feel silly, but you remember it so much longer whereas if you hear about it you may forget it. If you actually do it you have that retention. So we actively participated in that training and we worked a lot with peers and small groups once again. I think that large group and having time to reflect in the small group- I think that I benefit from that. Also, went to a three day seminar in Indiana called Brain Works. It was all about brain compatible learning. Once again we were involved in large groups, small groups, and then we were engaged. We had learning clubs where at the end of the day we would go and reflect on what we had done. At the time you were thinking oh I hate sharing and this is silly. It really had an impact on me. Those are things that I remember are the things that we reflected. The activities we did even if it was silly.

Veteran kindergarten teacher, D. Long, spoke about why staff development sessions were so effective for her. She stated that the being able to participate in the activities allowed her to know what to expect in the classroom. She stated,

The knowledge I gained from the session gave me a better understanding of how to teach my students. Plus I got materials and resources. They gave us stuff to back up what they were saying. We did the activities and we had the research on it. We could go back and refresh because we had the books right there. I could take that information and know what to expect from these children and their different learning abilities and be able to do activities that would enhance their learning.

Veteran teacher, E. Smith, found that competing with the entertainment era caused teachers to be entertainers in the classroom.

I get bored very easily. If I don't make learning fun then I'm bored out of my gourd. Then I can't expect them to do anything. I think we're competing in an entertainment world. If we are not a bit of an entertainer ourselves when we are in front of the classroom then we are not going to have the success that we could have. My goodness there is a plethora of programs that can make math so exciting. If we can provide that for teachers then maybe they'll catch that enthusiasm and excitement that the presenter has. I think it makes a huge difference. If you're going to seminars where they are making adults do the activities and making adults do silly things. Maybe when they're having fun that will encourage them to make their classroom more fun.

While hands on activities in staff development were perceived to be more favorable among teachers, they also commented on how the sessions were organized. Teachers wanted to attend sessions that were age appropriate for their current grade. Attending sessions that were for grade spans of K-8 were not found to be very effective for many teachers. Veteran teacher, J. Wells spoke of her experience with a session that was not grade appropriate. She spoke about not wanting to "reinvent the wheel."

I went to a writing one at central office a workshop type thing. It was an all day thing. Well it was actually a two-day workshop during the summer. It was really not appropriate for my grade level. The presenter stated that you can adapt it to your first grade class. Well I could, but it would take a lot of adapting. To me for staff development to be good for me I have to be able to take things back to my classroom fairly easily. I don't mind adapting some things. I can't spend my entire day reinventing the wheel. There are other ways out there of doing things. Like I said it was a good writing program, but more appropriate for the older grades. To me that was sort of a waste I brought back a couple of things, but in a two-day workshop I would want more.

Teachers stated that when they attended staff development sessions that were designed for multi grade spans, they were often limited by what they brought back to the

classroom. Veteran teacher, O. Mise, had a similar comment when referring to her experience with a session that was not grade appropriate. She stated,

Most times it has been very helpful for the ideas that I have received. At times we have had things that have not been useful in my classroom that are above the age level of my classroom. Somehow it doesn't seem to fit the kids that I have. I have had several workshops that are 1<sup>st</sup> through 5<sup>th</sup>. They say, but who ever is presenting it may be a 5<sup>th</sup> grade teacher and they are gearing it for what they know for 5<sup>th</sup> grade. It is not the lower end that you can even adjust – algebra or way up there.

When teachers were making sacrifices to attend staff development session, they wanted to ensure that the session was worthy of their time. Sessions that were multi-grade levels meant teachers often had to adjust the information to their grade level.

Veteran teacher, D. Long, made suggestions concerning the scheduling of staff development sessions.

What I would really appreciate more than anything would be for them to find something for all age levels. Not to put us all in one big group and say this is what we are going to do. Maybe break it down by K-2 and so on by grade level. That is how they did it in Building Blocks then Four Blocks. The Building Blocks is just for K. In professional or staff development I like it when they bring it down to your level. They teach you something that is going to benefit you.

#### *Teachers Need Proven Application For the Classroom*

When teachers were interviewed during the study veteran and apprentice teachers stated that staff development resulted in personal growth. They were confident that staff development had impacted their professional careers.

#### *Staff Development Impacted Veteran Teachers in the Classroom*

Throughout the interview process teachers recalled that staff development sessions had changed their educational careers. Veteran teachers explained that staff

development provided them with ideas that refreshed their teaching. Veteran teachers noted that attending staff development sessions kept them abreast of new ideas and strategies that made learning key in the classroom. Teachers who had been teaching for many years wanted to be current with the times and remain vital in the classroom that often meant changing their teaching strategies. Veteran teacher, F. Ingle, stated this in her interview.

I would hate to know that I only knew what I knew in 1983. That would be scary. Wouldn't it? I guess that there are people out there that have taken on their career like that. Some are still doing the same thing that they were their first year. I would wager that I haven't done the same thing two years in a row. When I first heard of essential question I said okay what is the difference between that and the objectives. When that question is on your mind and on that board. You can turn around and ask those kids. You can see exactly whom you have missed. You know exactly who needs to be retaught. You can tell who has an understanding totally different than they should have. That is a great tool that I would have never known about had it not been for staff development.

Teaching for twenty-seven years, veteran teacher, O. Mise, noted that attending staff development sessions had prevented her from becoming stale in the classroom. Keeping fresh and updated on the latest methods required teachers to participate in staff development. With regulations changing for education not only do apprentice teachers need to grow professionally veteran teachers need to learn the new regulations as well. With added demands being placed upon educators, teachers must be willing to grow in the classroom, especially veteran teachers who have been out of the classroom for 20 odd years, O. Mise, expanded on this thought.

After you have been out of school for a while you get stale especially if you don't keep going back and getting staff development and keeping up with the trends. A lot of people can read and find out information and all, but it helps me as a teacher. I'm starting my twenty-seventh year. It has been a long time since I have been in school. The things we do here have helped me to stay a

good teacher and not get stale. It has allowed me to be fresh and updated. It hasn't allowed me to become stale and do the same things. It has kept me on top of all the new ideas and different things like that rather than doing the same dittos. You have to change. With this No Child Left Behind the accountability for these low achieving kids is tremendous.

Veteran teacher, O. Mise, commented about not becoming stagnant in the classroom.

She stated,

It has made me want to learn more and grow professionally than just be stagnant. The graduate courses really help you to correlate with the state standards and accomplishments and give you time for reflection and time with those people having it offered by the school system helps too, because you really don't have enough money to go back to school yourself. Even the professional study group books were paid through the system.

Teachers wanted to do a better job in the classroom for the educational benefits of their students. Educators knew they must continue to grow professionally or allow their students fall behind. Students who were placed with an ineffective teacher often fell a year or more behind students who were placed with an effective teacher. J. Wells talked about her reasoning behind attending staff development sessions.

I think that it gives me new ideas and keeps me aware. When I'm sitting in staff development sessions or workshops and someone starts talking about things I think I do that. However, I get new ideas to put in with it. I think it makes me think about what I'm doing and ways that I can implement to get more out of the kids. I feel like I have to be changing things because I get tired of doing it and I know the kids get sick of it. Anything that they can give to me that I can take back and do in my classroom that will pull more out of the kids I feel like that is why I go to the staff development sessions.

Veteran teacher, N. Moore, said that she must continue to improve her teaching styles for her students. Attending staff development sessions caused her to reevaluate how she was teaching the students. She said that just giving students ditto sheets was not an effective way to assess their skills. She explained,

I think that it made me look at how I was taught to teach. I'm not sure if we were taught to teach. We go to school and learn all different aspects. As children change each year and by keeping up with the latest and this is really not the latest. It is just what needs to be done because of the thinking, the writing, and the reading. It has made me sit back and think that all those worksheets really weren't beneficial even though I know we need drill and kill to get ready for a test, but in the long run the reading and the writing were probably the best way to go. Teaching this way takes a lot more preparation and takes a lot more monitoring. Because when you're doing nothing but doing worksheets you take them up and you may go over them. The monitoring part comes in when listening to them read and listening to their thoughts and helping them put it on paper. You have to be constantly with somebody all the time.

### *Staff Development and the Impact on Apprentice Teachers*

Apprentice teachers were looking for solutions to the many situations they faced in the classroom. Suggesting that the college had not fully prepared teachers to face the variety of learning styles they would encounter in the classroom, they stated they needed additional help. Therefore, each system needed to ensure that all teachers, especially apprentice teachers, were receiving quality staff development training. Apprentice teacher, H. Marks, stated how the staff development sessions had helped her in the beginning of her teaching career.

As an apprentice teacher, I have found staff development sessions extremely helpful in my career. Coming out of the training received in college, it is always beneficial to have continuous learning and training. There were often times I felt I was not prepared enough to handle the role of teacher simply because I was new at the job surrounded by teachers with years of experience. Staff development sessions are a beneficial way to continue "on the job" training while working in the field. With each session, I feel as if I am being kept up-to-date on what is new in education. The opportunities in training that have been provided to me have been beneficial and worth my time.

Apprentice teacher, R. Green, found that attending staff development sessions made her a better teacher. Incorporating the new methods and strategies into her teaching created

more opportunities for her children to learn. She commented on why staff development had been so vital to her at the beginning of her career.

I think that I have been a better teacher for having participated. The different styles and activities have created a more hands on approach. Whereas, the children the more they have hands on the more they are going to connect with the ideas in the curriculum. So probably, just bringing that back and letting them experience what you have done in a different way. In just the same topic at a different angle will let them to connect it with connect the dots.

Apprentice teacher, G. Early, stated that the staff development sessions she had attended had started to make a difference in her thinking about her teaching career. Knowing that what she was being exposed to in staff development and knowing that she was not expected to implement everything at once eased her mind. Having pieces brought together slowly had impacted her thinking about teaching. She explained,

I guess I look at it in a different way than I did at first. Some of the information that I have gotten has actually worked with what I was going on before with my degree. Especially, when you are thrown into an environment the day before school starts. I think that they give you the general big picture. At the same time they break that down, and show you some actual examples and some actual ways in which you can do things. Just not say here is what you need to do, but just break it down more so with what you can do and what is feasible to do. Not just saying here are the standards read and do it. I mean useful ideas with the alphabet books and predictable charts.

Apprentice teacher, I Davis, also said that staff development sessions she attended had influenced her teaching. She commented on how staff development had made her a stronger teaching in her beginning years. She stated,

I know that there are areas that I need to improve on, but I don't think that I would be as strong as I am. Without those staff developments, I don't think that my kids would be where they are today. I don't think that they would be writing like they are. I have a few live wires in here. They wouldn't have been as mature as they are if I hadn't had some of those staff developments. They have helped me get the kids focused and what

we need to be doing. When they are at their seat what they need to have done. I don't think that I would have gained those things. I wouldn't have come up with them on my own. I have to have idea starters to get me going on something. I think that it has helped significantly. It has increased the rate of becoming a better teacher. I know that it comes with experiences, but it won't take me as long to get to that point.

Apprentice teacher, B. Brown, commented on the staff development opportunities she had received during her second year of teaching. She noted the sessions had made a tremendous impact on her ability to writing. The difference between her first year teaching and her second year were evident. She noted that the training in her second year definitely benefited her students. She explained,

I feel very fortunate that we have had these opportunities, because I know that a lot of school systems do not have these opportunities to have these classes. Being a new teacher I would not have know. Just in talking with other teachers from other school systems they are not giving these opportunities. So I feel that we are very luck from that standpoint. When I look back on what I knew coming my first day of work and what I know now I feel very lucky. Again, I feel very fortunate to have had these workshops. Coming out of college new and to begin teaching and not having the knowledge to incorporate the writing and the reading. We had reading methods courses in college, but a lot of it was broken down for us. I think that these classes helped with that. I have noticed a difference the writing workshop I didn't have until my second year so I noticed a difference just between my first and second year of how I learned to teach writing to my students.

Based on the interviews several themes emerged from the data. Impact of staff development on student achievement, staff development's effect on teacher knowledge, perceived factors that influence staff development, and teachers' need for staff development with proven application for their classes were identified as common themes from the data. These themes revealed teachers' perceptions of their staff development experiences. With open communication in the education profession our programs such as



staff development will continue to grow and succeed. The true end result for any staff development experience or activity is for student learning.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Teachers are required to provide children with a quality education as well as ensure that students master the grade level curriculum. Apprentice and veteran teachers alike are expected to provide students with the knowledge that meets all learners' needs. Educators need to fully understand their students' curriculum need, and be able to pass that knowledge on to all learners.

Governmental members are consistently adding to the teachers' burden of educating all students. Darling- Hammond (p.5) stated, "Betting on teaching as a key strategy for reform means investing in stronger preparation and professional development while granting teachers greater autonomy." "It also means spending more on teacher development and less on bureaucracies and special programs created to address the problems created by poor teaching." "Finally, we must put greater knowledge directly in the hands of teachers and seek accountability that will focus attention on "doing the right things" rather than on "doing things right." As Darling- Hammond (1996) stated we must allow teachers who were well-trained in the educational profession the common courtesy to determine the methods and strategies that help them to ensure that all students learn.

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore teachers' perceptions of their experiences with staff development in elementary schools in order to determine whether or not staff development programs were perceived to provide valuable knowledge to educators' in promoting student achievement. Staff development needs of apprentice educators as compared to veteran educators were also explored within this research project. Based on an analysis of this data, school systems should be able to design

quality staff development that will provide all teachers with effective staff development opportunities. Four major themes emerged from an analysis of the data from in this study: staff development impact on student achievement; staff development effects on teacher knowledge; perceived factors that influence staff development; and teachers desire for activities that have proven application for the classroom.

### *General Findings*

In this section each individual research question was addressed to ensure that the findings from the study were portrayed effectively.

#### *Research Question #1*

What are teachers' perceptions of current staff development programs in elementary school?

This study focused entirely on teachers' perceptions about the staff development experiences that they had received in their school system. The *No Child Left Behind Act*, signed into law by President George Bush, included staff development for teachers. This was the first law in American history that has included staff development. With the added pressure that has been placed upon school systems and teachers to achieve extremely high standards, staff development is vital to assist teachers in educating students. Without the guidance of staff development participants, staff development sessions may not continue to be as effective without analyzing the perceptions of those who participate in their training.

During the study many teachers often referred to factors that occurred during their staff development opportunities. These perceived factors were noted as having an effect on the session. Throughout the interview process many participants referred to perceived

factors such as the presenter, the timing of staff development sessions, participation, and the appropriateness of the sessions. Teachers perceived these factors to be influences upon whether or not the staff development session in their mind was effective.

The presenters were often described as setting the tone for the sessions through the type of formats and enthusiasm they portrayed. Teachers wanted presenters who were organized, enthusiastic, knowledgeable, and well prepared. When teachers devoted their time to staff development sessions they were sacrificing something from their life whether it was their students or their family. Teachers wanted to know that they were devoting their time to a worthy venue in their professional career.

The energy level of the staff development sessions were often attributed to the presenters. Audience members rated the presenters in terms of the effectiveness of their presentation style. When presenters were enthused about their topic, it often carried over to the participants. Teachers wanted to attend sessions where the presenters were passionate about their topics. Presenting should not be considered a chore. Teachers chose their profession because they had a love of education. They want presenters who also love their profession. One participant in the study stated that her most memorable staff development session was like an educational revival. The presenter instilled in her a love of reading that she wanted to pass on to her students. Presenters such as this were found to be the most favorable among the participants. When teachers had taught all day and then were required to attend staff development sessions after school, they often needed a presenter who would motivate them to learn.

Not only having a presenter who was enthusiastic about their presentation but also being knowledgeable about their craft was perceived to be important to the teachers.

Several teachers stated that having presenters who had recent classroom experience was another important factor in staff development. Teachers perceived other teachers as knowledgeable of educational methods and strategies and could relate to their situations. One teacher even stated that often specialists had a “pie in the sky” attitude. On the other hand, classroom teachers who presented staff development sessions were often more aware of what could be realistically implemented in the classroom. Other teachers stated they were more comfortable with current teachers presenting. They said that asking questions and clarifying topics was better received.

While presenters had the opportunity to make a staff development session even more powerful, they also had the opportunity to be a factor in determining the failure of the presentation. When presenters were not open to questions about their methods, teachers often left the sessions with negative attitudes. These negative attitudes often clouded their judgment in dealing with future staff development sessions.

While the presenter was perceived as a dominant factor in determining the effectiveness of a staff development session, many participants in this study referred to the timing of the event. Understanding that there is little time for teachers to attend staff development sessions few time options were available. When teachers participated in staff development they were often being taken away from something else such as their family or their classroom. Interviewed teachers spoke of participating in staff development after school, weekends, summer months, and during the school day. It seemed that there was really not a perfect time for teachers to participate in staff development. Many teachers had different choices as to their preferences of timing. One apprentice teacher stated this in her interview. “To be honest I think that is why we just

accept there is really not a good time. When you really think about it, it couldn't be during the day. That would be too many substitutes to bring in and arrange. Our days off you really don't want to come in then. So I think that you just adjust to it and say okay we need to do this. You just kind of just get used to it." Timing of staff development sessions were often difficult for everyone involved; the school bookkeepers, teachers, principals, and staff development coordinators.

The teachers' interviews revealed that teachers often had a different preference as to when they would rather attend a staff development session. Many stated that attending summer sessions summer allowed time to reflect on the material being learned. Having extra time to determine what would be the most effective way in which to incorporate the new material into the current curriculum was important. However, teachers that worked in year- round schools found this difficult in terms of scheduling family time. Teachers commented that attending after school sessions was often accepted among the profession as a responsibility. When attending after school sessions teachers were often distracted by the day's events or the happenings at home. Several teachers favored release time from teaching. Teachers were relieved of their classroom duties. Release time was a positive factor in the timing issue with staff development. As stated earlier all teachers preferred something different in terms of scheduling staff development opportunities. Staff development programs that focus on all aspects of the scheduling timeframe allowed all teachers to be satisfied at least part of the time.

Not only did teachers perceive presenters and timing as factors that affected staff development experiences teachers also wanted to attend sessions that were appropriate for their needs in the classroom. Throughout the study, several kindergarten teachers

were interviewed and asked about their most favorable sessions. Each teacher in this study revealed that their most memorable session was age appropriate for their teaching. Many of these teachers had memories of staff development sessions that focused on a large grade span. This grouping of age levels was not effective for many teachers. All teachers wanted to attend sessions that were relevant for their students' needs. Teachers commented on attending sessions that were large group settings focused on the entire K-8 curriculum. This was often considered to be too broad for their needs. Presenters in this format were heard saying that one could adjust the material for their grade level. Teachers stated that they did not want to reinvent the wheel. This was fully understood by many participants in the study. Teachers want a narrow focus when planning staff development sessions.

One aspect of the perceived factors that repeatedly affected teachers' staff development was the format in which the staff development was presented. All teachers had their preference as to how the staff development was presented. The majority of teachers who were interviewed preferred receiving information in the hands-on format. Teachers wanted first hand knowledge of the material prior to introducing the students to new material. Being familiar with the material allowed the teachers to be more comfortable when presenting the new technique or strategy to the students. Teachers wanted to be certain that new methods they introduced in the class were effective for the students.

## *Research Questions # 2*

What are teachers' perceptions regarding whether or not, or the degree to which, current staff development programs provided added knowledge and skill to their teaching that impacts students in the classrooms?

Within the last several years society has placed lofty goals upon educators meeting state accountability standards. Teachers felt the pressure become even greater after President Bush signed *The No Child Left Behind Act* into law. It was vital that teachers' perceptions have an effect on whether or not they choose to implement the latest theory or concepts being provided in staff development sessions. If teachers recognized the importance of the staff development as it applied to the curriculum and their classrooms, they were much more likely to implement these new techniques. If teachers believed that these new strategies affected student achievement, they were more likely to be willing to devote the necessary time to incorporate them into their own teaching.

One teacher stated that being able to measure the students' achievement in terms of her staff development knowledge was difficult to do. However, she continued to respond that students had benefited greatly from her added teacher knowledge that she had gained from participating in staff development programs. She had gained new techniques and strategies that had made her a better and more energetic teacher in the classroom.

Wong stated that the best use of the educational dollar was spent on educating teachers. Darling-Hammond (1998) stated, "Teachers need to understand subject matter deeply and flexibly, so that they can help students create useful cognitive maps, relate



ideas to one another, and address misconceptions. Teachers need to see how ideas connect across fields and to everyday life.” Teachers should have a variety of content knowledge that allows them to effectively teach all students.

All teachers interviewed in this study stated that staff development had indirectly impacted their students’ achievement through their participation in staff development programs. After teachers attended these staff development sessions they often reported they were more confident in their teaching and secure of their educational decisions within the classroom.

Another aspect of staff development programs that was found to be effective in impacting student achievement was providing a time for feedback sessions. After a teacher has learned a new technique and attempted to implement this new learning into the classroom, a time must be set aside for reflection. During this time teachers should reflect on the teaching technique that has been implemented into his/her classroom, using his/her professional judgment to decide if successful transfer of the learning has taken place and whether it effected student achievement. Allowing the information to “sink in” and think about how the material may be applied to the curriculum provided teachers with a time for reflection on the new material learned.

### *Research Question #3*

Do teachers perceive that school systems are providing adequate staff development for apprentice teachers as compared to veteran teachers?

Most teachers were searching for something different within their professional careers. Throughout the interviews apprentice teachers and veteran teachers expressed their desires to become better teachers in the classrooms. Whether that entailed attending

regular study group sessions with colleagues or participating in a weeklong hands on math session. All teachers needed something different to complete their professional matrix.

Literature had revealed “that one-third of new teachers leave the profession within three years and almost half leave within five years” (Weaver, 2004, p.10). Often in the educational profession we have heard the phrase new teachers must “sink or swim“. Gone are the days that veteran teachers thought “I had to do it by myself, and I turned out okay”. Apprentice teachers’ needs were more diverse than veteran teachers in that apprentice teachers were searching for strategies that allowed them to stay “above water” during their first few years. With this in mind, school systems should directly target incoming teachers.

High teacher turnover is a strong factor affecting students’ achievement (Weaver, 2004). New teachers are not coming to the 21<sup>st</sup> century classroom prepared to teach a classroom of diverse students. This was evident through the comments made from the participants of this study. Many participants stated that they were not taught how to teach in college. This statement could have been a reflection of factors that influenced their college career such as not being interested in the material being taught or not seeing the value of the current concepts for future use. That putting all the pieces together was not fully understood until they participated in staff development programs within their current system.

Darling –Hammond (1996) stated that through induction programs new teachers should learn the basic “cookbook rules’ for the classroom. The programs should allow teachers to develop a positive attitude toward problem solving, reflect on teaching

situations, and engage in educational research. These methods should ensure that teachers will be well prepared with the tools to begin to understand their students and how to effectively teach their entire classroom.

Throughout the interviews all apprentice teachers had participated in some type of new teacher program such as being placed with a mentor teacher or attending a new teacher induction program. These programs seemed extremely popular among the participants of the study. Participants who were involved with the Teacher Induction Program noted the positive aspects of the program. One aspect was that a third grade teacher in the school system instructed the program. This allowed the teachers to be comfortable with the presenter in terms of asking questions and seeking guidance in classroom issues.

Another aspect that was mentioned as being helpful was the format of the class. The sessions used the *First Days of School* by Wong. This provided many teachers with added basic knowledge of classroom procedures such as morning work and dismissal procedures. Classes were often discussion groups for various scenarios that might have happened to class members in that year. This activity allowed new teachers to hear ideas from other new teachers that had worked in their classroom as well as hearing ideas from veteran teachers. One suggestion that was made during the interview process was the scheduling of those classes. One participant noted that the classes did not begin until October. She stated that one point that was brought out in the textbook was that you needed to have your classroom in order by the second week of school or you had lost it. She mentioned that because the classes did not begin until October it was difficult to comply with this standard. She suggested scheduling the classes prior to the beginning of

the school year. This might be difficult for school systems because many do not hire all of their new teachers before school starts. The remaining apprentice teachers in the study were involved within a mentor teacher program. Again this was expressed as an extremely positive experience for the apprentice teachers. New teachers seemed to desire to have a teacher when they could rely on throughout the school year. Apprentice teachers often need guidance in school culture, procedures for the building, and regulations for the system. These were issues that veteran teachers had learned over the years and may have taken for granted. Apprentice teachers, however, were in need of this invaluable knowledge. Several apprentice teachers that were interviewed stated that they were often a burden to veteran teachers. One teacher expressed that knowing the mentor teacher was receiving a small stipend for her service eased the feeling that she was constantly being a bother.

Not only should a school system target apprentice teachers but veteran teachers as well. Continually presenting staff development for veteran teachers provided these teachers with the latest educational research. Veteran teachers are often at different places in their professional careers than apprentice teachers. However, when participants in the study spoke about the tuition free graduate courses provided by their system both groups of teachers found that these sessions had dramatically improved their teaching expertise.

Being part of an intensive and sustained program that directly focused on effective teaching methods was a positive staff development experience for veteran and apprentice teachers. Apprentice teachers noted they were fortunate to have such opportunities in their system. The training they had received in college had merely

brushed the surface on teaching. Through these staff development sessions apprentice teachers had started to connect their learning to the students' needs. Veteran teachers were being exposed to new skills just as apprentice teachers. Many veteran teachers found that this type of staff development made them take a serious look at how they were teaching. Participating in staff development sessions made all teachers more knowledgeable.

Veteran teachers were searching for proven techniques that would make their teaching more effective for their students. Ensuring that all students learn was a common goal for teachers. Being an active participant in staff development assisted teachers in becoming better-qualified teachers. With higher demands being placed upon educators in terms of accountability, veteran teachers were often more cautious of the time they devoted to staff development opportunities. Veteran teachers expressed their desire not to bring new techniques into their classroom that were not research based. "Make It and Take It" workshops were mentioned throughout the study as a negative model. Veteran teachers stated that these sessions were a waste of their time. Veteran teachers wanted to know their staff development was worthy of this time investment. Also, this staff development should provide a proven change process in their classroom.

Veteran and apprentice teachers stated their school systems were trying to utilize staff development opportunities in effective ways. All teachers noted that staff development opportunities were being made available. However, the content of some of those opportunities may or may not have been appropriate for the teacher. All teachers should examine their professional careers. Teachers should then decide what they want to improve within their career for the year- what are their goals? The goals should then

be checked throughout the year and reflected upon as they progress. All teachers need to continue to grow professionally whether veteran and apprentice.

### *Implications For Future Practice and Future Research*

Staff development in the upcoming future will become even more vital in meeting the needs of teachers and students. Staff development coordinators should take into account the teachers' perceptions of their experiences with staff development. When planning staff development events, teachers should be valued for their knowledge in the curriculum areas. The staff development sessions should be planned with the school and system goals in mind. Consistency among the staff development sessions and the school and system's goals provides assurance that needs are being addressed within the system. Staff development coordinators should plan staff development opportunities that are instructed by presenters that are knowledgeable, enthusiastic, and well organized. This instills motivation and confidence in the teachers for the classroom. Teachers want to become better educators. With this in mind, teachers wanted to attend staff development sessions that are research-based. "Make It and Take It" classes are often seen as a waste of time or "fillers" just to satisfy time requirements. When teachers are exposed to quality staff development it often carries over into the classroom.

For future research, the current study could be implemented within grades five-eight. This would allow us to examine the perceptions of veteran and apprentice teachers in the middle school grades regarding staff development. Students and teachers should not be forgotten in these grades. It is important to have carryover from one grade to the next. One important aspect of the educational process is the impact that administration plays through their support of staff development. Principals and central office

administration should be supportive of a teacher's desire to grow professionally. A future study in the area of staff development could contain the principals' and central office staffs' perceptions of continuing professional growth opportunities for all teachers in order to help all child reach his/her potential.

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## APPENCICES

APPENDIX A

Demographic Questionnaire for Staff Development

1.) What is the highest level of degree received in your profession?

Bachelor      Masters      Post Graduate

2.) What is your level of teaching experience?

1-3 Years      4-7 Years      8-15 Years      15+ Years

3.) What is the number of hours that you have participated in staff development activities during the previous school year?

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of hours during the school day

\_\_\_\_\_ Number of hours outside of the school day

## APPENDIX B

### Interview Questions for Teacher's Perceptions for Staff Development

- 1.) Think about your three most favorable experiences with staff development sessions. These sessions may differ greatly in terms of content, format, or depth of subject matter. Think why these sessions were so memorable to you. What made these sessions so effective and memorable?
- 2.) In reflecting on these three favorable staff development sessions how has the knowledge gained in these sessions impacted your student's achievement?
- 3.) What made those staff development sessions successful? Or, what were the best things about those staff development sessions?
- 4.) When looking back on these staff development sessions, how do they compare to other staff development sessions that your school system provides? (timing, location, content, compensation, & etc.)
- 5.) Being an apprentice teacher reflect on how the system's staff development program has impacted the beginning of your teaching career. How have the staff development programs affected your teaching?
- 6.) Now I would like you to think about your three least favorable experiences with staff development. Explain why these sessions were your least favorable activities.
- 7.) In your opinion, what are the strengths of your system's staff development program? How could it be improved?

## APPENDIX C

### Informed Consent

East Tennessee State University

INFORMED CONSENT

Principal Investigator: Rebekah Barnard

Page 1 of 3

Title of Project: Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Staff Development in  
Three Public Northeast Tennessee Schools

Date: August 6, 2003

This Informed Consent will explain about a research project in which I would appreciate your participation. It is important that you read this material carefully and then decide if you wish to participate. Please understand that there is no pressure for you to be a participant of this project.

#### PURPOSE:

The purposes of this study are first, to collect and report elementary educators' perceptions of staff development programs of elementary schools according to educators. Second, the study is designed to determine if educators perceive that staff development programs are providing valuable knowledge enhances student achievement. Third, this research will provide insight into the staff development needs of apprentice educators as compared to veteran educators. The results of this study may provide a tool for school districts to evaluate their current staff development programs and determine if changes should be made.

#### DURATION:

Each participant will be interviewed for approximately one hour. Response time may vary with each participant based upon his or her responses.

#### PROCEDURES:

The interview process used in this study will be a semi-structured interview that includes seven open-ended questions and three demographic questions. The participants will respond to the questions in a one- on – one interview. A copy of the interview protocol is attached.

#### POSSIBLE RISKS/DISCOMFORTS:

This study will not result in any possible risks or discomforts to the participants. Participants may choose not to answer any questions that may make them feel uncomfortable, and they may decide at any point in the research project to quit.

Initial \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_

Principal Investigator: Rebekah Barnard

Page 2 of 3

Title of Project: Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Staff Development in  
Three Public Northeast Tennessee Schools

Date: August 6, 2003

**POSSIBLE BENEFITS:**

Possible benefits to the individual would be reflection upon his/her personal staff development plan. Individuals will not receive any compensation for his/her participation in the study. Benefits to the individual school systems would be receiving feedback from the interviews. This information would provide the school systems with a better understanding of teachers' perceptions of staff development programs. Individual's name and school systems will not be identified in the data. Benefits to other educational institutions would be using the data to influence the development of staff development programs.

**CONTACT FOR QUESTIONS:**

If you have any questions, problems, or research-related medical problems at any time, you may call Rebekah Barnard at (423) 753-5817 or Dr. Russell Mays, at (423) 439-4430. You may also call the Chairman of the Institutional Review Board at (423) 439-6134 for any questions you may have about your rights as a research participant.

**CONFIDENTIALITY:**

Every attempt will be made to see that my study results are confidential. A copy of the records from this study will be stored in a secure file cabinet at the researcher's home for at least 10 years following the completion of the project. The results of this study may be published and/or presented at the meetings without naming you as a participant. Although your rights and privacy will be maintained, the Secretary of the Department of Health and Human Services, East Tennessee State University, and the study related personnel in the ETSU Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis have access to the study records. My personal records will be kept confidential according to current legal requirements. They will not be revealed unless required by law, or as noted above.

**COMPENSATION FOR MEDICAL TREATMENT:**

East Tennessee State University will pay the cost of emergency first aid for any injury that may happen as a result of your participation in this study. The instruction will not pay for any other medical treatment. Any claims against ETSU, any agents, or employees may be submitted to the Tennessee Claims Commission. These claims will be settled to the extent allowable as provided under TCA Section 9-8-307. For more information about claims call the Chairman of the Instructional Review Board of ETSU at (423) 439-6134.



Principal Investigator: Rebekah Barnard

Page 3 of 3

Title of Project: Qualitative Study of Teachers' Perceptions of Staff Development in  
Three Public Northeast Tennessee Schools

Date: August 6, 2003

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:**

The nature, demands, risks, and benefits of the project have been explained to me as well as are known and available. I understand what my participation involves. Furthermore, I understand that I am free to ask questions and withdraw from the project at any time, without penalty. I have read, or have had read to me, and fully understand the consent form, I sign it freely and voluntarily. A signed copy has been given to me. Your study record will be maintained in strictest confidence according to current legal requirements and will not be revealed unless required by law or as noted above.

Signature of Volunteer: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX D

### Phone Conversation Guide For Principals

I would like to interview staff members with a strong sense of staff development understanding. Teachers who go above and beyond the required system requirements for inservice credit. Teachers who truly believe that staff development assist in making them a more qualified educator. Also, I would like to speak with teachers who are still scrambling or struggling in May to find staff development credit. These teachers may see staff development hours as a chore that takes away from their time. I would also like a representation of male and female veteran and apprentice teachers.

## APPENDIX E

### Auditor's Letter

April 23, 2004

Rebekah Barnard, Doctoral Candidate  
East Tennessee State University  
Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis  
501 Warf-Pickel Hall  
Johnson City, TN 37614

Mrs. Barnard

It is my pleasure to provide this auditor's letter of attestation for inclusion in your doctoral dissertation. The audit was conducted using the criteria set forth in Guba and Lincoln's Naturalistic Inquiry (1985). I reviewed your data and found the following:

- Validating the data was easily accomplished due to the logical steps taken throughout the research process. The audibility of the data is confirmed.
- The credibility of your study is confirmed through implementing the techniques of member checking following each interview.
- After listening to the audio recordings and reviewing the transcripts, the themes that emerged from the data were appropriate for this study. There is no evidence of bias in this research.
- The dependability of your study was established through the sampling methods and establishment of the methodological decisions that were chosen. They were purposeful and relevant.

Congratulations on the complementation of your study. I commend you on the professional manner in which the study was conducted. This research will provide insight into the area of staff development. The education of students will be enhanced through the area of staff development.

Sincerely,

Denise Cox

VITA

REBEKAH E. BARNARD

Personal Data:       Date of Birth: August 29, 1973  
                          Place of Birth: Jonesborough, Tennessee  
                          Marital Status: Married

Education:            Public Schools, Jonesborough, Tennessee  
                          East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;  
                          Bachelor of Science in Elementary Education, B.S.; 1995  
                          Tusculum College, Greeneville, Tennessee;  
                          Masters of Arts, 1997  
                          East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee;  
                          Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis, Ed.D.; 2004

Professional  
Experience:            Teacher, West View School, Limestone, Tennessee  
                          1995-2001  
                          Assistant Principal, West View and Lamar School  
                          2001-current