THE SYSTEM FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT ADVANCEMENT AND EMBEDDED

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY

by

LaConti Shantell Bryant

Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this qualitative case study was to explore the perceptions and experiences of educators who participated in The System for Teacher and Student Achievement (TSTSA) and ongoing, applied professional development at multiple school sites in The School District of the Southwest. The guiding theories guiding this study were Knowles' Adult Learning Theory and Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory to understand their experiences and perceptions about participating TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. Participants in this study took part in face-to-face field interviews. In addition, documentation, direct observations, and participant observations were considered, compared, and investigated. Data collected was used to give a descriptive account of educators' perceptions and experiences about participating in The System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TSTSA) and ongoing, applied professional growth. Data analysis consisted of transcribing and coding face-to-face interviews and observations, content analysis of documentation, and memoing.

Keywords: The System for Teacher and Student Advancement, ongoing applied professional growth, embedded professional development, TAP System, Teacher Professional Development

Copyright Page

Dedication

This work is dedicated to my mom, Dianne Nichols, for her dedication and persistence to ensure she taught me to have a strong work ethic. Thank you for speaking life to me as a child and believing in my dreams. Thank you for simply being mom.

Acknowledgements

First, it is imperative that I give Jesus Christ the glory for carrying me this far. As the mothers of the church would say, "I would take nothing for my journey. If I had to do it all over again I would do it just because Jesus gets the glory." Next, I must thank my husband, Michael, who is truly my Proverbs 32 man. Thank you for being my personal cheerleader and encouraging me along the way. Words cannot explain the appreciation and love I have for you for your constant encouragement. Next, I would like to thank my mom, Dianne Nichols, for her continued love and support throughout my academic career. I thank the school of education staff at Liberty University. You have made this journey bearable throughout the years. Your support is greatly appreciated. Thank you, Dr. Keith for your willingness and encouragement through the end of this process. I would like to give thanks to Dr. Murlene Watwood. You have been patient on this journey with me for fifteen years. You were there in the beginning of my career as a professional educator. It would only be befitting for you to be a part of this great accomplishment. I thank God for your longsuffering and patience throughout this process. Next, it is imperative to thank Dr. Joan Fitzpatrick for her time and energy to serve on this committee. I want to personally thank you for your expertise, time, and intercessions. Thanks to Dr. James Swezey for encouraging me to grow in the area of scholarly writing, and maintaining a humble spirit while doing so.

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List of Abbreviations

A Nation at Risk (ANAR)

Governor's Educators Excellent Grant (GEEG)

No Child Left Behind (NCLB)

National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET)

Race To The Top (RTTT)

Skills, Knowledge, and Responsibilities (SKR)

TAP Leadership Team (TLT)

Teacher Advancement Program (TAP)

Texas Education Code (TEC)

Texas Educators Excellent Grant (TEEG)

The System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TSTSA)

United States Department of Education (USDOE)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

Professional development is a comprehensive, continuous, and rigorous approach to improving educator effectiveness to impact student achievement (Learning Forward, 2013). Effective professional learning is embedded into the educator workday and aligned to state standards and school improvement goals (Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009; Learning Forward, 2013; National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012). In addition, effective principals and school personnel facilitate professional learning communities that occurs several times per week with educators by implementing coherent, continuous, and research-based strategies to improve instructional practices and impact student achievement through collaboration (Learning Forward, 2013).

Educator collaboration is a central component of professional learning communities; moreover, the significance of educator collaboration is accentuated by many experts (DuFour & Keating, 2008; Gajda & Koliba, 2008; Hord, 2004; InPraxis, 2006; Morrissey, 2000; Newmann & Associates, 1996; Schmoker, 2004). Collaboration is crucial in shifting from a culture of isolation to a culture of cooperation among educators (Bezzina, 2006; Diaz-Maggoli, 2004; Frazier, 2004). Educators who work with peers can get immediate feedback about their instructional practices (Drennon & Foucar-Szocki, 1996). Learning is deepened as learning community members draw on the skills and viewpoints of their colleagues (Drennon & Foucar-Szocki, 1996). As each individual educator learns, so does the entire learning community (Drennon & Foucar-Szocki, 1996). This causes authority to shift "from the outside experts to practitioners inside the school community who come to develop and articulate theories grounded in their real-world experience" (Drennon & Foucar-Szocki, 1996, p. 72).

The most effective professional learning programs are those that connected theory with modeling, practice, feedback, collaboration and coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1980). In addition, education experts agree that effective professional learning promotes teacher change which impacts instructional delivery and collaborative practices (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Dana & Yendol-Hoppey, 2008; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Killion & Roy, 2009; Knight, 2007; Showers & Joyce, 1996).

Background

Over the past decade reform for public education has heightened because of the enactment of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act 2002. The NCLB Act (2001) requires students to make adequate progress in reading and math. Schools and districts are charged with the responsibility of hiring, retaining, and developing, high-quality educators and expanding educator pedagogical content knowledge through professional growth and development that will positively impact student achievement and respond to the demands of the NCLB (USDOE, 2012). To meet the demands of teacher quality, it is essential that high-quality professional development be employed. The purpose of high-quality professional development is to equip educators with research based strategies that foster the creation of small learning communities in the classroom setting and influence instructional delivery in challenging and innovative ways that positively impact student achievement (USDOE, 2009).

The *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report highlighted the achievement gaps and concerns about public education in the United States. The report was generated by the National Commission on Excellence in Education and accentuated the necessity of education reform. Achievement gaps were present in the areas of science, mathematics, and technology. Comparisons of achievement rates were done on a global level comparing American students to their counterparts in England,

Japan, Singapore, and Finland. In addition, the *A Nation at Risk (1983)* report highlighted the mediocrity of the educational system in the United States and stressed the desperate need for change. The results of this report stimulated over three decades of initiatives and reforms in public education, which eventually concluded with the NCLB Act of 2002. NCLB aimed to reduce the achievement gap between minority students and their counterparts by ensuring that highly-qualified educators are placed in every classroom (Smith & Kovacs, 2011). The *A Nation at Risk* (1983) report played a fundamental part in implementing education reform that eventually put a focal point on hiring and retaining high-quality teachers and on educator professional growth and learning.

In 2008, *A Nation at Risk: Twenty-Five Years Later* underscored the successes and challenges that public schools have faced since 1983. Even though per pupil expenditure increased from an average of $5,800 to an average of $9,800, achievement scores for fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders did not show significant academic growth for the past two decades since the original publication of *A Nation At Risk* (1983). The successes that public schools have experienced are fundamental in detailing next steps for professional growth, yet there are challenges ahead such as narrowing and closing the achievement gap, ensuring that students are capable to compete in a global economy, and being prepared for a world that has yet to be imagined.

Next, *Goals 2000* (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) impelled educator professional growth and development. *Goals 2000: Educate America Act* (1994), also known as *Goals 2000*, was pioneered by the Clinton administration as an initiative to create a national framework for education reform to begin closing the achievement gap. The initial aim of *Goals 2000* was to focus on school readiness and completion, student achievement, leadership in math and science,

and adult literacy (USDOE, 2004). *Goals 2000* revamped the framework for educator professional learning and growth and the way that professional learning was funded. Educator professional growth and development became a national focus and priority to positively impact student achievement and success. *Goals 2000* served as a supposition for *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* (USDOE, 2004).

The enactment of *Goals 2000* paved the way for *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002*. *The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002* was signed by President George W. Bush. *The No Child Left Behind Act* sought to reduce the achievement gap among minority students and their counterparts by placing highly qualified educators in each classroom (Smith & Kovacs, 2011). Specifically, Title II of *The No Child Left Behind Act* focused on preparing, training, and recruiting highly-qualified teachers and principals and the improvement of the teaching force by providing funding to states to supply professional development for educators (USDOE, 2009).

Even more prevalent in the evolution of the system are initiatives that demand reform of the teaching profession. Evidence of this expectation is the *Race To the Top* (RTTT) reform initiative that was signed into law by President Barack Obama on February 17, 2009. The RTTT is authorized under the *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009* and rewards states for implementing innovative education reform in their districts. The purpose of RTTT was to drive reform in four critical areas: (a) adopting standards that will help students be successful in the global community to include college preparedness and the workplace, (b) recruiting and retaining effective educators, (c) developing an effective evaluation system for educators and principals, and (d) turning around low performing schools (USDOE, 2009). Today, educators need to know more than pedagogical content knowledge to educate each student. Instead, educators are

expected to: (a) learn, (b) effectively model, and (c) teach 21st century skills to prepare students for the global community (Hargreaves & Fink, 2008).

In addition to national reform efforts, there are initiatives that are specific to the state of Texas, focused on educator professional development and student achievement. These initiatives for the state of Texas were relevant because this qualitative case study was conducted in The School District of the Southwest. More specifically, the School District of the Southwest was located in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. The Texas Education Code (TEC) Subchapter J, Sec. 21.451 (TEX ED, 2003) stated that professional development be conducted in accordance with the requirements of the school districts and must be designed to improve student achievement (TEX ED, 2003). In addition, professional learning must be school-based and connected to school goals (TEX ED, 2003). Professional learning must be research-based as defined by Section 9101, No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (20 U.S.C. Section 7801) (TEX ED, 2003).

In 2006, the Governors Educators Excellent Grant (GEEG) Program and Texas Educators Excellent Grant (TEEG) were enacted in the Third Session of the 79th Legislative. These grants were created to provide educators with a monetary incentive for high levels of student achievement in public schools, (TEA, 2009). The District Award replaced both grants in 2006 for Teacher Excellence by the 79th Legislature. The purpose of D.A.T.E. was to allow districts the flexibility to develop innovative ways to award educators who improve student achievement (TEA, 2009a). To promote professional learning and alignment with the stipulations of *No Child Left Behind*, The System for Teacher and Student Achievement, formerly known as The Teacher Advancement Program or TAP, was created in 1999 and overseen by the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching. The purpose of TSTSA System for Teacher and Student Achievement is

to embed professional learning, instructional coaching, and collaboration into the educator's workday.

<p style="text-align:center">Situation to Self</p>

As a classroom teacher, professional development played a huge role in impacting student achievement for my students. Although at times I struggled with transferring knowledge from professional development in the classroom setting, I was motivated to become a mentor teacher because I worked in a school that implemented The System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TSTSA) and ongoing, applied professional growth. Through participating in cluster and leadership meetings, I discovered how to field test instructional strategies and transfer those instructional strategies into the classroom setting immediately. This discovery led me to look at the perceptions and experiences of education in schools that have been implementing TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in other school districts.

As a mentor teacher during first year implementation of TSTSA program, I had mixed emotions about ongoing, applied professional development because of the amount of effort required to implement and sustain cluster and leadership meetings, in addition to maintaining a full-time classroom. In addition, I had mixed emotions about the amount of immediate accountability that is associated with ongoing, applied professional growth because of the number of increased teacher observations. As the school year progressed, I noticed that the feedback from observations positively impacted my instructional practice and I saw a positive change in my classroom data. It was a personal, transformational experience.

As a Christian and minister, my personal belief was that there could be transformational change in educators. Educators are charged with the responsibility of teaching the most precious commodity there is: students. Educators educate students despite their ethnicity, gender, or

socioeconomic status. The students today are the builders of tomorrow's future. It is important to have educators that are effective, reflective, and transformative educating students.

Problem Statement

Professional development was not utilized as a sustainable event that relates to improvement in the instructional practices of teachers, yet embedded professional development is connected to education evaluations, performance-based compensation, and instructional practices (Eaker & Keating 2008; Knight, 2007). Collaborative practices, as well as, embedded learning, and instructional coaching is crucial to educator success (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2005; Hord & Tobia, 2012; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Sparks, 2013). However, there were barriers, such as resistance to change, that impede the "knowledge-doing gap" that impacts instructional practices (Fullan, 2006; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

The System for Teacher and Student Achievement was a research-based, comprehensive reform model that used embedded, ongoing, applied professional development and instructional coaching. This system was implemented and used consistently in The School District of the Southwest to develop and retain educators to have a positive impact on student learning and achievement, however, no systematic investigation regarding the impact or effectiveness of this program has been studied (Keller, 2008).

Furthermore, most of the current and available literature focused on teacher preparation. Consequently, there was a gap in literature examining changes in educator instructional practices and performance as a result of participating in embedded, professional learning, structured collaboration, and instructional coaching (Knight, 2007; Nelville & Robinson, 2003). Also, there was a need to investigate the effectiveness of programs such as TSTSA to determine its influence on the implementation of instructional practices in the classroom and its subsequent impact on

student achievement (Kinnucan-Welsch, Rosemary, & Grogan, 2006; Knight, 2009; Skiffington, Washburn, & Elliot, 2011).

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this collective case study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of select educators after participation in TSTSA ongoing, applied professional development within the School District of the Southwest. Educators' perceptions of ongoing, applied professional development was defined as understanding and applying research-based instructional strategies acquired through embedded professional learning in the classroom setting. The theory guiding this study was Knowles' Adult Learning Theory, as it examined how adults learn and apply new information in their work environments.

Significance of the Study

With the initiation of Race to The Top, states became competitive with reform initiatives to receive monies to carry out ground–breaking reforms in their districts and schools. In this era of education reform, schools are looking for ways to execute best practice that will effectively serve diverse populations of students. Since educators are accountable for initiating and sustaining innovative changes that will positively impact student achievement, then effective and ongoing professional development and growth was necessary for developing and retaining highly-qualified educators. The NCLB Act defined highly-qualified educators as: (a) those holding a bachelor's degree, (b) having a valid teaching certificate or license, and (c) having pedagogical content courses in the area of certification. The states were given the responsibility to determine any additional requirements for highly qualified educators (USDOE, 2005).

Ongoing, applied professional growth is also known as job-embedded professional development and is grounded in the everyday instructional practices with the intention of

improving student learning. Traditional approaches to professional learning included external workshops and graduate courses. Unlike traditional approaches, ongoing, applied professional growth involved embedded activities such as mentoring, peer planning, and observations (Springer, Ballou, & Peng, 2008). Ongoing, applied professional growth required educators to be directly involved with their professional learning. Ongoing professional growth and development was necessary for building educator pedagogical content knowledge through embedding professional learning communities into the school day to help facilitate a collaborative practice among educators as mandated by *The No Child Left Behind* (USDOE, 2004). Job embedded professional learning was a shared process that can take the form of coaching, case studies, action research, data teams, or professional learning communities (Croft, Groggshall, Dolan, & Powers, 2010). In embedded professional learning communities, educators had opportunity to learn from experts in their buildings and build capacity for teacher leadership in their professional learning communities.

The significance of this collective case study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of elementary educators who are currently participating in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth by using the case study methodology. Through conducting this collective case study, it is hoped that educators, schools, and school districts will benefit professionally from the research and evidence collected.

Research Questions

I explored elementary educator perceptions of TSTSA ongoing and applied professional growth and whether or how, it has had an impact on or caused change with individual, collaborative, and instructional practices.

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional

development component of TSTSA program?

The purpose of this question was to examine the perceptions and experiences of

elementary educators who have participated in TSTSA and ongoing, professional growth. Mizell

(2008) stipulated, "School-based professional learning is the best way to ensure that the learning

of educators is relevant to the context of their daily work, providing the impetus for them to apply

their learning to their work" (Mizell, 2008, p. 8). Ongoing, applied professional development

required educators to be active participants in constructing content knowledge. Unlike traditional

approaches to professional development, embedded professional development included activities

that connect directly to classroom practices. Instructional support was provided through

mentoring, peer coaching, and observations (Knight, 2009; Skiffington, Washburn, & Elliot,

2011; Springer, Ballou, & Peng, 2008).

RQ 2: What are educators' perceptions about how TSTSA and ongoing, and applied

professional growth impacted collaboration?

The rational for this question was to examine whether and how educators' pedagogical

knowledge has developed while participating in ongoing, applied professional growth and

collaboration. The goal of educators engaging in professional development and growth was to

increase their content knowledge and learn instructional strategies to integrate into their

classroom setting. According to Hedges (2011), professional development "Increased teachers'

commitment to developing their teaching practice and keeping up-to-date with new information"

(p. 301). Educators played a vital and active role in constructing their pedagogical content

knowledge during professional growth.

RQ 3: What are educators' experiences with the application of concepts learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning communities?

Through embedded professional development educators were expected to go beyond learning a new strategy. Educators were expected to implement strategies in their classrooms and make connections between research, their instructional practices, and student learning (National Staff Development Council, 2010). Guskey (1995) argued that successful professional development is the educator's ability to apply their knowledge.

RQ 4: What are educators' perceptions about how collaboration during TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional development contributed to changes classroom teachers made in their instruction?

Though a collective-team approach, educators engaging in TSTSA ongoing, applied professional learning built autonomy through a structured cycle of continuous inquiry, planning, collaboration, implementation, and reflection (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Hord, 2009; Killion & Hirsh, 2011; Learning Forward, 2011). Schmoker (2006) stipulated that "Collective effort and intelligence are the most powerful force for improvement because teams are genuinely smarter than the smartest people within them" (p. 111).

Definitions

1. *A Nation at Risk.* A comprehensive report published in 1983 about the condition of education in the United States (USDOE, 1983).

2. *A Nation at Risk: 25 Years Later.* A comprehensive report published in 2008 about how far the United States public school system had progressed since 1983 (USDOE, 2008).

3. *Career Teacher:* A full-time classroom teacher who participated in TSTSA program.

4. *Cluster Meeting:* This term was used interchangeably with job-embedded, professional learning community (NIET, 2012).

5. *Goals 2000: Educate America Act.* A reform initiative that was implemented during the Clinton administration that served as a premise for The No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This initiative highlighted the need for professional learning for public educators (Dufour & Eaker, 1998).

6. *Job embedded professional development.* Professional learning communities that were connected to the day-to-day activities of the school and classrooms and happen during the school day (NIET, 2012).

7. *Master Teacher:* A teacher that does not have a full-time classroom. The teacher is a full-time instructional coach.

8. *Mentor Teacher:* A teacher that has a duel role within TSTSA. The teacher continued to be a full-time classroom teacher and assumed the responsibilities of an instructional coach.

9. *No Child Left Behind.* The law signed into effect on January 8, 2002. The goal of No Child Left Behind was to foster a quality and equitable education for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. The No Child Left Behind Act is also known as Public School Law 107-110. (USDOE, 2004a)

10. *On-going, Applied Professional Growth.* This term was used interchangeably with cluster meeting or job-embedded professional learning community (NIET, 2012).

11. *Race to The Top.* An initiative implemented during the Obama administration to sway states to implement comprehensive and innovative reforms (USDOE, 2009a).

12. *Teacher Advancement Program.* This is the former name for TSTSA (NIET, 2012)

13. *The System for Teacher and Student Advancement.* A comprehensive reform model for

professional development and growth that was deployed during the school day. This

model was formally known at The Teacher Advancement Program (NIET, 2012).

Summary

The purpose of this collective case study was to examine the perceptions and experiences

of select educators towards TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional development within the

District of the Southwest. The theory guiding this study is Knowles' Adult Learning Theory. This

chapter introduced the reader to the historical and current research about embedded professional

development and TSTSA and the guiding questions for this study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

The goal of education is to initiate the change process in an individual (Holton, Knowles & Swanson, 2005) because "The quality of an educational system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers" (Barber & Mourshed, 2007, p. 8). Learning is an engaging and constructive process that acts as an interactive continuum to initiate and effect change in different components of an individual's life by building upon previous learning experiences. The adult educator serves as an agent of change who develops and presents learning that promotes transformational change of volition, habits, attitude, and knowledge (Hord, 2009) within the adult learner.

Adults assess the value of learning and the significance the learning has in their lives through their experiences (O'Toole & Essex, 2012). Adult learners appreciate learning based on real life experiences connected with collaboration (Hansman, 2001), however, collaboration "Causes temporary discomfort until the benefits of the change effort are obvious to the staff and become part of the normal routine" (Fiszer, 2004, p. 13). The theory that provided a suitable framework for this study is Knowles' theory of andragogy. Understanding what and how adults are motivated to learn is the central component of adult learning theory.

There is a need for a constructive approach to examine what causes effective collaboration among educators and to examine school norms, shared beliefs, examine new knowledge, and allow educators to work collaboratively as they examine their instructional practices (Fullan, 2006). The purpose of collaboration is to collectively help educators develop a common thinking process and examine assumptions about how their instructional practices have impacted student achievement (West, 1996). Educator collaboration and collegiality are norms that encourage educator innovation (Richardson & Anders, 1994). Collaboration is a team-centered process that

provided educators an opportunity to think outside of the context of their personal classrooms and refocus on the needs of every classroom in the school and reflect (Fullan, 2006) and work together collectively (Cambron-McCabe, Cunningham, Harvey, & Koff, 2005).

Next, collaboration positively impacted educator buy-in and ownership by educators (West, 1996) by enabling educators to develop professional relationships based on trust. Implementing collaboration with fidelity has a positive impact on educator instructional practices (Desimone, Porter, Garet, Yoon, & Birman, 2002). Additionally, sustained collaboration within a learning community is essential to improving schools (Learning Forward, 2013). High levels of collaboration positively impact job satisfaction for educators and foster setting high expectations for student learning and achievement (Learning Forward, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Yugoslavian educator, Savicevic, in 1967 introduced the term andragogy, however, it was later theorized by Knowles (Holton, Knowles & Swanson, 2005). Andragogy has been adopted by European countries such as Finland, France, and Poland to be applied in the field of education to help educators learn (Savicevic, 1991). An andragogical approach is essential to help prepare educators for learning communities and to help them transfer skills learned in learning communities into their classroom (Forrest & Peterson, 2006).

Knowles developed his theory on adult learning and coined the term andragogy, which is the discipline of teaching adults (Knowles, 1980; Knowles et al., 2005; Merriam, Caffarella, & Baumgartner, 2007). Adult learning theory focuses on how adults effectively learn and how and why their learning must be based on their personal experiences and connected to real life problem solving. Adult learning theory caters to and engages adult learners in constructive ways by interconnecting the foundational components of: (a) the need to know, (b) the learner's self-

concept, (c) the role of the learner's experience, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation to learn (Forrest & Peterson, 2006; Knowles, 1990; Merriam et al., 2007).

Learning is the result of interaction between educator and learner (Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980). O'Toole and Sussex (2012) argued that "Adults can more easily judge the value of the learning and its relevance to their lives and their needs to acquire particular skills or knowledge" (p. 187). Education and learning for adults must be personally meaningful and constructive enough to build upon their previous learning experiences and designed to impact change in the learner's knowledge base and attitude (Holton et al., 2005). Adult learning relies on the self-direction and readiness of the learner, as well as, meeting the environmental and physiological needs of adult learners.

Strategic processes should be in place that will help guide learning. Adult learners are motivated by biological and physiological pressures such as job promotions, pay raises, and career advancement (Knowles, 1995). When facilitating professional learning for adult learners it is important to recognize the experiences, both negative and positive, that motivate adult learners (Holton et al., 2005; Knowles, 1990; Lindeman, 1926). Understanding motivational factors that impact professional learning will create a learning community that is conducive to educator learning.

Several frameworks for adult learning have emerged over several decades, which influenced Knowles' arguments for andragogy (Brookfield, 1986; Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980; Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Lindeman, 1926; Mezirow, 1991; Swanson & Holton, 2009). Lindeman (1926) explained that learning should be personalized for adult learners based on their experiences, which is the richest resource for learning. Additionally, learning is a lifelong process centered on academic and non-academic educational ventures.

Brundage and MacKeracher (1980) contended that adults' past experiences should be acknowledged and used as a rich resource in the professional learning environment. The learning environment should be conducive and mutually respectful, allowing adults to openly share their experiences with one another.

Brookfield (1986) noted, "Adults used experience as a resource in learning so the learning content and process must bear a perceived and meaningful relationship to past experience" (p. 31). Adults are motivated to learn when there is a perceived notion that there is a need to learn and when there is a sense of accountability for what they learn through reflection. Reflection provides a "Unique function of adult learning to bring into critical consciousness the assumption and perspectives learned in adolescence" (Brookfield, 2003, p. 19).

Swanson and Holton (1997) made three assumptions about andragogy: (a) it is the principal of adult learning, (b) it provides techniques for adult learning, and (c) it provides adult educators with assumptions about adult learners (Swanson & Holton, 2009). Swanson and Holton (2009) stipulated that adult learners are transitional and independent learners that direct their learning and have direction over when, where, and why they desire to learn. Various strategies that aid in acquisition and engagement of adult learning are: (a) group discussions, (b) simulation exercises, (c) problem solving activities, (d) case method and laboratory method, and (e) peer helping activities (Knowles, 1990; Swanson & Holton, 2009). Adult learners are viewed as self-reliant and capable learners that are capable to making decisions about their learning experiences (Knowles, 1990; Swanson & Holton, 2009).

Ertmer and Ottenbreit-Leftwich (2010) argued that adult learners use their experiences as a foundation for their learning. When designing learning for adult learners it is important to set a purpose for learning based on their experiences and needs so that learning can be engaging,

meaningful, and transformational (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010; Knowles, 1995). When developing professional learning for adult learners it is crucial to consider the types of experiences each adult learner brings to the learning environment. Adult learners construct knowledge that can be immediately applicable to their lives (Ertmer & Ottenbreit-Leftwich, 2010).

Adult Learning and Transformational Learning

In the 1990s, Jack Mezirow used adult learning theory as the foundational component for a new constructive learning theory he named Transformational Learning Theory (Mezirow, 1991). Mezirow's (1981) defined andragogy as "An organized and sustained effort to assist adults to learn in a way that enhances their capacity to function as self-directed learners" (p. 21). Mezirow (1991) argued that earlier researchers did not make a connection with the learner's perspective and the transformation of "These habits of expectations during the learning process" (p. 4).

Transformational learning provides a way to tailor and facilitate adult learning experiences in a way that builds the adult learners' professional capacity and perspective to function as independent and self-directed learners through "Assessment or reassessment of assumptions" (Mezirow, 1981, p. 6). In addition, transformational learning is a creative and reflective process because the change that happens as a result of learning results in an internal and external manifestation through reflection and change (Mezirow, 1981). Adult learners transcend from one state of learning to another such as evolving from novice to expert through reflection because adult learners test their prior experiences through the process of critical reflection (Mezirow, 1981).

Transformational Learning Theory examines how learners view the world. Another definition of transformational learning from Schlitz, Vieten, and Miller (2010) states:

Transformation really means a change in the way you see the world—and a shift in how you see yourself. It's not simply a change in your point of view, but rather a whole different perception of what is possible. (p. 19)

Mezirow (1997) used the term frame of reference to describe an individual's habits of mind and point of view based on an individual's personal experiences. The frame of reference includes a two-dimensional process that includes an individual's cognitive and emotional components. The frame of reference is transformed through reflection on personal assumptions on which personal viewpoints, habits of mind, and beliefs. Educator's habits of mind impact their frame of reference and their readiness to embark on and continue professional learning.

According to Mezirow (1997), "Habits of mind are broad, abstract, orienting, habitual ways of thinking, feeling, and acting influenced by assumptions that constitute a set of codes" (p. 6). Habits of mind are perceptions that individuals bring to the learning community. It is the way they have been taught to perceive the world and respond, whether negative or positive. For the adult, experience plays a huge part at this stage in the thinking and transformation process because experience will dictate how the adult learner perceives professional learning and reflection and the impact it can have on instructional practices. According to Taylor and Cranton (2010) it is important "To reflect critically on the assumptions underlying what is communicated to us, and those informing our own perceptions, thoughts, feelings, and actions, is of fundamental importance in order to address the challenges, responsibilities, and complexities associated with adult life" (p. 323). The goal of reflection is to have a positive, non-punitive impact on instructional practice. Reflection serves as a haven for collaborative conversations.

Point of view involves adult learners reflecting on situations from multiple perspectives. This reflection serves as a transformational process of helping adult learners change their points of view or perspectives about situations. According to Mezirow (1997), "Points of view are subject to continuing change as we reflect on either the content or process which we solve problems and identify the need to modify assumptions" (p. 6). The adult learner goes beyond reflecting on situations from their personal experience and point of view. They have the opportunity to transition to viewing and reflecting on situations from multiple perspectives. Reflection can be a positive construct to develop a transformational practice.

Transformative learning requires that adult learners assume a dual role in their learning. Learners position themselves as an active participant in the learning process and as a reflective observer (Hoggan, Simpson, & Stuckey, 2009). Transformational Learning Theory describes the method for perspective transformation in adult learners. Perspective transformation is the process in which adult learners use prior knowledge to interpret their experiences to guide future actions (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009). Perspective transformation is converting or changing our habits of mind or mind-sets that have been informed by the learners' experience to a broad and more comprehensive perspective (Mezirow, 1991). Also, perspective transformation explained how "Adults learn to reason for themselves" (Mezirow & Taylor, 2009, p. 23). Transformative learning requires learning experiences to prompt the learner to reflect upon personal beliefs, mind-sets, and worldviews (Hoggan et al., 2009) in order to experience "…new sense of knowing and a perspective transformation" (Hoggan et al., 2009, p. 18). Through critical reflection learners challenge their assumptions in order to turn an experience in to a transformative learning experience (Cranton, 2006; Hoggan et al., 2009).

Adult Learning Theory provides facilitators with "useful insights about motivational, instructional, and leadership strategies that can be effective with experienced professionals" (Tallerico, 2005, p. 55). In addition, a positive collaborative interaction between the facilitator and the adult learner is fostered by promoting an environment of trust and self-awareness through collaborative work to design instructional content and embedding methods that cater to the needs of the adult learner (Chan, 2010; Forrest & Peterson, 2006). Knowles' andragogical model is not an ideology; "It is a system of alternative sets of assumptions, a transactional model that speaks to those characteristics of the learning situation" (Knowles et al., 2005, p. 72). Learners are actively involved in creating their learning experiences and setting boundaries for those experiences (Chan, 2010).

Adult Learning and Professional Learning

The goal of professional development is to actively engage learners in activities that provide multiple alternatives to learn (Cranton, 2006). Professional development can improve when schools use self-reflection (Gordon, 2004). Gordon (2004) defines reflection as "careful consideration and systematic search for knowledge and truth" (p. 71).

Cranton (1996) outlined the criteria that is consistent with a transformational professional development experience as: (a) different perspectives examined, (b) articulation of assumptions, (c) collaboration, (d) critical reflection, and (e) activities connected to the educator's instructional practice. Professional learning is neither an autonomic process nor a workshop or lecture. Adult learners are actively involved in their learning and transference of learning from the professional development setting to the classroom setting. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) stipulated that professional development must adhere to constructive practices if educators are "Expected to be convinced of the validity of those practices and to understand them sufficiently well to make them an integrated

part of their classroom repertoires" (p. 11). Professional learning is a developmental and social process. Educators are active participants in their learning process through various activities such as collaborating and sharing with other educators, examining student work, and critical reflection (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

Related Literature

Reform efforts must be a transformational process in order to have a long-term impact on educator quality and professional growth (Bereiter, 2002). Educator quality, through professional learning, has been targeted to improve student achievement.

The publication of *A Nation at Risk* caused focus to be placed on teacher quality and effectiveness (ANAR, 1983; Darling-Hammond et al. 2009; Seed, 2008). Traditional forms of professional development included workshops and conferences where experts relay information to educators. The term "professional learning communities" has become fashionable and equated with various school-based groups such as grade-level meetings, school committees, and professional organizations (DuFour, 2004).

This method of equating professional learning to other educator-related responsibilities such as team meetings and one day workshops did not result in educators applying the information in their classrooms, reflecting on the information, or collaborating about the information obtained from conferences and workshops. This type of professional learning has been termed as "drive by" or "set and get" learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). Further, Fullan criticized the "set and get" workshop approach to professional learning by stating, "Nothing has promised so much and has been so frustratingly wasteful as the thousands of workshops and conferences that led to no significant changes in practice when the teachers returned to their classrooms," (as cited in Collinson & Ono, 2001, p. 230).

Quality professional development positively impacts both educators' instructional practices and student learning (Borko, 2004; Darling-Hammond, 2000; Musanti & Pence, 2010). No Child Left Behind stipulates that professional learning is an integral part of the instructional day, or embedded into the educator workday (USDOE, 2005). Further, professional learning is a process that builds educator capacity and positively impacts student achievement within structured learning communities that are focused on continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment (Learning Forward, 2011). Professional learning is a multidimensional process that models constructivist practices that allow educators the opportunity to apply knowledge gained in professional learning in their instructional practices (Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Professional learning is a carefully planned process that makes effective use of educator's time and effort to impact instructional practices and student achievement.

As public schools in the United States continue to struggle with the challenges of how to provide effective and transformational professional development for educators that impact student learning; international counterparts have implemented high-quality, job-embedded professional learning (Collinson & Ono, 2001; Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Dubin, 2010; Wei, Andree, & Darling-Hammond, 2009). Each country underwent systemic change over the past three decades "Using strategic approaches to build teaching capacity," (Darling-Hammond, 2010, p. 21). Additionally, educators guide much of their professional development and growth along with curriculum and assessment in alignment with national standards (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

The top performing school systems in Finland and China consistently attracted stronger people into the teaching profession leading to better student outcomes. Recruitment into the field of education is highly selective by developing effective processes for selecting the right

applicants to become teachers, and paying good starting compensation. (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). In addition, educators are provided high-quality, ongoing, embedded professional development with opportunities to collaborate with peers (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Fullan, 2006).

In Finland, educators work together collaboratively to develop curriculum, interdisciplinary units, and assessments at the school level (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond, 2010). In addition, time is built into the educator's weekly schedule to provide adequate time for collaboration with peers (Darling-Hammond, 2010; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Frazier, 2004).

Educators in Singapore and Japan spend 35% of their time on instruction compared to 80% in the United States (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Most of the workday is spent collaborating with peers and problem solving. In Singapore, educators engage in multiple collaborative efforts to build educator capacity such as learning circles and teacher-led workshops (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Educators meet in learning circles for eight two-hour sessions over four to twelve months to share successes and challenges in the classroom, experiment with new instructional practices, and share personal experiences about their instructional practices (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Educators in The Netherlands, Singapore, and Sweden are required to complete 100 hours of professional development per year, in addition to other forms of collaboration and lesson planning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Additionally, Sweden required educators to complete 104 hours of in-service per year, in addition to the 20 hours per week spent performing peer observations to study master teachers (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Next, educators in Japan engaged in lesson study. Lesson study played an essential component of the learning culture in Japanese schools (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Novice educators were provided with a lot of assistance for beginning educators. Novice educators were supported with 20 days of in-service training and 60 days of professional learning during their first year in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1998). In addition, they were provided the opportunity to collaborate with master teachers who facilitated their professional growth (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Their collaborative practices included observation, discussion, and lesson critiques focusing on strengths and weaknesses. Through lesson study and collaboration, educators refined lessons based on feedback from peers.

Educators in The Netherlands, Singapore, Sweden, and Japan spend approximately 30% to 50% of their day engrossed in embedded professional learning. In contrast, United States educators spend a "total of 1080 hours providing instruction to students yearly compared to 803 for primary schools and 664 a year for upper secondary schools" (Darling-Hammond et. al, 2009, p. 15). In addition, each country spends 15-20 hours each week collaborating, compared to the United States three to five hours per week (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009, Wei et al, 2009). Each of the aforementioned countries have reinvigorated professional development to build capacity in its teaching force (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Job-Embedded Professional Learning

Educators are identified as the single most important entity that impacts student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 1988; Viadero, 2007). For educators to develop professionally, the right working conditions have to be created for educators to share their experiences outside of the classroom (Taylor & LaBarre, 2006). Developing an organizational

framework that allows educators to create a learning culture and build capacity is crucial to professional growth (Pfeffer & Sutton, 2006, p. 145).

Job-embedded professional learning and collaboration concentrating on educator's knowledge of content will impact instructional practices and student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Ball, 2004; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Garet et al., 2008; Guskey, 2003; Guskey & Yoon, 2009) and affords educators the opportunity to learn and test concepts in their classrooms (Schweitzera & Stephenson, 2012). Embedded learning is a formal and informal process that takes the form of peer coaching, mentoring, lesson study and action research (Chappius, Chappuis, & Stiggins, 2009; Croft et al. 2010; NIET, 2012). In addition, various modalities of professional development are incorporated into the educator workday (Chappius et al., 2009). Professional learning for adults should be a meaningful and transformational process for professional growth to emerge. Adult learners are not passive in their learning; instead they actively construct meaning in purposeful and engaging ways. Adult learners value learning from various experiences and collaboration (Hansman, 2001). For professional learning and growth, it is not any different. Adult learners must be actively engaged in their learning process. Adult learners become "Co-learners as they engage in professional dialogue with one another" (Cornu, 2005, p. 358).

Embedded professional learning challenges the traditional autonomic process of "set and get" in professional learning. It is a constructive process in which educators actively build knowledge (Santrock, 2001). Not only is it imperative that educators are actively involved in learning and the transference of learning from the professional development setting to the classroom setting, but the process of professional learning to happen consistently and be connected to educators daily, instructional practices (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009;

Killion & Hirsh, 2009; NIET, 2012). Professional learning is a developmental, engaging, and continuous process.

To implement and sustain successful embedded, professional growth and learning, continuous improvement is necessary (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Hirsh, 2012; Learning Forward, 2011; Hord & Tobia, 2012). Effective professional learning is "intensive, ongoing, and connected to practice," (Darling-Hammond, 2009). Further, effective professional learning focuses on student learning, curriculum development, and school improvement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hirsh, 2012; Killion & Hirsh, 2011; Hord, 2009; NIET, 2012). Continuous improvement involves revisiting goals, mission, and learning targets of the organization and realigning those goals with the goals of the school and district. As educators' instructional practices evolve with student learning, continuous improvement ensures that the initiatives of the school and district will continue to be carried out through professional learning.

Defining expectations for professional learning is essential. Expectations include: (a) having shared mission, (b) defining the vision and values of the organization, (c) educators engaging in collective inquiry with their peers; (d) developing collaborative teams; (e) taking action; and (f) focusing on continuous improvement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009; Learning Forward, 2011; NIET, 2012). An additional component to add to the expectations for professional development is that professional learning be incorporated into the educators' workday. As predetermined and specified by NCLB, professional learning must be an integral part on the educators' day and centered around instructional practices that positively and immediately impact instructional practices and student achievement (USDOE, 2012). Having

these foundational pieces in place will guide professional learning communities and the work they do to promote student learning and improving instructional practices.

The vision, mission, and values delineate purpose of the organization as well as serve as a guide for educator and student achievement, learning, and collaboration. Through a shared vision, mission, and values professional learning communities collectively define their purposes for professional learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009; Killion & Hirsh, 2009). The mission and vision align with identified student and educator needs and outlines a positive glimpse into the future, based on projected outcomes and results for students learning and educator professional growth (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). Once the vision is established, the instructional framework will move the vision into reality (Killion & Hirsh, 2011, 2013). The instructional framework consists of setting clear and obtainable expectations, alignment of professional learning based on student data, and supporting educator assessments (Killion & Hirsh, 2011, 2013). Having a vivid, positive projection of future successes can make the journey of the professional learning community cohesive and collaborative in nature.

Educator Collaboration

Collaboration is the foundation of professional learning communities. Engaging in collaboration enables educators to share experiences and learn from their peers (Biancarosa, Bryk, & Dexter, 2010; Chappuis et al., 2009; Darling-Hammond et al, 2009; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2011; Hord, 2009; Killion & Hirsh, 2011; Leiberman & Miller, 2011; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Waldron & Mcleskey, 2010). In collaborative teams, educators are provided the opportunity to examine student work and data, receive constructive feedback about instructional practices, and build relationships with peers (Dufour & Eaker, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Sparks, 2013). Collaboration happens across grade level and

departments (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Collaboration should be embedded in the workday to allow educators the opportunity to share their experiences and expertise about instructional strategies implemented in the classroom (Frazier, 2004) since learning communities provide a medium for reflection to identify practices that promote or hinder instructional practices. The common and shared purpose of the learning community is to focus on instructional practices and student learning. Professional learning communities create an avenue for educators to learn from one another. Consistent collaboration provides an opportunity for educators to take ownership of their instructional practices (Levine & Marcus, 2007). Educators collaboratively work together to refine their instructional practices to impact student achievement.

Collaboration challenges the isolated practice of teaching that has transcended many decades (Hord, 2009; Hord, Bradley, & Roy, 2013). Levine and Marcus (2007) explained, "Teachers traditionally have enjoyed both autonomy and isolation from their colleagues; some hope that a more organic, context-sensitive process of learning and personal investment in reform will result when teachers work more collegially to realize a shared vision" (p. 118). Engaging in sustained collaboration challenges the norms of the institution and is met with great resistance. Educators are challenged to transform from a culture of isolation to a collaborative practice that involves peer educators and stakeholders (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Killion & Hirsh, 2009). Change is a complex process that is not always welcomed in the instructional environment because it introduces unfamiliar practices to educators. External barriers that impact successful change and collaboration are failing to recognize need for change, not wanting to change because of current satisfaction with current instructional practices, past failures of initiatives, and threatened by perceived future, personal failure hinder educators from effectively engaging in collaboration with peers (Zimmerman, 2006; Fullan, 2011). To develop a collaborative

professional learning community, educators must work with peers towards a common goal (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2009; DuFour, 2012; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 2009).

To build a process for collaboration, structures need to be in place to ensure an equitable, collaborative practice. Specific elements for collaboration includes, (a) administrative support, (b) facilitation of professional development by teacher leaders, (c) explicit protocols that guide professional learning, and (d) time to engage in problem solving (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Educators work collectively, collaboratively, and reflectively to enhance their instructional practices and positively impact student achievement in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2012). According to Hord (2009), the learning community "assumes a focus on a shared purpose, mutual regard and caring, and an insistence on integrity and truthfulness," (p. 41). Professional learning and professional learning communities are at the center of how educators work together to improve their instructional practices and the work educators do every day. To have a transformational experience with collaboration, self-reflection is necessary.. Educators must understand the changing dynamics of the classroom setting and be prepared and flexible with delivery of instruction, collaboration, and self-reflection to create a successful classroom environment for students and learning community for educators. The shared purpose of educators in learning communities is to develop their instructional practices, ensure students are academically successful, and to align state academic standards and the curriculum. As educators come together to form professional learning communities, it is important that collaboratively they develop a process that will guide their work and clear expectations about their roles in the learning community.

The emphasis of professional learning is to develop educators to be competent and capable professionals in the classroom setting and serve as mentors to new educators. Collaboration is crucial to have effective inquiry that positively effects change in instructional practices. Collective inquiry is a crucial element of professional learning because it provides an avenue for educators to build positive relationships with peers through collaboration. Working collaboratively is a transformational experience for educators because it provides an opportunity for educators to experience teaching and learning from various perspectives. It focuses on the group's ability to collaboratively and effectively learn together through problem solving and reflection.

Embedded Instructional Coaching

Coaching is a crucial component of job-embedded professional development because instructional coaches serve as facilitators of educator professional growth (Blank, de las Alas & Smith 2008; Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Croft et al., 2010; Showers & Joyce, 1995; Killion & Harrison, 2006; Killon & Roy, 2009; Knight, 2007; Saphier & West, 2010). Coaching is defined as a process in which coaches collaborate with educators in a reflective and innovative manner that causes educators to maximize their professional potential (Knight, 2006; 2007). Barkley (2005) and Reiss (2007) argue that coaching is a professional alliance between the instructional coach and the educator developed through professional rapport and trust. Danielson (2007) views instructional coaches as support experts whose skill sets and instructional techniques are an asset to professional learning communities. Kise (2006) contends that instructional coaches are individuals who help educators identify and work through challenging areas of their instructional practice.

The role of instructional coaching. The coaching role required that instructional coaches are capable of functioning in various roles including being an effective communicator (Borman & Feger, 2006; Kowal & Steiner, 2007; Poglinco et al., 2003). The relationship between the instructional coach and the educator is an ongoing and collaborative relationship focused on helping educators reach their full professional potential. Instructional coaching is a process of concentrated professional learning substantiated with ongoing and embedded application of researched-based instructional strategies in the classroom with opportunities for educators to critically reflect on and improve instructional practices (Skiffington, Washburn, & Elliot, 2011). Instructional coaches focus on working with educators to implement researched-based instructional strategies across content areas. Even though the instructional coach may not be an expert in every content area, however, this individual is knowledgeable about best instructional practices (Knight, 2009; Skiffington, Washburn, & Elliot, 2011).

Instructional coaches serve in non-administrative and non-evaluative roles to work with educators to improve their instructional practices and advance student achievement. For educators to change their instructional practices, it is necessary to differentiate learning options. Individual and collaborative options such as delivering classroom and team support, building a professional rapport and trust, and collegiality are necessary to promote change and transform learning for educators (Bowgren & Sever, 2010). Coaches engage in various professional development opportunities such as delivering embedded professional development, modeling instructional strategies for educators in the context of their classrooms, and coaching conversations to help educators reflect on and refine their instructional practices (Knight, 2006).

Elements of professional learning and instructional coaching. There are five important elements of effective professional learning sessions: (a) presenting a strategy with the theory and

research that supports the effectiveness of the strategy, (b) provide demonstration lessons, (c) allow practice time with new strategies so that educators can began to understand how to transfer the new learning into their classrooms, (d) evidence based and constructive feedback to educators, and (e) embedded coaching to help educators transfer new knowledge into their classrooms (Showers & Joyce, 1980). Instructional coaching is a vital component of professional learning for educators. Coaching provides an avenue for educators to reflect on their current practices to revise and improve their instructional practices and have a positive impact on student learning (Barkley, 2005). Barkley (2005) explains:

> Coaching has proven to be one of the primary tools of staff development for teachers and administrators alike. Coaching provides a vehicle by which to achieve goals, improve strategies, and make a difference for students and colleagues. With coaching, teachers discover--usually for the first time--how to reflect on their teaching in ways that add value to their methods and an enhanced level of professionalism. (p. 4)

It is crucial that coaches develop collaborative relationships with educators (Knight, 2009) and allocate time and resources to properly differentiate coaching for individual educators (Killion, 2009). In addition, daily tasks that instructional coaches perform include data analysis, coaching/mentoring teachers, and attending district workshops (McCombs & Marsh, 2009). Also, encompassed within the coaches' responsibilities are components stressing "Deep collaboration, collective responsibility for student learning, teacher as decision maker, continual adult learning, and adult norms of dialogue and debate" (Saphier & West, 2010). In addition, continuous professional development focusing on coaching and instructional skills is a critical component of successful coaching (L'Allier, Elish-Piper, & Bean, 2010).

The System for Teacher and Student Achievement

One reform effort that has been implemented that links collaboration, instructional coaching and embedded professional learning is TSTSA created in 1999 by the Milken Foundation. TSTSA has been recognized as a comprehensive school improvement reform model that increases student achievement through teacher effectiveness (Spring, Ballou, & Peng, 2008). TSTSA is a multi-tiered system that restructures and reinvigorates professional learning by providing educators with career advancement opportunities, embedded school-based professional learning, a comprehensive evaluation approach, and performance-based compensation (NIET, 2012).

TSTSA is also known as the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP). To answer the demands of NCLB, school districts have sought out comprehensive reform models for professional development, such as TSTSA. The National Institute for Excellence in Teaching launched TSTSA in 1999 as a comprehensive reform model to invigorate the teaching profession by offering educators choices within their profession while engaging in ongoing, job-embedded professional development (NIET, 2012). School districts across the United States have successfully implemented TSTSA and have sustained ongoing, and applied professional development including: (a) Algiers Charter School Academy, (b) Indiana Department of Education, (c) Louisiana Department of Education, (d) South Carolina, (e) Henrico County, Virginia, and (f) Knox County School District. At the time of this study, 20 elementary schools and 17 secondary schools in Texas currently participate in TSTSA (Eckert, 2009; NIET, 2012). TSTSA connects collaborative learning teams and instructional coaching to ensure career and mentor teachers are successful in their classrooms (NIET, 2012). In addition, many school

districts are implementing TSTSA as an avenue to recruit, develop, and retain educators (Eckert, 2009).

Quality, embedded professional development is not a one-time or one workshop event, rather is ongoing, sustainable, and connected to classroom practice (Eaker & Keating 2008; Knight, 2007). High-quality, embedded professional learning adds to educators' content and pedagogical knowledge, recognizing how students learn, and perceptiveness into enhanced instructional practice (Quick, Holtzman, & Chaney, 2009). TSTSA is a reform model that links embedded professional development with evaluation and performance-based compensation. The goal of TSTSA is to attract, develop, and retain educators who have a positive impact on student achievement (Keller, 2008; NIET, 2012).

Ongoing, and applied professional growth provided educators the opportunity to work in collaborative groups with career, mentor, and master teachers in structured learning communities embedded in the school day (NIET, 2012). TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional development is designed to directly impact instructional practice and student academic growth and achievement through the interconnected working of its components and accountability (NIET, 2012). TSTSA advancement provides educators with high-quality professional development, opportunities to collaborate frequently with peers, and ways to improve instructional practices (Soloman, White, Cohen, & Woo, 2010). The components of TSTSA include: (a) Multiple Career Paths, (b) Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth, (c) Instructionally Focused Accountability, and (d) Performance Based Compensation (NIET, 2012).

Components of TSTSA

TSTSA provides a framework that supports educator collaboration intentionally concentrated on goals defined and aligned with the school growth plan and the opportunity to

work with collaborative teams and instructional coaches to maximize support for classroom educators (NIET, 2012). Before implementation of ongoing, and applied professional growth, initial training occurs during the prior summer for nine days by NIET and state level teams (NIET, 2012). During training, the TAP Leadership Team develops its first cluster cycle based on student data.

Multiple career paths

There is a need to bridge professional learning and classroom practice (Talley, 2008). Educators involved in TSTSA have three career options. They can become career teachers, mentor teachers, or master teachers (NIET, 2012). Opportunities for career advancement are competitive and based on educator classroom performance. This affords educators the opportunity to transition into leadership roles without transitioning into an administrative position. Career and mentor teachers are full-time teachers with a classroom, while the master teacher does not have a classroom and devotes time to developing and delivering embedded professional development. In addition to having a full-time classroom, mentor teachers help the master teacher deliver professional development.

Mentor teachers function in a dual role in ongoing and applied professional growth. They continue to teach as a full-time teacher, and have the added component of being a mentor teacher. Mentor teachers coach career teachers and work with grade level and content area educators to implement the components of TSTSA. In addition, mentor teachers help field test instructional strategies in their classrooms to support embedded professional learning. They conduct classroom observations with career teachers and are part of the leadership team.

Master teachers are instructional coaches and school-based professional developers who collaboratively work with classroom and mentor teachers (Knight, 2007; NIET, 2012). Master

teachers do not have full-time classrooms and serve as full-time instructional coaches who support mentor and career teachers. Embedded within the master teacher's job are elements accentuating "Deep collaboration, collective responsibility for student learning, teacher as decision maker, continual adult learning, and adult norms of dialogue and debate" (Saphier & West, 2010, p. 49). Effective coaches have a profound and detailed knowledge about the content area they are coaching (Kowal & Stein, 2007). The primary responsibilities of master teachers are to collaboratively support educators with their instructional practices through coaching. Coaching is a supplementary support that increases that chances that educators will transfer new knowledge into practice (Cornett & Knight, 2008). Master teachers lead weekly embedded professional learning, conduct observations, model best practices, and co-teach with career and mentor teachers. In addition, master teachers work with educators to incorporate research-based instructional strategies into their classrooms (Knight, 2007). Master and mentor teachers are a part of the leadership teams, along with the principal and assistant principal (NIET, 2012).

Ongoing, and applied professional growth

Ongoing, applied professional growth is referred to as cluster meetings or embedded professional learning communities in schools that implement TSTSA (NIET, 2012). Cluster meetings include building-wide personnel: (a) principal, (b) master teacher, (c) mentor teacher, (d) and career teachers. Master teachers facilitate cluster meetings (NIET, 2012). For professional learning to have an effect it has be 30 to 100 hours over 6 to 12 months (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). The total time educators spend engaging in ongoing, and applied professional learning is 36 to 72 hours over a nine-month period. Embedded professional learning communities provide a structured environment in which educators and administrators collaborate

for decision making about student growth and achievement. In addition, ongoing applied professional growth has a specific framework to deliver professional learning.

Master teachers plan and facilitate cluster meetings in alignment with the school plan and goals using the five steps of effective learning. Master teachers research instructional strategies that align with the school needs and field test the strategies to implement in cluster meeting. During field-testing, master teachers deploy the strategies in different classroom, collect student data, and "tweak" the strategy until it becomes universal. In addition, master teachers develop characteristics of student work and create a listing of critical attributes based on student work. The characteristics of student work are divided into three groups: (a) characteristics of benchmarked work, (b) characteristics of strategic work, and (c) characteristics of intensive work. Critical attributes highlight skills students must learn to independently and successfully deploy an instructional strategy.

During cluster meetings, master teachers deploy research-based, instructional strategies (NIET, 2012). To deploy the strategy in cluster meeting, master teachers use two-tiered modeling. Two-tiered modeling involves the master teacher playing the role of the master teacher and the role of the classroom teacher. During that time, the educators in the learning community step into the student role as the master teacher delivers the instructional strategy. Afterwards, the master teacher steps back into the coaching role and the educators step back into the teacher role. After the master teacher models the strategy, career teachers and mentor teachers are provided opportunities to a plan and apply the new strategy in their classrooms to collect student work to determine the impact of the strategy.

Instructionally focused accountability

Instructionally focused accountability is a focal point for student and teacher achievement. As part of TSTSA, educators receive four additional observations per school year by the principal, master, and mentor teachers. Two of the additional observations are announced observations. Educators are given a time, date, and content area for observations. The two remaining observations are unannounced. Educators do not know the time, date, or content area of the observations. Observations are scripted by two observers and scored in accordance with TSTSA rubric. The rubric consists of the following sections: (a) designing and planning instruction, (b) instruction, and (c) classroom environment (NIET, 2012). The scoring for educators is on a five-point scale with 3 being considered proficient. Based on the scoring educators are given areas of reinforcement and refinement. An area of reinforcement highlights what went well during the lesson. The educator is asked reflection questions about the lesson. The refinement area focuses on what the educator can work on in the future. An educator can be refined in an area that was rated as proficient.

Performance based compensation

The goal of TSTSA is to equip educators with instructional strategies to help their instructional practice to help students be academically successful. Educators who are a part of the process have the opportunity to earn a monetary incentive based on student growth. The monetary incentive is based on combined scores in the following areas: (a) skills, knowledge, and responsibilities (SKR), (b) student growth, and (c) overall school growth.

The skills, knowledge, and responsibilities are based on observation scores and surveys done by mentor and master teachers for individual classroom teachers they have coached

throughout the school year. Classroom teachers must earn a score of 2.5 out of 5 on skills, knowledge, and responsibilities to earn the monetary incentive. Additionally, master and mentor teachers must earn a score of 3.5 out of 5 or higher on skills, knowledge, and responsibilities. The scores from the observations are averaged for the skills, knowledge, and responsibilities score.

Next, student growth is based on district assessments at the beginning of the school year and compared with end of the school year district assessments. This is calculated individually per classroom teacher before the overall school growth is calculated. Overall school growth is a combined score for the entire school collectively. Based on the scoring, individual educators are compensated for their work with students.

TSTSA at the school level

The TAP Leadership Team (TLT) consists of the principal, the master teacher, and mentor teachers (NIET, 2012). The mission of the TLT is to ensure that high quality professional development and collaboration happens at the weekly cluster meetings. The driving force of professional learning is student data (Killion & Hirsh, 2011). Student data helps educators in learning community identify the need and focus of learning (Hirsh and Killion, 2011). The use of student data empowers educators to look for innovative, research-based strategies to embed into their instructional practices (Savery, 2006). As student data drives the creation of learning targets and goal alignment in cluster meetings, it is vital that goals and targets are distinctly communicated with stakeholders (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Desimone, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). The TLT works collaboratively to develop the school plan based on student data. In addition, instructional strategies that will be implemented in cluster meeting with career teachers are modeled in TLT meetings by the master teacher. The meetings happen

separately from cluster typically after school. The time allotted for both sessions is protected. Under no conditions is cluster or TLT canceled.

Ongoing, and applied professional growth framework for professional learning

In addition to developing norms and expectation for professional learning, TSTSA established a framework for delivery of professional learning. The framework for embedded professional learning is called a cluster cycle (NIET, 2012). The cluster cycle addresss specific student needs and identifies specific instructional strategies that teachers will learn during cluster meetings (NIET, 2012). The instructional strategies are aligned with student needs and will be delivered by mentor and master teachers during cluster. To properly execute embedded professional learning, schools adjust one day a week for cluster meetings (NIET, 2012). Cluster meeting are scheduled to meet during the school day with master, mentor, and career teachers.

The framework that guides professional learning is the five effective steps for learning (NIET, 2012). The five effective steps include: (a) identify the problem or need, (b) obtain new learning, (c) develop new learning, (d) apply new learning into the classroom, and (e) evaluate the impact on student learning (NIET, 2012). Using the five effective steps to learning, professional learning in consistently delivery weekly by the master and mentor teachers (NIET, 2012).

The master teacher begins cluster meetings by referencing the school plan and goals (NIET, 2012). Professional learning is connected to the school goals to set the purpose to obtain new learning. The master teacher introduces the research that supports the new instructional strategy and the strategy that has impacted learning with a student population similar to their school population (NIET, 2012).

Development time is a component of professional learning that affords educators the opportunity to collaborate with their peers about the instructional strategy, practice the strategy in

cluster through role playing and peer coaching, and receive coaching from mentor and master teachers for implementing the strategy (NIET, 2012). Additionally, development time affords educators the opportunity to plan how to embed the instructional strategy in their teaching using curriculum materials.

Educators apply the new learning in their classrooms. Student academic success depends on consistent and effective instructional delivery done daily by educators (Killion & Hirsh, 2011). Educators transfer their professional learning into the classroom setting through their instructional practice. Educators work with mentor and master teachers to deploy the new strategy. Mentor and master teacher conduct peer observation and provide coaching and feedback for educators.

After instructional strategies have been implemented in the classroom setting, educators evaluate the impact on student learning by collecting student data. Student data is brought to cluster meeting the following week (NIET, 2012). Educators used formative assessment to gauge student mastery (Killion & Hirsh, 2011; NIET, 2012). Educators discuss the successes and challenges of embedding the strategy into their instructional practice, delivering the strategy in the classroom setting, and how to adjust the strategy if necessary (Solmon et al., 2010; NIET, 2012). Based on student data, the master teacher works collaboratively with the principal to plan the next steps for the next cluster meeting.

Additional research about TSTSA

Formal studies conducted about the different components of TSTSA include two quantitative studies (Dispenzieri, 2008; White, 2006) and one qualitative study (Gant, 2010). The first study (White, 2006) is a quantitative study that investigated the relationship between principal's value-added score and school-wide, value-added scores in seventy-four schools in fourteen states that have implemented TSTSA. White (2006) found that there was a positive

correlational relationship between the principal's value-added score and school wide value-added scores.

A qualitative study (Dispenzieri, 2008) explored TSTSA implemented in a Midwestern parochial school district. This phenomological study examined the perceptions of educators that implemented TSTSA in their third, fourth, and fifth grade classrooms and student achievement. Dispenzieri (2008) found that even though TSTSA had a positive impact on student achievement, for educators to successful implement TSTSA they must be fully trained in the four components of the program before implementation. Additionally, Dispenzieri (2008) discovered that TSTSA program had a positive influence on instructional practices because of the structured observation rubric for classroom instruction.

Finally, a quantitative quasi-experimental study (Gant, 2010) about TSTSA program was conducted in an urban school district in Louisiana. Gant's (2010) research examined student assessment data on the fourth-grade pretests in comparison to third-grade post-tests and the impact that TSTSA has on the student achievement. In addition, the data examined included schools that implemented TSTSA program in comparison to schools that did not implement the program. Gant (2010) found that there was no statistical relationship between the fourth-grade pretest scores and third-grade post-test scores in schools that implemented TSTSA program in comparison to the schools that did not implement the program.

Summary

The goal of education is to initiate change in an individual. Learning is part of that process and acts as an interactive continuum to initiate the desired change in an individual's life. Adult educators serve as change agents who develop and present learning that promotes transformational change for adult learners that involves a change of volition, habits, attitude, and

knowledge (Hord, 2009). Deploying professional learning is a challenge for school districts; yet turning it into a transformational process is another challenge. Educators, just as students, bring a variety of experiences to the classroom setting. Whatever the experience, it is crucial that the learning environment is conducive to positively influencing instructional practice and how educators view themselves as members of learning communities. The goal of professional development and learning is to equip educators with the resources needed to be effective in their practices.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

Qualitative research requires in-depth descriptions of individual experiences and perceptions in order to convey a visual representation to readers about those experiences. According to Creswell (2007), "The procedures of qualitative research are characterized as inductive, emerging, and shaped by the researcher's experience in collecting and analyzing the data" (p. 19).

Design

A qualitative collective case study design was selected to conduct this study. According to Creswell (2007):

Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bonded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case based themes." (p. 73)

In addition, case study design was used to help the researcher develop a comprehensive understanding of a situation or phenomenon and to understand the importance for those involved in the event (Merriam, 1998). Further, a case study investigates an event in a real-life setting (Yin, 1994). For this study, a collective case study design was appropriate because the objective is to obtain a deeper understanding about whether or how TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth has caused change with educators' individual instructional practices and professionalism in a suburban school district. Throughout this case study multiple forms of data were collected: (a) interviews, (b) documents, (c) direct observations, and (d) participant observations.

Research Questions

This study explored elementary educator perceptions of TSTSA ongoing and applied professional growth and whether or how it has had an impact or caused change with individual, collaborative, and instructional practices.

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of TSTSA?

RQ 2: What are educators' perceptions about how TSTSA and ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?

RQ 3: What are educators' experiences with the application of concepts learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning communities?

RQ 4: What are educators' perceptions about how collaboration during TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers made in their instruction?

Setting

The setting for this study was the School District of the Southwest (a pseudonym) located in the southwestern United States. The School District of the Southwest is a small, suburban district that implemented TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth process as an education reform initiative ten years ago. The implementation was in two elementary schools within the school district. Currently, this district serves approximately 36,000 students in grades prekindergarten through 12th grade.

The demographics of the School District of the Southwest are:

Table 1

Demographics of the School District of the Southwest

Race	Percentage
American Indian/Alaskan	.4%
Asian	7.2%
Black/African American	19.3%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	.06%
White	60.1%
Hispanic/Latino	22.2%
More than one	4.3%

Note: Institute of Education Science, 2012

The first case study, School Alpha, implemented TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in the 2005-2006 school year. There are 704 students enrolled. Student demographics are:

Table 2

Demographics of School Alpha

Race	Percentage
American Indian/Alaskan	.1%
Asian	3.3%
Black/African American	47.6%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0.0%
White	3.7%

| Hispanic/Latino | 42.5% |
| More than one | 2.7% |

Note: Institute of Education Science, 2012

The second case study, School Bravo, opened during the 2005-2006 school year and implemented TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth during that year. There are 677 students enrolled. Student demographics are:

Table 3

Demographics of School Bravo

Race	Percentage
American Indian/Alaskan	.6%
Asian	0%
Black/African American	64.4%
Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	0%
White	1.6%
Hispanic/Latino	31.2%
More Than One	2.1%

Note: Institute of Education Science, 2012

The school district's superintendent began her fifth year with the district in 2014-2015. Currently, an executive director in the professional development department oversees TSTSA.

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants in this case study. According to Creswell (2007), "Purposeful sampling is when the researcher selects individuals and sites because he/she can purposely inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study" (p. 125). The participants for this case study included seven educators

from three elementary schools in the School District of the Southwest. Initial permission (See Appendix A) to conduct this study was requested from the school district's executive director of elementary education and student support, then individual school administrators and teachers. Teachers were selected based on their willingness to share their experiences and perceptions about participating in TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth. The selection was stratified based on years of experience and degree level ranging from bachelor to master degrees. Eight educators from the designated school sites were selected for this study. Each of the educators participated in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. The teacher's years of experience participating in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth was considered during sampling because the purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of educators that have participated in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth over a period of at least three years. In addition, after three years of implementation, schools transitioned into sustaining their ongoing, applied professional growth cluster meetings.

Procedures

The first step in conducting a case study was to identify if the case study approach is the best avenue to research the identified problem (Creswell, 2007). Next, identifying the cases for the case study was necessary. According to Creswell (2007), "A case study is a good approach when the inquirer has clearly identifiable cases with boundaries and seeks to provide an in-depth understanding of the cases" (p. 74). For this collective case study, I contacted the Executive Director of Professional Development, Administrator Tap (a pseudonym), for the School District of the Southwest. I met with her to discuss conducting research about TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth. Next, a formal written request (See Appendix A) was submitted to

the Executive Director of Professional Development for approval to conduct this case study in the

School District of the Southwest. After the Executive Director approved the request, the request

was forwarded to the Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Schools and the Superintendent of

the School District of the Southwest for approval to conduct this case study in the School District

of the Southwest. Upon approval from the Director of Research and Evaluation, requests were

forwarded to individual building principals, then educators, whose schools are currently

participating in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for permission to conduct the

case study in their buildings. This collective case study was documented through documentation

collection, direct and participant observation, and face-to-face field interviews to examine the

perceptions and experiences of educators currently participating in TSTSA and ongoing, applied

professional growth. Individual face-to-face interviews were conducted with master, mentor, and

career educators after school in a place convenient to the interviewee. Interviews were audiotaped

and transcribed with a Livescribe 4GB Echo Smartpen™. Follow up interviews were conducted

as needed. After approval from the Director of Research and Evaluation, I formally submitted the

application to the Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to begin the data collection

process.

Researcher's Role

I am a former mentor teacher/kindergarten teacher who participated in first year

implementation of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in an urban school district in

Colorado Springs, Colorado during the 2011-2012 school year. In addition to being a mentor

teacher for TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth, I had nine years of educational

experience teaching grades kindergarten, first, second, fourth, fifth, English as a Second

Language, and as a literacy coach in urban settings. All my educational experiences were in urban

districts with students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. I had no educational experience

working in suburban districts or in a school that has implemented TSTSA and ongoing, applied

professional growth for multiple years. My specific interest in this research was to understand

why educators in a suburban district continue to participate in schools that implement TSTSA and

ongoing, applied professional growth, which included additional workload, and if their

participation helped their instructional practices. Additionally, I wanted to further understand how

sustained, embedded professional learning and collaboration impacted instructional practices over

multiple years of implementation. Finally, I wanted a deeper understanding of educators'

perceptions about participating in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth over a

sustained amount of time. Due to personal bias, multiple avenues of data collection were

deployed.

Data Collection

Data for this case study was collected from a variety of sources. Creswell (2007) states,

"Case study data collection involves a wide array of procedures as the researcher builds an in-

depth picture of the case" (p. 132). There were four types of data collection for this study: (a)

interviews, (b) documentation, (c) direct observations, and (d) participant observations.

Interviews

Interviews were the most important process of the case study methodology. Interviews

offered insight, through conversation, into the lives and experiences of individuals (Merriam,

1994). In addition, interviews allowed the researcher to gather information that cannot be

observed directly (Yin, 1994). Open-ended interview questions were developed to allow

participants to elaborate with responses and to share their experiences and perceptions about

TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in their individual schools. Additionally, interview protocols (See Appendices B & C) were developed to guide the study and organize information. The researcher, through collaboration, developed interview questions with the Executive Director of Professional Development for the School District of the Southwest. The interview questions were reworded and adjusted to allow participants the opportunity to adequately share their perceptions and experiences. Individual, face-to-face interviews were conducted with master, mentor, and career educators after school in a place convenient to the interviewee. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed with a Livescribe 4GB Echo Smartpen™. Follow up interviews were conducted as needed.

Table 4

Alignment of Research Questions to Interview Questions

Research Questions	Career Teacher	Mentor Teacher	Master Teacher
What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of The System for Teacher and Student Achievement program	1-5	1-5	1-5
What are educators' perceptions about whether and how The System for Teacher and Student Achievement and ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?	1-4	1-4	1-4
What are educators' experiences with the application of concepts learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning communities?	1-7 1-6	1-7 1-10	1-7
What are educator's perceptions about how collaboration during TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers made in their instruction?	1-7	1-7	1-7

Documentation

After conducting one-on-one interviews, documentation was collected. According to Yin (1994), "Documentary information is likely to be relevant to every case study topic" (p. 81). Documentation collected will corroborate data collected from other sources (Yin, 1994). For this study documentation consisted of administrative documentation of the ongoing, applied professional growth which included: (a) the five effective steps of learning, and (b) leadership team documentation. Information within the documentation included the school goals, data outlining students' successes and challenges, areas of improvement, and cycles of professional development to include research-based, instructional strategies and the research that supports the implementation of the strategy, educator refinement, and reinforcement areas. The documentation from cluster meetings helped to corroborate information received from interviews and observations.

Direct Observations

The next modality of data collection was through direct observations of ongoing, applied professional development cluster meetings and leadership team meetings. In this role, I did not assume an evaluative, administrative, or leadership role. I observed four ongoing, applied professional development cluster meetings per school for approximately 90 minutes per cluster meeting. Observations provided the researcher with additional information about individuals and experiences (Yin, 1994). Additional observations included observing educators in their classrooms as they implemented instructional strategies. Direct and participant observations were used to substantiate, corroborate, and triangulate research findings (Merriam, 1998). Observations offered a firsthand account into a phenomenon being studied (Yin, 1994). The focus of the

observations was on the master teacher's delivery of professional learning, the physical setting, the interactions of educators with each other, and classroom and mentor teachers' delivery of the instructional strategy in their classrooms, if possible (See Appendix D).

Participant Observation

The final modality of data collection was through participant observation. Participant observation allowed the researcher the unique opportunity to collect information that would otherwise be unavailable (Yin, 1994), such as experiencing the ongoing, applied professional growth cluster meeting from the perspective of the educator (See Appendix D). During participant observations, I assumed the role of a classroom teacher during ongoing, applied professional development cluster meetings and leadership meetings. I participated in four ongoing, applied professional development cluster meetings per school for approximately 90 minutes per cluster meeting. During TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth cluster meetings and leadership team meetings, I did not assume a leadership, evaluative, or administrative role during participant observation.

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Data Analysis

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According to Creswell (2007), "Data analysis in qualitative research consists of preparing and organizing the data for analysis, then reducing the data into themes through a process of coding and condensing the codes, and finally representing the data in figures, tables, or a discussion" (p. 148). Further, in case study research, data collection and data analysis happened simultaneously (Merriam, 1998). As data collection was deployed, transcription of interviews was conducted. Yin (1994) recommended two general frameworks for data analysis designed for a case study inquiry: (a) theoretical prepositions and (b) case descriptions. In addition to general

modes, there were four specific approaches for case study analysis: (a) pattern matching, (b) explanation building, (c) time series analysis, and (d) program logic models (Yin, 1994). For this case study, I used theoretical prepositions as a general framework for data analysis and explanation building for specific data analysis.

Theoretical Preposition

The general mode of analysis for this case study was developing and framing a theoretical preposition. Theoretical preposition entailed providing a framework for the case design and analysis by probing the motivations for the case study (Yin, 1994). The researcher examined the experiences and perceptions that elementary educators have with TSTSA and whether and how ongoing, and applied professional growth has influenced collaboration and improved instructional practices. In addition, educators' experiences with the application of concepts learned and practiced in professional learning communities were explored.

Explanation Building

Yin's (1994) explanation building is a type of pattern matching that analyzes the case by building an explanation. This method was used as the primary mode of analysis to deconstruct information gathered from face-to-face interviews and observations. While reading through transcribed interviews, possible codes and themes that emerged were noted using an open coding method to categorize the common themes and patterns (See Appendix E). Initial codes were formed by systematically searching the evidence to identify observable actions, characteristics, and emotions within individual cases to explain the experiences that educators encountered being part of ongoing, and applied professional growth. The goal of this case study examined the "how and why" certain results transpired in individual cases (Yin, 1994). In addition, pattern matching

was conducted within individual cases and across cases to identify commonalities and differences within and between cases (See Appendix F). Initial codes helped with describing, classifying, and interpreting data from the cases (Creswell, 2007).

Content Analysis

A content analysis of documentation allowed the researcher to examine documents in detail to determine the authenticity and validity of the documents as they related to the research (Merriam, 1998). Official document collection consisted of the following: (a) cluster/professional development documentation that included yearly school and professional learning goals and (b) research background on instructional strategies that are being implemented in cluster/professional learning communities (See Appendix G).

Memoing

According to Creswell (2007), "Memoing is a process in which the researcher writes down ideas about the evolving theory throughout the process of open, axial, and selective coding" (p. 67). Memoing helped to capture the personal reflections of the researcher in a reflective log during the data collection process. Throughout the data collection process the researcher annotated reflective notes and thoughts of direct and participant observations, as well as, interviews.

Member Checks

Member checks were used to ensure adequate data representation (Creswell, 2007). Once face-to-face interviews were conducted interviews were transcribed verbatim. Next, transcriptions were emailed to the participants. Participants had seven days to review transcripts, make changes

to their information, and email transcripts back to the researcher. If follow-up interviews were needed, participants were allowed another five days to review information and make changes.

Trustworthiness

There were numerous modalities of data collecting to ensure data triangulation: (1) interviews, (b) documentation, (c) direct observation, and (d) participant observation (Yin, 1994). The multiple methods were in place to ensure the trustworthiness of this research and ensure construct validity of the data collection process. Yin (1994) stated, "Any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information following a corroboratory mode" (p. 116). Member checks were used to ensure that participants' experiences are properly captured from face-to-face interviews. Participants had the opportunity to review their answers to interview questions to clarify information and further elaborate on responses. Finally, an external auditor was used for this study. External audits helped protect the validity of the study examining the findings, interpretations, and conclusions of the research data Creswell (2007). The external auditor did not have any experience with TSTSA and the ongoing, applied professional development growth, however, the individual did possess educational experience and a completed Master of Education degree.

Ethical Considerations

The multiple modalities for collecting data reinforced data triangulation, internal and external validity during data analysis (Merriam, 1998). Creswell (2007) stated, "A qualitative researcher conveys to participants that they are participating in a study, explains the purpose of the study, and does not engage in deception about the nature of the study" (p. 141). The consent form had a synopsis about the purpose and goals of this study. For this study, participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity (Creswell, 2007). In addition, the name of the

school district and the names of the schools were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. Information from individual face-to-face interviews was not shared with anyone including building and district administrators. If a participant decided not to continue to participate in this study that individual's data was immediately be destroyed. Through member checks, participants viewed their information for accuracy and elaborated on responses, if needed. Additionally, a data management system was developed to secure materials. A digital and hardcopy of the data was kept. Data was kept in a locked file cabinet in a closet for three years then destroyed. The researcher was the only individual who had a key to the file cabinet.

Summary

This research examined educator perceptions of TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional growth and whether or how it has had an impact or caused change with individual, collaborative, and instructional practices. For this case study, I developed a plan to collect data. Observation and interview protocols were designed. I analyzed data collected from face-to-face interview, documentation, and observations with open and axial coding to establish themes that emerged from the data. In chapters four and five, I added the experiences and perceptions of educators to present a rich description of their experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The goal of this case study was to examine the experiences and perceptions of educators that have been a part of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. Chapter Four addresses the finding of this case study. The methodology was explained in Chapter Three where the different methods of data collection were identified: (a) interviews, (b) documentation, (c) direct observations, and (d) participant observations. According to Yin (1994), case study research allows the researcher to study participants in their real life setting to gain a deeper understanding of their lived experiences. In addition, multiple methods of data collection allowed me to corroborate evidence collected from participants. Chapter Four provides an outline of the data analysis findings conducted by coding and emerging themes identification from individual interviews, documentation, direct observation, and participant observation. The data collection and analysis revealed four themes:

1. Successes with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration
2. Challenges with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration
3. Ongoing, Applied Coaching Support
4. Impact of Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth

This case study research was guided by the following research questions:

RQ 1: What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of TSTSA?

RQ 2: What are educators' perceptions about how TSTSA and ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?

RQ 3: What are educators' experiences with the application of concepts learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning communities?

RQ 4: What are educators' perceptions about how collaboration during TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers made in their instruction?

Participants

Purposeful sampling was used to select participants for this study. Seven participants within the School District of the Southwest agreed to participate in this study. Multiple attempts were made to contact more participants, but were futile. In this collective case study, participants included career teachers, mentor teachers, and master teachers. Some of the participants have functioned in more than one role during the implementation and sustainablity of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth. Initial permission was granted by the School District of the Southwest and individual school principals at School Alpha and School Bravo.

Participant selection was stratified based on years of experience and degree level ranging from bachelor to master degrees. Each participant in this study took part in TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years.

All participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their identity. There were six females and one male; one was African-American, five were Caucasians, and one was Latino, who participated. The participants met the requirements to participate in this case study which consisted of being an educator (career, mentor, or master teacher) with three or more years of experience with TSTSA. In addition, three of the participants (Tracy, Carmen, and Dana) had experience with several of the TSTSA roles.

Tracy

During the implementation of this study focused on TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth, Tracy was an elementary career, mentor, and master teacher at School Alpha. She was hired as a career special area music educator and later promoted to the mentor teacher position and then the master teacher position. Tracy has a Master's degree in Business Administration and has 15 years of teaching experience. Additionally, Tracy has 10 years of experience with ongoing, applied professional growth. During her tenure as a mentor and master teacher, Tracy helped to plan, research, and facilitate cluster meetings for School Alpha. As a mentor teacher, she held the duel position of special areas educator and instructional coach supporting educators across content areas through formal and informal observations and collaboration. Tracy emphasized how ongoing, applied professional growth impacted her growth as an educator. She stated,

> I have definitely been impacted by ongoing professional development. I consider myself
> a life-long learner so I look forward to new information and learning that awaits me as an
> educator. Being able to readily apply what I've learned is most beneficial to my learning
> process. I was always able to modify a lesson and make accommodations for my students
> then share the outcome with my colleagues. (Interview)

Jordyn

Jordyn was an elementary special areas career teacher at School Alpha teaching physical education and health. He has over 25 years of teaching experience and has 10 years of experience participating in ongoing, applied professional growth as a career teacher. Jordyn highlighted how

having weekly cluster helped him realize how ongoing, applied professional growth helped boost collaboration between grade level and special area educators. Jordyn stated,

> It helped us catch the vision for all students. See what everybody's doing and catch the vision on where our schools going in order to make things successful. It helped us work together to help all the students. I think it helped us realize where the strengths and weakness of our students were and how to help. We were able to hear from the teachers (master and mentor teachers). These are the things kids are struggling with how can you help them in your area. It helped us help them in other places besides our own field. (Interview)

Often special area educators and classroom educators rarely spend time planning and collaborating. TSTSA provided the opportunity for both sets of educators to get together and discuss instructional strategies that could be implemented to support student learning. Further, Jordyn went on to explain how teamwork was fostered because of collaboration among all the educators at School Alpha.

Ashley

Ashley was an elementary special area career teacher at School Alpha. Ashley has a Master's degree in Education. She has 17 years of teaching experience at the elementary and secondary levels. Ashley taught English at the secondary level prior to becoming special areas educator at School Alpha. Ashley testified that she witnessed the impact that collaboration had on relationships. Ashley noted, "Well, I think you get more familiar with the people that you are collaborating with and sometimes they mention other teachers. I think it makes it more conducive and people are more willing to collaborate." (Interview) Since Ashley was a special

area career teacher she had the opportunity to see teachers interact on a daily basis outside of their classroom environments.

Cameron

Cameron was an elementary support area career teacher at School Alpha. She has a Master of Science degree. In addition, she has 12 years of teaching experience and was part of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth for 9 years. In addition, Cameron is a doctoral student. Cameron expressed how in her position as a school counselor that implementing strategies with her students were a "hit or miss" because of the complexity of her position. Cameron said about TSTSA,

> It is not directly geared towards counselors. There was no counselor created program. My school actually created an assessment tool for the counselors and even through then at the end of everything we did I didn't believe it was appropriate to what I was doing." (Interview)

One benefit that Cameron highlighted was she got the opportunity to collaborate with other educators that she otherwise would not have. As a result, she was able to help other educators understand her role in TSTSA as a school counselor and a career teacher, as well as, share instructional strategies.

Renee

Renee was an elementary master teacher at School Alpha. Renee had 11 years of teaching experience and 9 years of leadership experience. She was a part of ongoing, applied professional growth for four years. In her role as master teacher, Renee planned, researched, and facilitated weekly cluster meetings for School Alpha. In addition, she served as a full-time instructional

coach who supported career and mentor teachers through collaboration, reflection, and formal and informal observation. Renee provided insight into the process of evaluation within the framework of TSTA. She shared,

> Somebody said you're putting yourself on the autopsy table. People are going to pick you apart. So, again you have to have that thick skin and be willing to hear what people are going to say but it brings you closer together I think everybody is vulnerable. Everybody has areas they can improve and we're all in this together. We're working on it together. (Interview)

Renee also has a Master's degree in Education. Renee stressed the importance of fidelity to program implementation with TSTSA. Renee later became the principal at School Bravo and helped support the implementation of TSTSA with fidelity. Renee shared,

> When I came to School Bravo they had really changed TSTSA. It was not being done the way it was intended and they changed it to appease people for example, they conducted all their cluster meetings after school. They would do them multiple grade levels. They watered it down to the point where you're running a cluster 3rd -6th reading teachers after school it's not specifically tailored to the needs of the teacher or the students, it's sort of a general overview. (Interview)

Carmen

Carmen was a career, mentor, and master teacher at the elementary and secondary level in the School District of the Southwest. As a career teacher, Carmen worked collaboratively with mentor and master teachers to implement instructional strategies in her classroom and support classroom educators. In her role as the master teacher at School Alpha and School Bravo, she configured cluster meetings to meet the needs of educators. Carmen remarked how she was able

to see teachers that she coached become master teachers and duplicate the coaching process she taught them. She stated,

> As a master teacher, I worked with a 3rd grade set of classroom teachers on this. The teacher on that grade level was not the mentor and did the math planning and we just collaborated so well together and she was very honest about when I did the field testing what worked, what didn't work, and those classroom teacher…though that was a series of clusters I did probably 7 years ago…. When this third-grade teacher became a master teacher, she presented the same set of clusters to the teachers that she worked with. (Researcher: That process got duplicated?) Yes, I was so just…it was just a huge compliment, but at the same time we could see the growth in the kids for sure. (Interview)

Additional responsibilities included planning and facilitating weekly cluster meetings, researching research based strategies for specific content areas, modeling instructional strategies during weekly cluster meetings, and conducting formal and informal observations of educators.

Dana

Dana was a career and mentor teacher at School Bravo. She has a Bachelor's degree and 10 years of teaching experience. In addition, she was a mentor teacher for two years and has three years of experience participating and facilitating ongoing, applied professional growth. In her role as a mentor teacher, she worked with the master teacher to design and facilitate cluster meetings for primary grades (K-2). Dana supported primary educators through collaboration and formal and informal observations. However, Dane did note that her experiences with conducting evaluations with educators that she did not have a relationship with posed a challenge. Dana noted:

 As mentor teacher when you had to do evaluations on other people not in your clusters and you didn't have relationships built with them, sometimes trying to go observe them during a random time was always hard. Also, not having built a relationship built with them can make the observations awkward because if they felt like they didn't agree on things I was saying in the evaluation it put me in a weird position. (Interview)

Results

I provided a description for each participant that was a part of this study. The results of this study will be provided in this section by answering the research questions. I will discuss how themes were identified based on the evidence collected along with a description of the analysis and coding process.

Theme Development

In case study research, multiple sources are used to collect and corroborate evidence (Creswell, 2007). The first round of open coding consisted of condensing, sorting, re-reading, and highlighting repetitive codes that emerged (Saldana, 2013). The following codes and definitions emerged after initial re-reading, sorting, and condensing information during the first round of coding.

Table 5

Code Book

Codes	Code Definitions
Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth	Another term for job-embedded professional development. Ongoing, applied professional growth takes place during the school day.
Positive Aspect of Collaboration	Any perceived positive conversations between career, mentor, and master teachers that focused on building teachers' instructional

	capacity.
Challenging Aspects of Collaboration	Any perceived difficult or challenging conversations between career, mentor, and master teachers that focused on building teachers' instructional capacity.
Fidelity to Program Implementation	Implementing TSTSA in accordance with guidelines from the National Institute of Excellence in Teaching (NIET).
Instructional Strategies	Research based teaching strategies teachers obtained from cluster meetings that they implement into the classroom setting.
Positive Professional Development Experience	Any positive experience that educators had with ongoing, applied professional growth.
Negative Professional Development	Any negative experience that educators had with ongoing, applied professional growth
Career Teacher Supports	Supports in the form of instructional coaching and collaboration that are available to help support career (classroom only) teachers with implementing instructional strategies.
Mentor Teacher Supports for Career Teachers	Supports in the form of instructional coaching and collaboration that are available to help support career teachers with implementing instructional strategies.
Master Teacher Supports for Career and Mentor Teachers	Supports in the form of instructional coaching and collaboration that are available to help support career teachers and mentor teachers with implementing instructional strategies.
Teamwork	Career teachers, mentor teachers, and master teachers working together collaboratively.
Cluster	Learning communities in which ongoing, applied professional growth occurred.
TSTSA Leadership Team (TLT)	The leadership team that consisted of school administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers. The TLT meet each week to deploy strategies before implementing them in the weekly cluster meeting.

Analysis of data, "is a complex process that involves moving back and forth between concrete bits of data and abstract concepts" (Merriam, 1998, p.178). The within case analysis began with immersing myself in individual audio recordings. I listened to each interview

recording at least five times. Next, I isolated specific themes for each participant. I memoed as I listened to the audio recording and conducted observations. In addition, I color coded specific phrases and statements that related to each research question and later assigned codes.

The interview responses are based on evidence collected from all participants that participated in face-to-face interviews, documentation collection, direct observation, and participant observation. Data was collected, analyzed, and portrayed from the participants' perspective. Both negative and positive portrayals of educators perspectives are included to minimize bias. The participants shared diverse perceptions about their experiences about ongoing, applied professional growth.

A structured interview protocol was developed by the researcher (See Appendices B & C) and used in all the interviews with the career, mentor, and master teachers. Questions were formulated based on the research questions that were developed for this study. Each interview was conducted individually with seven educators at their respective campuses. Educator's responses to the interview questions are presented in this section organized by research question, themes, and participants.

Data from next round coding were grouped into smaller themes and subthemes. I used NViVo™ software to demonstrate the code frequency across data sets. (See Table 6). Later, I identified four themes which provided answers to the research questions that guided this study (See Tables 7-10).

Table 6

Frequency of codes across data points

Open-Codes	Open Code Appearance Across Data Sets	Themes
Collaboration	117	Impact of Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth
Ongoing	114	
Growth	110	
Cluster	83	
Professional Development	75	
System		
Learning	73	
Impact	61	
Challenging	60	
Benefits	38	
Success	34	
Relationship	31	
Training and Responsibilities	24	
Career Teacher	324	Ongoing, Applied Coaching Support System
Master Teacher	142	
Mentor Teacher	117	
Applied	113	
Responsibility	25	
Coach	16	
Principal	13	
Leadership	13	
Strategies	545	Successes with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration
Instructional	119	
Implementation	117	
Student	91	
Kids	73	Challenges with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration
Learning	17	
Achievement	13	
Rubric		

Note. Open codes were analyzed using NViVo™ data analysis software to identify themes

Data analyzed for this study included face-to-face interviews, observations, and document

collection. Triangulation was used to strengthen the validity and reliability of this study by using

multiple sources of data to confirm emerging themes (Merriam, 1998). Data analysis began in the early stages of information collection. As I conducted face-to-face interviews, I memoed as participants answered interview questions. Later I personally transcribed the interview tapes verbatim to start immersing myself in the data. In addition, I listened to the tapes multiple times during and after transcription. I continued to memo each time I listened to the tapes. I made relevant notes on the actual participant's transcription for later analysis. Next, I uploaded the transcripts into NVivo™ in order to color code emerging themes and participant's quotes. I identified emerging themes through open coding. This allowed me the opportunity to further explore the meaning of those themes (Yin, 1994). During within code analysis, I created a code list of words and phrases within NVivo™. I included a table to represent codes found within the data collected for each individual research question (See Tables 7-10).

Table 7

Research Question One: What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of The System for Teacher and Student Achievement program

Open Code	Properties	Examples of participant words
Systematic Professional Development	Defining ongoing, applied professional growth	A systematic approach to advancing educators, students, and administration A system put in place to help student achieve academically through making teacher practices better This is site based professional development
Positive Experiences	Experiences with ongoing, applied professional growth	It allowed for a lot more understanding of what each different area did The ability to focus on researching, modeling, and

		implementing strategies
		Opportunities for multiple career paths
		Building a community as a staff, working together
		The relationships you build with the people and the relationships you build with the master teacher
		We learned to look so much deeper and to really have a critical eye and support the comments we were making with evidence, evidentiary based observations.
		In the first year, we broke down the rubric and talked about how that looked in the classroom
Challenges	Not a positive experience with ongoing, applied professional growth	What I didn't like about TSTSA was taking time away from our school day
		If you are not a reflective person and you do not have semi-thick skin, I can be very upsetting because you will not be told that you're perfect
		The TSTSA evaluation I felt like was a one-time gotcha.
		Too much information was given at one time.
		Not everyone involved in the school buys-in to the system
		It is not directly geared toward counselors
		People are put into master teacher positions or mentor teacher positions that are not fully qualified
Additional Challenges	Time for implementation	I was in the classroom doing observations. I was coaching teachers. I was planning for researching and field testing

| | | for the strategies we were going to use in our field tests. Just the extra meeting time. As a mentor teacher, I had to maintain all of my traditional classroom responsibilities We had to use two of our planning periods a week to go to TSTSA meeting Master teachers and mentor teachers report back to school three to four days prior to regular teacher start dates. It took a lot of time for preparation to implement the strategy to make it work Every week we had cluster and the homework from cluster. |

Table 8

Research Question Two: What are educators' perceptions about how The System for Teacher and Student Achievement and ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?

Open Code	Properties	Examples of participant words
Challenges	Collaboration Relationships	One challenge was the overload of evaluations and work One challenge was for mentor teachers and master teachers to find and teach strategies that were helpful to all the teachers Having counselors in this program wasn't necessarily the most intelligent thing The biggest challenge was making teachers see the value of doing these strategies in the classroom and not seeing it as just an extra add-on that they have to do

Successes	Collaboration Relationships Support	I think everyone is real supportive of each other. Being able to talk through. Being able to talk about education and not about Friday night plans. Let's sit down and talk about good things that are happening or help me become a better teacher. The TSTSA process help to build relationships It (TSTSA) made us work together Teachers frequently communicate their misunderstandings or share insights without bias or judgment The collaborative relationships will be as strong as the intent of the people collaboration I was lucky enough to have great master teachers Teachers met together to help find strategies that best served our students
Impact	Collaboration	I learn more from the other people I worked with. I think it has given me a lot more things to look at to try and improve how I am going about my teaching. The collaboration part came when the master teacher and the mentor teacher would field test You have to work with somebody else a lot of the times to be able to accomplish the goals you set up Because of their frequent

ongoing conversations
teachers and students began to
use common language

Table 9

Research Question Three: What are educators' experiences with the application of concepts

learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning communities?

Open Code	Properties	Examples of participant words
Educator Responsibilities	Master Teacher Responsibilities Mentor Teacher Responsibilities Career Teacher Responsibilities	The mentor teacher taught us new strategies Master teachers were very helpful They were supportive To be a mentor is someone who coaches and supports their team …when you can see the teacher's frame of thinking, way of thinking, teaching style, or teaching practice change …having meaningful conversations that are reflective and refining
Ongoing, Applied Support System	Administrative Support Master Teacher Support Mentor Teacher Support Career Teacher Support	The principal is the most important component of implementing TSTSA I was very lucky because the principal I worked with fully trusted us. I never felt like I was micromanaged They would sit down with me and we would go through some literature and figure out ways to make it applicable

Table 10

Research Question Four: What are educators' perceptions about how collaboration during The System for Teacher and Student Achievement ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers made in their instruction?

Open Code	Properties	Examples of participant words
Successes	Instructional Change	I think always trying to think of new ways to help me see TAP in my room in my area We did a lot of work with our teachers on multiple response strategies Before you go all crazy and say we are going to do something you better have some research to back it up before you go all crazy and say we are going to do something you better have some research to back it up They have always included me in the specials cluster, which is nice The implementation of instructional strategies from cluster caused me to listen to my adult learners and adjust my presentation style to meet the needs of my learners I think it gave me new ideas and strategies on how to deliver instruction I became more cognitive of it's ok to answer correctly Professional development has impacted my instruction completely
Challenges	Instructional Change	I let it go and go back to what I know how to do
Impact	Student Achievement	Having different ways to present something hopefully helped some children better

It really made me help kids
think through what they were
doing
The cluster strategies
definitely helped in showing
student growth
I can see specifically for
fluency. I could see the
difference in their DIBELs

Research Question One

The first research question I designed for this study was, "What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of The System for Teacher and Student Achievement program?" The interview questions were purposely designed to probe educator's overall perceptions about participating in ongoing, applied professional growth. Master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers' educators' responses were descriptive and included information pertaining to intense training, positive experiences, benefits, and challenges of ongoing, applied professional growth.

First, educators provided a definition of what they believed TSTSA ongoing, applied professional development encompassed. Tracy, Carmen, and Jordyn defined TSTSA's ongoing, professional development as a systematic process that helps strengthen educator's instructional practices in order to impact student achievement.

Systematic professional development. Tracy, a master teacher at School Alpha, defined TSTSA as, "A systematic approach to advancing educators, students, and administration in the best practices for on-going professional development." (Interview)

Carmen, a master teacher at School Bravo and a local middle school, viewed TSTSA as, "A system put in place to help students achieve academically through making teacher practices better." (Interview)

Renee was a master teacher at School Alpha. Renee later transferred to School Bravo to become the principal. Renee explained that TSTSA ongoing, applied professional learning is embedded professional development based on the needs of the school and students. Renee stated:

> This is site based embedded staff development. Embedding staff development based on campus needs and research based strategies embedded into our regular work week and what we are doing. It becomes ongoing learning. It provided chances for different growth opportunities, but it becomes part of what you do. It really emphasizes this is good teaching. This is what good teachers do. (Interview)

Dana, a mentor teacher at School Bravo, interpreted TSTSA and ongoing, professional learning as, "professional development for the teacher themselves, as well as, the kids achievement." (Interview)

Jordyn, a special area educator, stated, "In a nutshell, basically the TSTSA system is designed to help make the teacher successful so they can make the student successful." (Interview)

Ashley, a special area career teacher, explained that TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional learning was a grant-based opportunity for educators. "It's a grant opportunity for teachers to be paid for performance based on a particular criteria." (Interview)

Cameron, a support area career teacher, commented that TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional learning was more of an enrichment program that supported instructional practices. Cameron expressed:

TSTSA like any of the other programs, is a teacher enrichment program to give new skills

and strategies even to veteran teachers because it gives current and new information. It's

better to prepare you to work in the classroom and to address different challenges that

come up depending on the population you work with. (Interview,)

Next, master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers shared their perceptions and

experiences about TSTSA's training prior to implementation. Training for implementation of

TSTSA with fidelity included a planning year in which educators were introduced to the

components of ongoing, applied professional growth and the instructional rubric. After the

preplanning year, master teachers and mentor teacher received training in their respective areas

which included: (a) cluster planning, (b) instructional coaching, and (c) conducting observations

using the TSTSA rubric. Additional training happened each year in the spring during the TSTSA

conference and follow-up training during the summer months.

Intense training. Knowles (1990) identified that professional content has to be connected

to what adult learners do every day in their careers. Mezirow (2006) added that in order for adult

learning to be relevant it has to bring the adult learner to a place of critical reflection if there is to

be any change in their professional practices. Educator's perceptions about TSTSA training,

different aspects of ongoing, applied professional growth, challenges encountered during this

process, and how they define TSTSA's model of professional development. Educators were given

the opportunity to freely share about their perceptions and experiences with TSTSA and ongoing,

applied professional growth.

Tracy explained that training was extensive and outlined additional requirements for

mentor and master teachers which included training on how to conduct evaluations. Additionally,

training consisted of planning using school data to plan cluster meetings. Tracy stated:

Upon implementation into the TAP program we received extensive training throughout the year specifically for mentors and master teachers as evaluators, facilitators, and overall change managers. The training received helped to plan for research and data that would be presented in professional development meetings. (Interview)

Carmen's training focuses on the framework for ongoing, applied professional growth. Addition training consisted of learning about the evaluation expectations and the framework of TSTSA. Carmen also fostered a positive professional relationship with the master teacher. Carmen expressed:

The evaluation system and framework of TSTSA helped inform me about the program expectations. Also, weekly ongoing professional development laid the foundation. As a mentor teacher, I worked with master teacher very closely. I met with the master teacher every week. (Interview)

Renee reflected about training during the summer that centered around the rubric. Each year, mentor teachers, master teachers, and career teachers are retrained on the TSTSA instructional rubric. Renee recounted:

So, the first year we implemented TSTSA at School Alpha was in June of 2006. All of the master teachers, the principal, and I believe the mentor teachers went through a full week of training at one of our local junior high schools. During that week, we learned about different parts of the rubric. (Interview)

Since Renee was a master teacher at the time of TSTSA implementation there was additional support provided to support her from NIET. During implementation, NIET provided feedback about the cluster meeting implementation and configuration. Renee pinpointed:

We learned about what our cluster meetings were supposed to look like. We did a lot of

collaboration. We did a lot of talking. We did a lot of teaming. That was sort of the first

week that got us started. After that we had people from TSTSA come to us often. They

would watch us do our clusters take notes and give us feedback. We went through the

rubric training and how to pass all of our tests. (Interview)

Renee further pointed out the intensity of TSTSA training and additional support NIET

provided to support cluster meetings. She commented:

The first three years of training was extremely intense and frequent. Training was

delivered by a program specialist from TSTSA because we were new to the program. The

program specialist would give us feedback on cluster meetings. Then we would go to the

TSTSA conferences throughout the year to get trainings. (Interview,)

Dana mentioned the only training she received was TSTSA summer conference. The

TSTSA summer conference were held in a different city each year. Prior to the conference,

mentor teachers and master teachers got to pick professional development sessions they wanted to

attend. Dana mentioned that her only training was the summer conference prior to the

implementation year. Dana said, "The only training I got was that summer TSTSA conference. I

got to choose which professional development session I wanted to go to. Professional

development was geared towards what I would be doing as a mentor teacher." (Interview)

When asked about the training, Jordyn indicated that he did not remember the training he

received. Ashley remembered training being based on the TSTSA rubric. All evaluations are

scripted. Once scripted, master and mentor teachers work together to match teaching evidence

with the TSTSA rubric. Ashley said, "I think the most important training we received was to go

over the rubric and the expectations of that rubric and show how it was different from the Professional Development Appraisal System." (Interview)

Cameron highlighted that even though expectations were outlined, there was a challenge to see how those expectations applied to support area educators. Cameron stated:

> We basically did the weekly meetings and were actually doing two a week at the beginning and that was the explanation of the program, what you're going to be working on and a struggle to hear how it applies to your area. (Cameron, Face-to-Face Interview, May 28, 2015)

Positive experiences. I designed the next set of interview questions to examine positive experiences master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers experienced with TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth. Participant responses continued to provide insight into Research Question one, "What are the perceptions of elementary educators' experiences of the professional development component of The System for Teacher and Student Achievement program?" as it relates to the positive experiences that educators' perception of ongoing, applied professional growth. Ongoing, applied professional development can be difficult to implement and sustain because of time commitment requirement. Additionally, participant responses gave insight into Research Question two, "What are educators' perceptions about how The System for Teacher and Student Achievement and ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?" Some of the positive aspects of ongoing, applied professional growth centered around positive collaboration and supports for career teachers, mentor teachers, and master teachers. When educators have immediate supports in place to support their instructional practices and student achievement simultaneously, educators become more willing to collaborate and take risks with their instructional practices.

Tracey explained one of the positive aspects of TSTSA was the advancement opportunities. Educators were afforded the opportunity to advance in the their careers without leaving the classroom. Opportunities for advancement allowed educators to progress in the field of education without becoming a school or district administrator. Tracey stated, "Opportunities for multiple career paths, incentive pay that is competitive, and resources to support strategies and research for certain professional development." Tracey began her career with TSTSA as a career teacher. She was later promoted to mentor teacher then master teacher

Renee and Ashley reported that connected classroom practice and the TSTSA instructional rubric was a positive aspect. Educators were observed based on the TSTSA rubric components. The rubric components are: (a) instruction, (b) the learning environment, (c) designing and planning instruction, and (d) responsibilities. Ashely shared:

It was nice to break down the rubric. In the first year, we broke down the rubric and talked about how that looked in the classroom. Mentor and master teacher would share, "This is how I think it will look, let me know what you think. Give me your idea." The mentor and master teachers were very good about trying to find the diversity of our specials group and how to incorporate that but just breaking down each of those grids and what they each look like was very helpful. (Interview)

Renee described how she spent time with teachers breaking the rubric down and translating that into what good teaching looks like. This gave her an opportunity to collaborate with teachers across content areas. Renee said:

First, with TSTSA some of the things we learned what good teaching looks like and how to recognize good teaching and why some things are better than other things. Which I loved that. We would sit down in our cluster meeting and we would break apart and really

talk through the different areas on the rubric. "What does this look like? What does this look like in the classroom? How would you do this? How would you make sure you have it? and so forth. For weeks at a time we were really breaking down, "What does good teaching look like? Why are you doing these things? If you're not doing them, why should you be doing them? What does it do towards student achievement? So, it was very in-depth look at what really high quality teaching looks like. That was one positive aspect. (Interview)

Carmen said her positive experiences focused on researching instructional strategies, modeling those strategies with educators, and helping educators implement the strategies in their classrooms with fidelity. Carmen stated:

One of the most positive impacts was the ability to focus on researching, modeling, and implementing strategies in the classrooms that the teachers needed based on their data. Another positive aspect is if things are done truly with fidelity the way they were meant to be in terms of the structure and framework of TAP you can see an improvement with teachers and their growth and teaching practices. (Interview)

Dana indicated one the positive aspects was the opportunity to build positive relationships with colleagues and participating in weekly cluster meetings. Dana commented:

I felt like the relationships I built with the master teachers. As a career teacher, I felt like there was somebody I could go to that knew what was going on in my room. The master teachers would always have to come in for 15 minutes to 45 minutes every week. I think the relationship building is definitely a positive. (Dana, Face-to-Face Interview, May 29, 2015)

Dana continued to point out that cluster meetings afforded her the opportunity to learn about new instructional strategies and teaching methods that she could immediately implement into her classroom. Dana said, "Another positive aspect was cluster meeting. During cluster meetings, we would get a new teaching method to try out. I continue to use the strategies that work in my classroom today." (Interview)

Jordyn highlighted building a community together as a team through collaboration as a positive aspect of TSTSA. Jordyn shared, "I think one of the positive aspects was building a community as a staff, working together and teamwork. Learning the new strategies to help the kids. Collaboration with other staff members. Once again, working together for the same goals." (Jordyn, Face-to-Face Interview, May 28, 2015)

Cameron indicated that one of the positive aspects of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth she experienced was educators gathering to collaborate across grade levels and content areas. Also, she felt that through collaboration other educators got a better understanding of what she did as a support area teacher. She stated, "It allowed for a lot more understanding of what different areas did. As a support are teacher I was included with grade level groups and so there was a better understanding of what I did as a counselor." (Interview)

Benefits. Educators shared their perceptions about the effect ongoing, applied professional growth had on collaboration. Most participants highlighted that collaboration became more student centered.

Tracy, Renee, Carmen, and Cameron outlined one of the benefits that ongoing, applied professional growth was that collaboration became more focused on student achievement, data, and teacher growth. In addition, there were clear expectations that were set for cluster meetings to

protect educators time. Tracy explained how collaboration promoted educator engagement in the professional learning session. Tracy said:

> One of the benefits of weekly ongoing, applied professional growth is that there was always an opportunity to keep the learning conversations fresh and engaging. Data began to make sense and became a norm in the process and the conversations were on student engagement and success rather that teacher complaints and lack of focus. (Interview)

Renee recounted how cluster meeting time was a protected time in which educators strictly focused on student learning and student work. Cluster meetings were not allowed to be canceled or interrupted for other events. Renee said:

> I think one thing is it gives you a chance to sit down together in a time that's valued. I think when you have the structured time in your schedule and you understand what it's for, it lessens the interruptions. We're specifically looking at student work. We're looking at strategies. We're growing as teachers. So, I think that becomes part of the benefit. (Interview)

Renee further explained some of the things that were not allowed to happen during cluster because of its importance. Time for cluster was intentionally planned, protected, structured, and focused on educator professional learning. Renee further explains, "We're not going to go get pulled to do an ARD. We're not sitting her to talk about the class field trip. That time becomes precious and it's very structured." (Interview)

Renee provided an additional positive aspect she experienced as a master teacher coaching career teachers and mentor teachers. She expounded upon the success they experienced implementing instructional strategies. Renee stated:

When teachers began to see the benefits that this PD is providing, when they take it into their classroom and use it with their kids and they start tasting success, when you taste success you want more success. So, I think in that way, it brought about higher levels of teaching and growth with our kids because we were seeing success. It was working. Teachers would say, "This stuff you were telling me what to do over here. I tried it in my classroom and Oh my god! It worked! (Interview)

Carmen recounted the benefit of collaboration had on student achievement and how educators began to reflect on how to implement instructional strategies in their classrooms. Carmen said:

I think when weekly professional growth was done the right way the benefit you could see was the direct impact it had on student achievement, but also the way teachers started to look at the structure of how to implement different strategies differently. (Interview)

Carmen shared an example about educators' reflection on their instructional practice because there was a systematic approach in place for professional learning. Carmen recounted:

For example, strategies weren't haphazardly or randomly picked out of a bag. I think teachers could see a very systematic approach as to why certain strategies were chosen and they could see the importance of testing out these strategies to see if they actually worked and if it didn't work we can see how to adjust it along the way. (Interview)

Cameron highlighted there were clear goals set for everyone involved in ongoing, applied professional growth. Working in isolation was not a part of the process. Cameron explained:

It sets the expectation that you are going to work together because you're all getting the same instruction. It's not like you got your plans, and you got your plans, and I got my

plans. We have the same clearly delineated goals. We're here and we're going to get to here and these are the steps we're going to take. (Interview)

Dana, Jordyn, and Ashley reported that benefits that collaboration provided was teamwork, educator growth, a vision for students and student achievement, and a sense of community and togetherness.

Dana commented, "One benefit is teamwork." (Interview). Jordyn shared how collaboration helped him to focus on what was needed for students to be successful. In addition, he was able to work with mentor and master teachers to help impact student learning. Jordyn said:

> Collaboration helped us catch the vision for all students. It helped us see what everybody was doing and to catch the vision on where our school's going in order to make things successful. It helped us work together to help all the students. I think it helped us realize where the strengths and weakness of our students were and how to help. We were able to hear from the mentor and master teachers about the things kids are struggling with how can you help them in our specific content area. It helped us help students in other places besides our own field. (Interview)

When I asked Ashley about sharing a positive experience, she spoke about how she was able to get to know people she would be working with. In addition, she had the opportunity to build positive relationships with her colleagues. Ashley expressed, "Well I think I got more familiar with the people that I was collaborating with. I think it makes it more conducive and people are more willing to collaborate. There was a framework provided to build professional relationships." (Interview)

Challenges. Some of the challenging aspects of embedded professional development were resistance, educator buy-in, educator reflection, and fidelity to program implementation. Tracy emphasized that buy-in was a challenge. In addition, educators had a hard time differentiating between district and TSTSA program expectations. Tracy and Carmen noted that resistance from educators, including administrators, mentor teachers, and master teachers was a challenge they had to learn to overcome.

Tracy declared, "Not everyone involved in the school buys-in to the system and sometimes becomes an antagonist to the program and its implementation. Sometimes teachers complained about time and not having the ability to distinguish between the District or Program requirements." (Interview)

Carmen expressed two challenges. First, she explained how some administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers we resistant to ongoing, applied professional growth. Carmen noted that resistance could impact school culture. Carmen stated:

There are people or teachers that are not 100% percent on board with the program. It doesn't have to be teachers. This can be across the board with admin, with master teachers, mentor teachers, and classroom teachers. If you don't have a culture where everybody is on board with this then it can be very difficult to make this process work. (Interview)

Next, Carmen pointed out that some educators did not meet the requirements to be mentor or master teachers. In order to be a mentor teacher or master teacher, educators have to know more than how to teach. Educators much possess the ability to coach teachers, build positive relationships, and have difficult coaching conversations. Carmen declared:

One of the negative aspects is I think is people are put into master teacher positions or mentor positions that are not fully qualified or not really rounded in terms of coaching. In order to be a mentor teacher or master teacher of course you need to know content, but sometimes I think more importantly than that you really need to know how to coach and have conversations with teachers that are firm, but fair. There are going to be conversations that are awkward. There are going to be conversations that are uncomfortable, but if you are a competent coach and you are reflective on your coaching practices and conversations you can have those conversations and maintain a very good relationship with the people you work with. So, I think sometimes when people are placed in these positions and are not quite ready for that kind of responsibility you can see some tension in working relationships. (Interview)

Renee indicated that getting educators to reflect on their instructional practice was a challenge. Often times educators did not want to hear about areas that needed improvement. Renee declared:

TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth is not for the faint of heart. If you are not a reflective person and you do not have semi-thick skin, it can be very upsetting because you will not be told that you're perfect. You will be told there are places for you to grow. You will have to learn to take a hard look at yourself. For some people, that's not easy. (Interview)

Renee discovered another challenge when she switched schools. She left school Alpha and went to School Bravo. Renee was promoted from master teacher at School Alpha to school principal at School Bravo. Renee pointed out, "When I came to School Bravo, they had really

changed TSTSA. It was not being done the way it was intended and they changed it to appease people." (Interview)

Renee provided specific examples of the challenges she faced at the new school with facilitating cluster meetings and fidelity to program implementation. She expressed:

They did all their cluster meetings after school. They would do them multiple grade levels. They watered it down to the point where you're running a cluster 3rd -6th reading teachers after school it's not specifically tailored to the needs of the teacher or the students, it's sort of a general overview. I think that became a negative. As much as I think they were doing this to make teachers feel better about it. It became a negative because the PD was not tailored towards the teacher's needs. It was a bandage kind of or a broad overview. It never got specific so it didn't do the things it was intended to. It was a negative for the people that wanted the good training and the good PD and to be a better teacher because they were just going through the motions of, "Oh, we're going to have to do this." But the teachers weren't getting from it what they should have. It was checking a box. (Interview)

Dana and Jordyn felt a negative aspect of ongoing, applied professional growth component of TSTSA was being given too much information at one time and not given enough time to implement the strategies from cluster meetings into their classroom settings. Both educators said they felt overwhelmed at times. Dana stated:

Sometimes the overload of always having the workload every week. Hey you need to figure out how to do the strategy with the lesson plans you've already created. You need to figure out how to fit this in because I'm going to come watch you this one time to see

you do it. Sometimes it's inconvenient having to do the method learned rather than just

learning the method and doing it when you feel like you can. (Interview)

Jordyn felt overwhelmed by the amount of information given. Jordyn felt like he was not

given a lot of time to implement strategies before being given another strategy to implement.

Jordyn commented:

For me, too much information was given at one time. We got all of this information at one

time. For me, it was kinda like overload. Not enough time to start. We would get one

strategy one week and the next week we might get another strategy when I'm still trying

to introduce the first strategy. We were hit with another strategy. Not enough time to

really utilize them efficiently and then in some years in TAP we were without a specials

team. We were with different grade levels. They were trying to do things. Some of them

were helpful and some of them were totally off what I do with the kids. (Interview)

Dana expressed additional challenges about TSTSA evaluations at her school, School

Bravo. Dana did not feel that evaluations were done to support educators. Instead, she had to

rearrange her lessons and deliver the strategy in order to complete the evaluation. Dana stipulated

that this made the process seem disconnected. Dana said:

TSTSA evaluation I felt like was a one-time gotcha. Even though people were coming in

to evaluate you all the time. I felt like your evaluation itself was 'Oh, you didn't do it

during your 45 minute evaluation' So I felt like it was a one time. The strategies you were

given in cluster you were expected to be delivering those strategies when it was time for

your TAP observation. Yes, not just the one TAP observation but when you master

teacher would come in you were expected to show her you were doing it. So you would

have already planned your lesson and figure out how am I going to fit this in to where I

can do it when the master teacher would come in. You had to schedule it. It felt like

homework. (Interview)

Dana continued to pinpoint the importance of relationship building and how her position

as a mentor teacher affected her relationships with her colleagues. Dana expressed:

As a mentor teacher when you observed people who worked in your cluster and you didn't

have relationships built trying to go observe them during a random time was always hard

and you didn't have that relationship built with a couple of teachers the observation was

awkward because they felt like they had a relationship with me they could agree on things

I was saying. I felt like it put me in a weird position. (Interview)

Ashley stipulated that time taken during the day to conduct cluster meetings was a

negative factor for TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth. Ashley noted that scheduling

of cluster meetings created a scheduling challenging for her classes. Ashely stated, "The only

thing I didn't like about TAP was taking time away from our school day. You know that time I

had I couldn't schedule classes in or see a specific group of people." (Interview)

Cameron stated a unique challenge she encountered because she was a school counselor

and was not a part of a specials rotation nor a regular classroom teacher. When Cameron became

a career teacher she discovered there was no protocol in place to support school counselors. She

stated:

TSTSA is not directly geared towards counselors. There was no counselor created

program. My school created an assessment tool for counselors and even through the end

of everything we did I didn't believe it was appropriate to what I was doing. (Interview)

Cameron reflected upon the challenge she faced being a school counselor trying to

implement math strategies into her counseling sessions. She did note that being a part of cluster

helped her understand what teachers encounter in the classroom. She recounted, "I originally started with a math cluster group and I didn't know how to apply math to counseling. We struggled with that, but I think the meeting with them helped me understand the classrooms better." (Interview)

Additional challenges. Educators expounded on other areas of that were challenging. Sub-themes that emerged were educator buy-in, fidelity of program implementation, and time. Tracy, Renee, Dana, Cameron, and Carmen highlighted time as one of the challenges of planning and facilitating weekly ongoing, applied professional growth. Also, Tracy, Renee, and Carmen mentioned there continued to be a challenge with educator buy-in. Tracy stipulated:

Some of the challenges involved time and organization for teachers, master and mentor teachers. We had to collaborate in advance to make it an opportunity for mentor teachers to do walk-throughs and provide sufficient feedback to teachers in their grade level or cluster. Some teachers still didn't see the necessity of the program or its benefits despite the successes experienced. (Interview)

Renee noted further challenges she encounter when it came to scheduling cluster meetings at School Bravo, "At first, I think it was getting people to want to give up that time. (Interview)

Afterwards I asked Renee to identify any other challenge encountered because of educator resistance to scheduling cluster. Renee further explained that fidelity of program implementation was a major challenge that emerged because of resistance. She recounted how she was able to handle resistance with educators. Renee recounted:

The version of things got watered down, making people understand this is not a choice. You signed a contract. You know this was coming. You don't get to not participate. When you do come here, you have to be prepared and ready to go. It's not a place where

you can just sit and do nothing. You're expected to be an active participant and you're

expected to be on time and follow the norms, etc. So, that would be a little bit of the draw

back. You got some push back sometimes. Again, once you establish this is how it's

going to be and we have those conversations, 'Let me remind you. You signed a contract.

This is part of your contract. You knew you were giving up this time when you came

here. It's not a choice. You want the payout at the end of the day, you have to show up

for the meeting, participate, and be actively engaged.' I think that helped with some of

that negativity. (Interview)

Dana, Cameron, and Carmen highlighted not having enough time as an additional

challenge they faced weekly. Dana recalled how losing planning time was a factor because of the

number of clusters that were scheduled throughout the week. Dana recalled:

Always losing that planning time was a challenge. You didn't have a planning time to

prepare anything in your classroom. At a school like mine, you got your other planning

taken away too. One year when, I think the last year we had TAP, I got a planning time on

Friday because there were multiple clusters during the week for different content areas.

(Interview)

Cameron stipulated further that additional time was needed in order to implement a new

math curriculum. Cameron asserted, "Taking the planning time away from teacher when there's a

new math curriculum being implemented so everybody has all that stuff going on. When you take

that time away, it can make it a challenge." (Interview)

Carmen recounted not having enough time to find research-based strategies that educators

can implement in their classrooms. Carmen said:

One of the challenges of course is no one has enough time ever. Not just teachers, but in general nobody. It doesn't matter what profession you work in these days, for teachers especially, time is so precious for a planning period or a time after school to be taken up it has to be meaningful. So, as a master teacher a great challenge is to pick strategies that are worth these teachers' time. Not just sit there and go through it with them but have these teachers take it back to their classroom. So that's definitely a challenge. (Interview)

Carmen further stipulated another challenge consisted of preparation for the master teacher and the effect that school culture can have on program implementation and fidelity. Carmen said:

Well, in terms of being a master teacher, the challenge is making sure what your presenting to these teachers is meaningful and not a waste of their time. Another challenge for sure is in terms of culture. It really depends on the kind of culture that was established in the school in connection with this program. If you have a culture where this seen as something extra on the side, that can become a challenge to master teachers because it's almost like your imposing on teachers when it should not be that way. It should be seen as a connection with what they're doing. (Interview)

Jordyn found it hard to balance implementing instructional strategies from different content areas into his physical education class. Jordyn recalled:

Sometimes when we were in cluster with 3rd and 4th grade they were working on something totally different that might not be applicable to what we're trying to do in the gym. So, to find that balance was difficult sometimes. (Interview)

Ashley outlined scheduling commitments that educators had no control over as a specific challenge. Ashley stated:

You know testing or activities or things that come up that we have no control over. I think

it was easier in some respect for the 3rd grade teachers to come up with their things than it

was for me because they have specific TEKS. I have them but they are embedded in other

areas and grade levels. Sometimes I have stuff planned and the grade level's like, 'we

can't come in today'. So, then anything I would have planned, I cannot try it out. By then

we have gone to another topic. So, you really can't share in that respect. It's a hit or miss

sometimes. (Interview)

Research Question Two

The data collected answered the second research question asked, "What are educators'

perceptions about whether and how The System for Teacher and Student Achievement and

ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted collaboration?" Information that emerged

from face-to-face interviews, documentation, and observations pertained to successes, challenges,

and benefits of collaboration.

Participants shared their experiences with collaboration prior to and after implementation

of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth and cluster. Six of the seven participants agreed

that collaboration was scant prior to implementation of ongoing, applied professional growth,

however, their views of collaboration after implementation was positive about the impact it has

made. One participant shared that she did not really see a difference in collaboration at her

school for a couple of years. In addition, most of the participants share personal examples about

how collaboration changed.

Challenges. Prior to implementation to TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth,

Tracy explained, "In my experience most grade levels worked together and developed their lesson

plans based on their own content or subject. There was little knowledge of the expectations at other grade levels and how they could best be supported." (Interview)

Dana shared her insight into collaboration at her school prior to implementation of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth. Dana shared her perspective as a mentor teacher at School Bravo. Dana stated, "Collaboration was on an as needed type bases the first year and second year. It was basically, 'What can I do to clarify things?' (Interview)

Jordyn described collaboration as something that happened between him and the other special areas teacher only prior to the implementation of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional learning. Jordyn stated, "Basically it was just me and the person I work with in here at the time, the fellow PE teacher. We collaborated about our lesson plans. Other than that, there really wasn't any other collaboration going on." (Interview).

Ashley described her experience outside of TSTSA with collaboration as a process in which there was not a lot of interaction between educators. Ashley commented, "The past experience I have is from secondary education. We didn't have a lot of interaction with our co-workers and things like that." (Interview).

Cameron shared her experience about collaboration from a previous school she worked. Cameron said, "At my previous campus there wasn't collaboration. They used vertical teaming. That was all they had." (Interview).

Successes. After the implementation of TSTSA, Tracy said she noticed educators began to participate in cross-curricular activities. Tracey reported, "Following the implementation of the TSTSA these weekly meetings provided an opportunity for teachers to discuss data, strategies and cross curricular activities that were actively being designed and implemented in order to support student learning." (Interview)

Tracy further explained, "Collaborative efforts can be seen between grade levels and other subject areas. Vertical Alignment efforts are supported and achieved through regular team and grade level meetings." (Interview)

Tracy gave an example of how educators began to frequently collaborate across grade levels. Tracy pointed out:

Two grade levels that come to mind are PreK and Kinder and 3rd and 4th grade. These grade levels have made it their goal to make sure they communicate EOY expectations in order to ensure students will be ready for the next level. They chose books and strategies that would meet the needs of their exceptional and foundational students. Because of their frequent ongoing conversations teachers and students began to use common language while teaching so students are aware as they step-up to the next grade level. (Interview)

Renee shared her experiences from School Alpha when she was the master teacher. Renee noted how ongoing, applied professional growth was initially an uncomfortable process. Renee explained:

What I can say is at School Alpha as a TSTSA school what I think about collaboration. As we began the TSTSA process and we were going through it people had to come out of their comfort zones a little bit. You recognized that you were expected to share. You were expected to be open to people coming into your classroom. Somebody said you're putting yourself on the autopsy table. People are going to pick you apart. So, again you have to have that thick skin and be willing to hear what people are going to say but it brings you closer together I think everybody's vulnerable. Everybody has areas they can improve and we're all in this together. We're working on it together. We're supporting each other. No one is looking at a weak area and saying, "Ew, she has a weak area," and

walks away. It's, "Oh man she needs help with this and I'm going to give her that help."

That's very different because it becomes less judgmental when there's a solution to go

with it. So, I feel it did bring about collaboration for people who really wanted to be a

part of the TSTSA program and most people at School Alpha did. It did bring about more

collaboration. Even PE teachers were doing strategies in PE. It might have been a reading

strategy, but they incorporated it into their PE classes. People witnessing other people

struggle and it was about we're moving kids. I think that was huge. I really do.

(Interview)

Carmen explained how it was necessary to collaborate with mentor teachers and career

teachers in order to implement instructional strategies to impact student achievement. Carmen

stated:

Collaboration for us was key whether you were a mentor teacher, a master teacher, or a

classroom teacher because the data spoke about what the need was. Without

collaboration, there would be no way to successfully implement strategies to attack those

areas of need in the classroom. For example, the master teacher can look at data or a

mentor teacher can look at data and say, "obviously, this is where your area of need is"

but the classroom teacher is the one teaching those kids the majority of the time. There

truly is the sense of you truly had to be able to collaborate in order to make these

strategies and lessons work in the classroom for these kids. (Interview)

Carmen pinpointed an example from her experience as a master teacher.

Carmen said:

I could see positive contributions even if the road was a little bumpy getting there. I think

specifically it is the classroom teachers, mentor teachers, and master teachers really work

together to help these students. So, one of the good things is that hopefully the classroom teacher didn't just see this as, okay this is a master teacher telling me or a mentor teacher telling me I need to implement this strategy. They're giving me this strategy and that's it. The collaboration part came in when the master teacher or mentor teacher would field test, go in and work with these teachers as well. Then go in and watch the teacher or offer to model the strategy for the teacher with a certain group of kids and then say, "Okay, it's your turn. Let me watch you, give you feedback, or help you out." It wasn't a dump and leave. We're not dumping the strategy on you and leaving you by yourself. We're supporting you along the way. I think that's one of the best examples of collaboration. (Interview)

After implementation of TSTSA for two years, Dana noted a small shift in collaboration at her school. The focus was on teaching educators an instructional strategy and getting better at teaching. Dana highlighted that it did take a couple of years for educators to get accustomed to the changes of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth. Dana said, "Collaboration shifted to "I have something to teach you." It's still like professional development when you're going in to learn new things. Also, it's about implementing TSTSA and how to be a better teacher." (Interview)

After implementation, Jordyn said there was more collaboration across grade levels because of the cluster meetings. Jordan said:

We had meetings with people in our learning communities. We were able to have meetings with our grade level each week. In addition to the meeting, I was able to meet with my co-teachers. There was a lot more collaboration with the different grade levels and teams. So that was helpful. (Interview)

After becoming a part of a TSTSA school that implemented ongoing, applied professional growth, Ashley commented she liked how collaboration looked because everyone seemed to be working together. Ashley specifically said:

I like the way collaboration looked. I wasn't sure if it was TAP or elementary education. It's that different people work together differently. I find that I can ask anyone questions and they could ask me question. It's a very workable situation. I think everyone is in it together. We know that we cannot do it by ourselves. (Interview,)

However, after becoming an educator in a TSTSA school Cameron testified, I know all the grade levels worked well together and the TSTSA leaders. What I saw working in 3rd, 4th, and 5th grade is that they had the exact same goals and expectations. So, we all knew we were all working on the same basic stuff. Even though there wasn't vertical planning, we were all getting the same instructions and the same interventions. So, you felt like you were working more together. (Interview)

Impact. Next, I examined the impact that collaboration had on professional relationships. Collaboration is a large part of ongoing, applied professional growth. Educators are provided the opportunity to openly share about their instructional practices and student data. Interview questions were designed to probe how educators' perceptions about collaboration and professional relationships on their campuses. Five of the seven educators were able to share their experiences. Three of the participants, Carmen, Dana, and Ashley focused specifically on relationship building.

Tracy shared how educators on her campus took personal responsibility to freely collaborate. Tracy said:

Teachers on my campus have made it their responsibility to interact and find out how they

can help to support teachers in various subjects, so that students will be prepared in the

next year. Teachers frequently communicate their misunderstandings or share insights

without bias or judgment. (Interview)

Tracy further shared that being able to openly communicate shifted the culture in

the school.

Renee said that being able to show other educators that strategy implementation is

possible made a huge impact on collaboration. Renee was a strict about program implementation

with fidelity, educators shifting their instructional practices to support student learning, and

accountability. As she worked with educators she was able to use various career teachers'

classrooms to show strategies being implemented. Renee shared:

Well, I think it's interesting when you're collaborating in professional development to see

how it's working in different areas. If we're working on a particular strategy, for example

I gave you the example before about PE. The classroom teacher says, "I can't do that," I

can take them to PE and show them how the PE teacher is doing that strategy in PE with

their kids. It kind of takes that, "I can't do it,"if you can't do it it's on you. It's not on the

kids. Being able to show people and exemplify this is what the strategy looks like in

motion, this is how it's being used in different areas, and having those conversations.

Also, being open to say, "I've tried this in my PE class and I can't get it to work like I

thought I was going to. Anybody has an idea for me?" Being able to talk through. Being

able to talk about education and not about Friday night plans. Let's sit down and talk

about good things that are happening or help me become a better teacher. Help me work

on my craft of teaching. I'm not going to sit around and gossip. Let us raise the bar on the expectations for ourselves. (Interview)

Carmen spoke about the correlation between educator's willingness to collaborate and collaborative relationships. She noted the importance of reflection when to comes to collaboration and relationship building with colleagues. Carmen said:

I think one thing I can add to that …The only thing I can add to that is that the collaborative relationships will be as strong as the intent of the people collaborating. If you have people that are open, reflective and self- reflective and can be honest with themselves with their own areas of need then that collaboration is going to be very powerful. If you have teacher that feel like they're being put upon or if they feel they don't have areas to grow that collaboration becomes meaningless and it just becomes a group of people sitting in a room together talking and you lose that true meaning of collaboration. I think I really feel in order for it to be a very true and honest collaboration each individual has to have the ability to self-reflect. (Interview,)

Dana noted how the TSTSA help educators build relationships because its framework for ongoing, applied professional growth fostered collaboration between educators. However, Dana noted that in her situation some relationships were hindered because she did not get to work with some of the educators she had to observe. Overall, she believed that being able to simple talk to one another fostered a positive relationship with other educators. Dana said:

The TSTSA process helped to build relationships. I also felt like it hindered building other relationships because I didn't work with some people all the time but I still have to observe them. To me, I felt like I built more relationships as an educator with us talking to each other. For example, "How did it work for you? What did you do to tweak

something that made it work?' So, it was that reflection of getting to talk to one another and having that time to talk with one another. (Interview)

Ashley reflected on how educators supported one another. Educators began to understand that they were all in this process together as a team. Ashley shared:

I think everyone is real supportive of each other. We all get stressed out all the time. Those of us on the outer edge try to keep them calm. I guess that's just part of it. We're all in it together and it's unique to our building. (Interview)

Further, educators shared how having established a culture of collaboration impact implementing instructional strategies and working with each other became feasible. Six of the seven participants shared their experiences with collaboration and instructional practices. Cameron did not feel comfortable to provide an answer because the majority of her day is spent in counseling sessions with students where she would not be implementing instructional strategies most of the time like educators in the regular classroom.

Tracy shared how collaboration helped her broaden her view about teaching and learning. Tracy shared:

I personally appreciate and respect the minds of others and their attention to details. The collaboration that has been established through this program has impacted my learning and teaching of students because I have a more global view of their needs and how to access knowledge I may have not possessed prior to collaborating. (Interview)

Renee shared that working with others helped her reflect on how she could better support mentor teachers and career teachers implementing strategies. Renee also realized that the TSTSA process is a collective journey. Renee stated:

I learn more from the other people I worked with. Being able to go in and watch my

fellow master teachers and teachers and seeing the strategies they were using…seeing

where their struggle was and being able to think of, "How can I help this person. I need to

help them. I need to go research this. We need to talk about it. We need to try this," and

conversely the same thing, "I'm struggling here. Come in and watch me. See what I'm

doing. Give me some ideas. I'm not in this by myself." (Interview,)

Renee pointed out an example from the perspective of a school principal at School Bravo.

Renee shared:

One of my teachers uses the word silo all the time. She said some of our teachers are silos.

They're in their classrooms. They never come out. They don't share with each other.

Well, guess what grade level has the most problems on their grade level? The one where

the teachers are silos. (Interview)

Carmen reflected from the perspective of a master teacher. She explained her role as an

individual that worked with adult learners in order to impact student achievement. In addition,

being a master teacher helped her grow with presenting instructional strategies for educators to

take back into their classroom and implement. Carmen shared:

As a master, it really helped me fine tune ability as a presenter. You know when you're

the one standing up there and leading the weekly staff development. They're seeing you

as the keeper of all the knowledge and so you better come prepared with that knowledge.

You cannot fudge your way or lie your way through this if you have not field tested, or

you have not done the research. I think because of that I think it helped me become a very

prepared and organized facilitator with conversations, with just organization and

preparation for staff development and knowing how to insert questions at the right time

when you have a group and its crickets and that's all you hear. You have to be able to

think on your feet to be able to get the conversation going. You want that conversation.

You don't want it to always be you the master teacher talking. You have to be able to be

able to know when to insert these questions to get the conversation going. You have to be

able to ….it's a serious matter and we're talking about kids, but we're also educating a

group of adults. So you have to have that in mind too. You have to have a sense of

humor when you're teaching a class to these adults too. (Interview,)

Dana stated, "I'm a collaborative person. I feel like I always collaborate with my peers

with things I do instructionally. We bounce ideas off one another. Having to have that

collaboration, I think every teacher becomes better with collaboration." (, Interview)

Jordyn reiterated that he was able to grow professionally because the process of TSTSA

helped him to reflect on what he was doing to help students. Jordyn restated, "It really helped me

think through what I do and get advice from other teachers and to really help the kids think

through some of that." (Interview)

Ashley felt comfortable enough to ask questions and offer support to other educators.

Ashley shared:

> I can always go to ask a teacher if I have a question. You know it's like, "Are yawl doing
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> this or that and what can help you." You know I don't feel inhibited to go ask them for
>
> support or ideas. They are very supportive and I don't have a problem with that.
>
> (Interview)

Research Question Three

Research Question Three asked, **"**What are educators' experiences with the application of

concepts learned and practiced in TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional learning

communities?" Master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers were given the opportunity to expound on their perceptions about their individual roles and the coaching support they received. Interview questions were purposely designed to elicit responses about the types of support master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers received. In addition, questions were designed to understand educator's perceptions about their responsibilities in their respective roles. Coaching support of mentor teacher and career teachers involved a lot of collaboration with the master teachers.

Further, answers to this question give insight into how educators implemented instructional strategies in their classrooms with coaching support from mentor teachers and master teachers. Educator's responses included educator responsibilities within their specific roles and ongoing, applied coaching support

Mentor teachers and master teachers are considered teacher leaders and are expected to fulfill additional responsibilities within and outside the scope of TSTSA. Additional responsibilities for master teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers differed based on their respective positions and schools. Career teachers and mentor teachers had to figure out when and how to implement instructional strategies. Needing additional time to implement strategies became a factor. Master teachers' duties included researching instructional strategies and facilitating cluster meetings. Miscellaneous duties included working on the campus improvement plan and scheduling district benchmarks for their campuses.

Educator responsibilities. Tracy explained the additional requirements she was expected to fulfill as a master teacher included reporting back to school early, reviewing data, and developing the school plan for the upcoming school year. Tracy said:

Master and mentor teachers report back to school three to four days prior to regular

teachers in order to prepare for the current school year. During the summer months, we

attended the TAP Summit in order to review data, establish a TAP School Plan, review

new resources, network and receive program updates and individualized development for

master or mentor teachers. (Interview)

Renee's role as a master teacher was diverse. She conducted classroom observations, pre-

conferences and post-conferences, coached educators, conducted research, and facilitated cluster

meetings. Renee said:

I was in the classroom doing observations and was coaching teachers. I was planning for

researching and field-testing for the strategies we were going to use in our field tests.

Also, I planned and facilitated clusters, pre-conferences, and post conferences with the

mentor teacher. In addition, I had small groups of kids I worked with besides from my

field-testing and modeled in classrooms. I gathered information from the TSTSA surveys

at the end of the year. I would help plan and facilitate the TLT meeting once a week after

school and anything else our principal asked us to do that was necessary, but not

necessarily part of TSTSA. (Interviews)

Renee pointed out examples of miscellaneous responsibilities and commitments outside

the scope of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth that she was responsible for.

Renee added:

I did duty. I helped with all the scheduling which included all the daily schedules for the

teachers and discipline stuff as well. I helped write the handbooks and work on the

Campus Improvement Plan. In addition, I went to Admission, Review, and Dismissal

(ARD) meetings and sat in on RtI meetings. I was part of the local school council and the

Parent Teacher Association (PTA). Pretty much everything and anything became part of

our assignment because you're the teacher leader. That's what you do. You're modeling

for teachers. You're showing them that this is everybody's responsibility. (Interview)

Carmen reflected about her responsibilities as a mentor teacher and as a master teacher.

Carmen explained:

As a mentor teacher, I had to maintain all of my traditional classroom responsibilities as a

classroom teacher. On top of that, as a mentor, I worked and supported the master teacher

I worked with which meant discussing needs we saw in teachers, trying to help teachers

we saw had certain strengths maintain or grow in those areas. We talked through certain

strategies that could be implemented or modeled in cluster and of course as a mentor the

evaluation aspect of evaluating certain teachers. (Interview)

As a master teacher, Carmen's role changed because she no longer had a classroom. In

addition, she was responsible for planning and implementing cluster meetings, evaluating

teachers, and finding research-based instructional strategies to implement. Carmen further

detailed:

As a master teacher, the role shifted. I didn't have a class to teach anymore. With that

came more responsibility in terms of taking on more evaluations, being the one in charge

of researching, field testing, modeling, and observing the strategies being implemented in

the classroom by teachers. That was just the technical role of the master teacher.

(Interview)

Carmen elaborated on responsibilities that she was assigned outside the scope of TSTSA

and ongoing, applied professional growth. Carmen added, "You add on top of that the other

responsibilities your district or your principal because at that point you're a master teacher. You

are viewed as an instructional specialist by the district." (Interview). One specific responsibility Carmen was responsible for was benchmark testing. She was responsible for coordinating and assembling data. Carmen commented, "I was the one in charge of collecting, coordinating, scanning and assembling that data." (Interview)

TSTSA mentor teachers' function is a dual role. They maintain a full-time classroom while providing coaching to other teachers. In addition, they support the master teacher with field testing instructional strategies and planning weekly cluster meetings.

Dana was a mentor teacher during the implementation of TSTSA. She outlined additional responsibilities which included conducting cluster and completing homework assignments from cluster. Dana said, "Every week we had cluster and then the homework from cluster. Sometimes homework included trying out the strategy or bringing something back saying that you implemented the strategy and maybe a product that your children completed." (Interview)

Carmen was a mentor teacher prior to being promoted to master teacher. Carmen reflected about her responsibilities as a mentor teacher. Carmen explained:

> As a mentor teacher, I had to maintain all of my traditional classroom responsibilities as a classroom teacher. On top of that, as a mentor, I worked and supported the master teacher I worked with which meant discussing needs we saw as teachers, trying to help teachers we saw had certain strengths maintain or grow in those areas. We talked through certain strategies that could be implemented or modeled in cluster and of course as a mentor the evaluation aspect of evaluating certain teachers. (Interview)

Jordyn, Ashley, and Cameron recounted one of the requirements of career teachers was to attend weekly cluster meetings. Jordyn further added he had to complete homework assignments and implement instructional strategies which was time consuming. Jordyn recounted:

I feel like the strategies they wanted us to implement worked really well, there wasn't a lot

of time involved. Other times, it took a lot of time for preparation to implement the

strategy to make it work. We were required to attend a cluster meeting once a week to

meet with our team. (Interview)

Ashley further explained that it was time consuming trying to incorporate instructional

strategies into her lesson plans. Ashley stated, "Just extra meeting time. Forty-five minutes, I

guess, a week. Then we would have a homework assignment based on what we were talking

about that day. Try to incorporate things into our lesson plan. It wasn't a lot extra." (Interview)

Cameron outlined specific additional requirements for her included: (a) two planning

periods taken per week for cluster, (b) homework assignments, and (c) creating lesson plans to

accommodate the homework assignments. Cameron stated, "We used two planning periods a

week to participate in cluster. There was always homework to do. Whether it applied to a new

strategy they were teaching us, a philosophy, or a direct activity that had to be done." (Interview)

Ongoing, applied coaching support system. The three master teachers, Tracy, Renee,

and Carmen, in this study gave positive remarks about the administrative support they received

from the school principal. Master teachers help plan weekly ongoing, applied professional

growth. In addition, the master teacher facilitated the weekly cluster meetings. Tracy, Renee,

and Carmen shared their personal perceptions and views about the role administrators play in

ongoing, applied professional growth. Tracy shared:

The principal is the most important component to the implementation of the Program. The

principal not only provides the vision and importance of the program, but provides

ongoing professional development among his leadership team, which then funnels into the

grade level clusters. (Interview)

Renee pointed out how the principal trusted the master teachers enough to allow them the freedom to plan and implement cluster with minimum oversight. Renee stated:

The thing about the principal is that he loved us. Anything we wanted, he agreed to. If we said, "We want to do this," he would say, "Okay." He was kind of a hand's off person. So, the support came in the form of knowing that he would be okay with what we are choosing to do. It wasn't a hands-on support. It was more of a trusting support. He still came to meetings. He would go to the trainings with us, but he was more of a passive person. He was a good delegator. (Interview)

Carmen explained how she was able to work collaboratively with the school principal to choose instructional strategies and discuss campus data. Carmen recalled:

I was very lucky because of the principal I worked with because he fully trusted us. I never felt like I was micromanaged. So, in terms of support, administration would say, "You know the strategies that you need to implement that makes sense with the data. Let's talk about it. If it makes sense, you go for it and you do what you feel is best." I was lucky because the administrators fully trusted us because they knew we weren't going to do anything negatively. (Interview)

Mentor teachers function in a dual role as part of the TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth. Mentor teacher function as full-time classroom educators delivering instruction to students daily. In addition to being a classroom educator, mentor teachers function as full-time instructional coaches. They research and model instructional strategies in cluster for classroom educators and provide support to help educators implement strategies into their classrooms. Tracy and Renee explain how they supported mentor teachers.

Career teachers and mentor teachers received embedded coaching support implementing instructional strategies into their classroom. In this section educators shared how master and mentor teachers supported implementation of strategies in their classrooms. Four out of seven career teachers, Jordyn, Ashley, Cameron, and Carmen, shared their experiences about embedded support provided by the mentor and master teachers.

Jordyn, a special area career teacher, spoke about the type of embedded support he received from Tracy, the master teacher. Jordyn noted that Tracy was always encouraging and positive anytime he needed support. Tracy would take time to differentiate the instructional strategy for Jordyn. Jordyn explained:

Usually, we would sit down. She would come down here on my planning and she would just talk to me. She would go, 'hey this is where we are trying to go with this and this is how it would help the kids. Now, what do you think?' After she broke it down a little bit more usually I would go, 'that makes a little more sense.' And we would break it down to how we could use that for a throwing skill or how we could use that for a team sport or how we could use that in fitness. She would help me breakdown whatever we were working with at the time with the strategy we were trying to do. She was very encouraging and followed up on that. (Interview)

Ashley describes her experience with embedded support. She stipulated that master teachers had flexible time so she did not have to bother other career and mentor teachers for ideas. Ashley said:

I think they were very good. If I'm having trouble with something they would say, 'have you tried this or have you tried that?' You know just always being able to give me some advice. Right, because the master teachers, they have more flexible schedules too. They

work with groups and things like that too. I don't need to bother the 3rd grade teacher to come up with ideas for me. She's got enough on her plate already. So, I feel the master teachers are supposed to know a little bit more about everybody and have some good insight into that. (Interview)

Cameron, a support area career teacher, expressed how the master teacher supported her in her area despite the challenges she encountered as a counselor. Cameron said:

If I didn't understand something, I knew you go to them and say, 'I don't get this.' Or 'come and show me.' Which is always fun in the counseling. 'Here's what I'm presenting today. Come and role play with me or something and help me understand how I can make this work.' (Interview)

Cameron further reflected about how the support was not argumentative, but collaborative. Cameron stated:

They were really good about when I say, 'This won't work.' They didn't argue with me. They didn't try to dissuade me and say, 'Sure, sure you can make this work.' They would say, 'Okay, what are we going to do now?' And even I would say, 'Here's what I'm working on.' Sometimes they would give me some stuff I hadn't thought about. (Interview)

Carmen shared her experiences as a mentor teacher and a master teacher. As a mentor teacher, she spent a lot of time working collaboratively with her master teacher. Carmen said, "As the mentor teacher, a lot of the time the master teacher would use my classroom in terms of field-testing. I would script what she did and what she said and we would collaborate." (Interview). Carmen further explained that when she became a master teacher she ensured she stayed visible and provided a support system for the educators she worked with. Carmen stated:

When I was a master teacher, I made sure to follow the lead of my master teacher who I replaced who was such a great coach. I made sure to be very visible in the classroom, not as always observing but sometimes I would be the one to actually model the strategy for the kids. I made sure to let the teacher know that I would come back and do it again. That was the support system. (Interview)

Master teachers support mentor teachers with implementation of instructional strategies in cluster meetings. In addition, master teachers conducted coaching sessions with mentor teachers focused on their instructional practices and evaluations. Tracy and Renee shared how they supported mentor teachers with whom they collaborated.

Tracy explained how she worked with mentor teachers to conduct field testing with instructional strategies. Tracy said:

Many times, the mentor teacher was the class that I was to help with field testing strategies and communicating ideas for the next strategy or research ideas. The mentor is a great resource and partner in the program, who helps in developing ideas and structures for learning in cluster groups. (Interview)

Tracy further explains, "The master teacher provides a fresh eye for improvement on resources and student involvement with a lesson or strategy. The master teacher helps with customizing lessons so that students are engaged and meets success." (Interview)

Renee commented how she field tested strategies in the mentor teacher's class. She did this so the mentor teacher could be actively involved in the field tests and cluster meetings. Rene said:

Also, we pulled our field test kids from the mentor teacher's classrooms. So, that really helped so when we were ready to start implementing the strategies the mentor teachers

had already seen what was going on with their kids and us trying the strategy and the

benefits of it. So, then they kind of got that first-hand knowledge. Then we would turn it

over to them. You know that gradual release after we were ready we would turn it over to

them. When they came to the cluster meeting, it was kind of a co-teaching effect of,

'Now we have two people who are able to talk about this and the benefits of it and how

it's working in the class with these kids.' What happened when we tried it, what the

successes were, what you may have needed to tweak the strategy. (Interview)

Next, career teachers and mentor teachers were coached by the master teachers primarily

during the instructional day. Coaching sessions involved a lot of collaboration on the part of all

the participants involved in ongoing, applied professional growth. The career teachers, Jordyn,

Ashley, and Cameron, shared their experiences about the types of support they received and how

their instructional practices began to change as a result of receiving support. Jordyn expressed

that the master teacher he worked with was supportive and encouraging. Jordyn stated:

They were supportive of what we were trying to do in the classroom. They understood.

My master teacher was a former music teacher so she understood where we were at as far

as special goes. She was real supportive on trying to help us fit the new strategy into what

we were doing. She understood coming from a special area teacher background. They

were very encouraging. I think one of the things was they wore so many hats. I think it

was hard for them to do as good of a job as they would have like to as far as support and

all that. They weren't able to get around as much as they would have liked to or maybe we

would have liked them to be. There's only so much they can do. They did a good job.

(Interview)

Jordyn continued to share how he began to realize that he could implement a new strategy as a special areas educator with the necessary support in place. Jordyn was able to meet with Tracy outside of normal cluster time and discuss how to implement strategies.   Jordyn stated:

I think it helped me realize I can implement a new strategy. There were times when Tracy would come down and I would say, 'Tracy, I have no clue what you're wanting here.' You know in an hour meeting we can talk through things and we talked through things. When I get in a big group like that, I don't talk as much as I would one on one. She would come down and really be helpful and encouraging. Some days it would be, 'I really don't have a clue, help me with this.' She would be very encouraging and say, 'This is how can we implement this' and she was really encouraging. (Interview)

Ashley expressed how the master teacher would find ways to ensure that she was successful. Ashley expressed, 'The one specifically I am thinking about he would always find ways for me to be successful in what I was trying to plan to do.' (Interview). Ashley testified that she did not feel like another warm body in the room, but was a part of the conversations when working with the mentor and master teacher. Ashley stated:

I wasn't just another warm body. I participated in the conversation as well. I think that helped the grade level people because they really don't know what goes on in the library and do the stuff I do. I think it was important to have that back and forth. (Interview)

Cameron shared her experience of being coached by mentor teachers and master teachers despite the challenges she encountered being a support area educator who had to implement instructional strategies. Cameron said:

Because our mentor teachers are teachers and I'm a counselor, it was basically, 'Cameron if you need something, come to me.' They would touch base with me, but because what I

do is so different they can't really coach me on it. If we were doing a specific activity in PD that needed to be implemented to be an assignment and I could go to them and say, 'I don't know how to make this work with what I do.' They would sit down with me and we would go through some literature and that stuff to figure out ways to make it applicable which was very helpful because otherwise they weren't going to get anything back from me. (Interview)

Cameron further explained her experience being coached by the master teacher. Cameron stated:

The master teachers were the ones that did all the research and came up with the stuff they were teaching us. They were wonderful about saying, 'What do you need now?' If we were sitting in a meeting, and I'm over there and I have that look on my face of, 'Oh, not again.' They would usually come over and say, 'Come here. Come here a minute.' And we'd talk about, 'Guys I can't make this work. This is not reasonable'. So, they would help me create something that was reasonable so they can still say, 'Cameron is doing what she needs to be doing in this class.' So, I get my credit. (Interview)

Research Question Four

Research Question 4 asked, "What are educator's perceptions about how collaboration during TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers' made in their instruction?" The final set of interview questions focused on educator's experiences with implementing instructional strategies and concepts learned in ongoing, applied professional learning communities. Based on the educator's responses the following information was highlighted about their experiences about implementing instructional strategies and concepts in the classroom setting: successes, challenges, changes, and impact. Educators were asked to

describe their experiences with implementing strategies from cluster meetings, how implementing instructional strategies impacted their instructional practices, and how student achievement was impacted.

Successes. I asked the educators about their successes with implementing instructional strategies learned in cluster into their classrooms. Tracy, Renee, Dana, Jordyn, and Cameron reported experiencing success with implementing instructional strategies into their classrooms. Tracy reflected about how as a master teacher she adjusted her presentation style to effectively deliver instructional strategies in cluster. Tracy reflected, "The implementation of instructional strategies from cluster caused me to listen to my adult learners and adjust my presentation style to meet the needs of my learners." (Interview)

Renee, in the role of master teacher, recounted one success of working with educators to incorporate multiple response strategies into the lessons and working with cooperative groups. Renee said:

> We did a lot of work with our teachers on multiple response strategies. That was one of
>
> the biggest successes. There was way too much of raising your hand in the beginning to
>
> answer a question. We definitely worked with cooperative learning strategies and I think
>
> we felt success with that. Not when I was here, they did some Kegan strategies and they
>
> had success with that too. (Interview)

When Dana was asked about successes she experienced she focused on a specific instructional strategy and how it benefited English Language Learners (ELL). Dana reported that using multiple response strategies such as "Turn and Talk" and choral responses empowered students to answer questions in class. Dana expressed:

We want your kids to do more of the talking and learning from one another. Another

strategy we learned is every kid is expected to answer. You need to hold them all

accountable. They were expected to talk. This benefited my ELL students and my

struggling kids. So, I felt like this strategy gave them the confidence to answer the

questions. I felt the kids were empowered and confident to learn. (Interview)

Jordyn, the special area career teacher, shared one success was seeing kids transfer

knowledge from one content area to another. Jordyn often implemented reading and multiple

response strategies in his class. Students would use those same strategies in reading and math

classes. Jordan shared:

I think just watching students achieve success with a new strategy put in place where they

are transferring it: They say we learned about that in another class or they get it and you

watch that lightbulb go off and just watching them achieve success with some of the new

strategies is always encouraging. (Interview)

Cameron, a school counselor, highlighted one of the successes she experienced with

questioning strategies. Cameron often used questioning strategies in counseling groups with

students. Cameron said:

Some of the different questioning strategies, things like that when we're trying to do more

whole child, were beneficial and sometimes it was an 'Aha' moment for me because I

hadn't thought about bringing it from a certain perspective and that was helpful.

(Interview)

Challenges. Next, educators were asked to reflect on challenges implementing

instructional strategies learned in cluster into the classroom setting. Tracy, Renee, Dana, Jordyn,

and Cameron reported experiencing success with implementing instructional strategies into their

classrooms. Tracy shared that one major challenge she faced was resistance to change from educators. As a master teacher and coach, Tracy outlined how she was able to overcome challenges. Tracy noted:

> Some of the challenges associated with strategy implementation were when teachers were opposed to the strategy or the changes that were being suggested from how they were used to teaching. I was able to overcome this challenge by asking hesitant teachers to be my field test group, script and take notes from their observations, and share their experiences with the cluster. (Interview)

Dana recalled one challenge she faced was being given an instructional strategy that was disconnected from what was actually happening in her classroom. Also, Dana recounted not having enough time to properly implement the strategy. Dana said:

> A couple of the challenges were, 'Here's the strategy. Now I need you to just go do it and I'm going to come in and watch you do it.' Sometimes I felt like the strategy we were given didn't go with what I was teaching the next week. I needed to figure out how am I going get this strategy to fit so someone can come with me as I do it. The challenge I felt was let me soak this in, let me look at within my lesson to see when the strategy would work. Sometimes times we used the same strategies for upper and lower grades and it didn't always work that way. Sometimes it was, 'This worked with 5th grade. I want y'all to figure out how to do it with kindergarten.' Figuring out how to use the strategy was a challenge. (Interview)

Jordyn and Renee recounted similar challenges with implementing instructional strategies. Jordyn and Renee agreed that there were many times in which it was difficult for master and mentor teachers to find strategies because of the limited resources available. Jordyn said:

I think one of the challenges was for the master and mentor teachers to find/teach

strategies that were helpful for all the teachers. Some things depended on (we did it

differently different years). Sometime when we were in there with 3rd grade for 4th grade

they were working on something totally different that might not be applicable to what

we're trying to do in the gym. So, to find that balance was difficult sometimes. (Interview)

When I interviewed Renee, she reflected about her experience of finding instructional

strategies to implement. She specifically noted the lack of resources available when TSTSA was

implemented. Renee said:

For me as a master teacher the biggest problem we had in the beginning was where do we

find these strategies. It was like, 'Okay, we have Google™. Okay, we'll try it. It sounds

good.' That was definitely having a challenge. (Interview)

As school districts adopted TSTSA, NIET developed a portal where master teachers could

find strategies to implement. The strategies were uploaded by school districts that implemented

those specific strategies.

Ashley and Cameron noted the challenges they both faced with implementing

instructional strategies. Ashley expressed that the expectations for librarians were different from

expectations for classroom teachers. She further elaborated by explaining how not having enough

time to prepare posed an addition challenge. Ashley said:

Again, it goes back to my curriculum being so different and the structure of my classroom

being so different. Grade level teachers basically have all day to get these things done…at

least their block of English whatever 1 ½ hour. I have, at the most, if we're doing check-

out with the kids…I have 15 maybe 20 minutes to get my lessons done and to get all the

pieces together. So that was always challenging. I have to do everything on a much

speedier basis. I didn't get that evaluation piece…did the kids really get it? I don't know

because we had to move so quickly to the next thing. So, it was the evaluation piece I was

having rough time with. (Interview)

Cameron further explained how this program was not a good fit for school counselors. As

a school counselor, most of the strategies did not pertain to her work with students. She would

often have to develop strategies that would benefit her work. Cameron said:

Some of the challenges were just that things…they didn't apply. No matter how hard I

tried, it just wasn't going to work and so I would create something on my own and go to

my master teachers and say, "In lieu of this, I'm going to do this." Or I would go to them

and say, "This is silly. This is not going to work. What do I suggest I do instead."? And

basically, that was it. If it applied, I used it. If it didn't, I didn't use it. That's why I say

having the counselors in this program wasn't necessarily the most intelligent thing.

(Interview)

Carmen highlighted how differentiating a strategy was a challenge. She pointed out how

every strategy does not benefit every student. Carmen said:

There are different realities. Sometimes the strategies we used during TAP was very new.

We sort of learned as we went. So, at times we were given strategies for all the kids.

Well, not all the kids needed the strategy in the same way. So, what was challenging at

that point in time was the idea of differentiating the strategy was not there. (Interview)

Changes. Fullen (2011) noted that change was a difficult and grievous process that can be

met with resistance because educators have to abandon time honored practices. Tracy, Renee,

Dana, Jordyn, Cameron, Carmen, and Ashley shared different reflections about changes in their

instructional delivery from different perspectives. Tracy, Renee, and Carmen shared their

perspectives as master teachers. Dana shared her experience as a mentor teacher. Jordyn, Cameron, and Ashley share their experiences as career teachers.

Interview questions were designed to elicit responses about teacher reflection about the change process they encountered. In addition, data collected provided answers to Research Question four, "What are educators' perceptions about how collaboration during The System for Teacher and Student Achievement ongoing, and applied professional development contribute to changes classroom teachers' made in their instruction?" Educators were given the opportunity to reflect on their experience during data collection.

Tracy reflected about how ongoing, applied professional development helped her become reflective and responsive to the educators and students with whom she worked and coached. Tracy stated, "Professional learning has impacted my instructional practices and caused me to be more reflective and responsive to the students I interact with, as well as the teachers I mentor and provide support to." (Interview)

Renee explained how implementing instructional strategies from cluster caused a change in her instructional delivery. She also explained that she learned the importance of having research to support why strategies were chosen and implemented became an important factor for her. In addition, Rene reiterated the importance to fidelity with implementation so that desired results can be achieved. Renee explained:

> I think having the understanding that you go all crazy and say we are going to do
> something you better have some research to back it up. So, with that understanding of,
> 'I'm going to take this and I'm going to try it with kids and I'm going to see how it works.
> I'm going to do it the way it that was intended to be done.' (Interview)

In her role as a master teacher, Renee further noted that she focused on how students responded to the strategy to determine whether she would bring the strategy to cluster for other teachers. Prior to introducing instructional strategies to educators, Renee deployed the strategy with students first over a cycle of several weeks to test its effectiveness. She relied on student data to determine the strategy's effectiveness. Renee recounted:

I'm really going to evaluate how it's affecting students. Then if it is affecting students how I wanted it to then I can bring it back to the cluster. I think too many times as classroom teachers we try something and we don't necessarily do it with the integrity it was intended or we don't do the follow-up to see if it's really making a difference. We say it does or we say it doesn't but we don't necessarily have the data to back it up. So, being able to rely on that data and to look at it critically and to understand.

(Interview)

Finally, Renee noted the educator's responsibility to reflect on their teaching. Renee shared, "This is a huge thing that I believe, but it's hard for teachers. If the kids aren't learning, then teachers aren't teaching correctly. It's not a kid thing. It's not a kid thing. Kids aren't trying not to learn." (Interview)

Carmen explained how she was able to grow professionally because she implemented strategies in the classroom and cluster. As a result of having to find and use research-based strategies, she now has a variety of instructional strategies she can use for a variety of purposes. Carmen also mentioned how cluster was well thought out prior to implementation in math. Carmen stated:

Yes, professional development has impacted my instruction completely. I think in a couple different ways, but specifically just having the toolbox of different

strategies to go to when necessary whether it's fluency, whether it's comprehension, something with math and solving math problems, specifically I participate in what I thought was a well thought-out, planned-out services of cluster that dealt with visualization when it came to math. (Interview)

Dana shared her perspective as a mentor teacher. She highlighted the change in her instructional delivery, including more wait time for her students and becoming more cognitive during teaching. Dana explained:

As part of my instructional delivery, I feel like I did more of a wait time. I became more cognitive of it's okay if a kid answers incorrectly. Because what is my response after that if they do answer wrong and knowing how to do that wait time and doing the different types of responses for kids and keeping my kids engaged helped me to be more reflective about how I was teaching and help my kids be more reflective about their learning. (Interview)

As a mentor teacher, Dana's classroom was often used to test instructional strategies with students. At times Dana would be responsible for testing the strategy in her classroom along with the master teacher. As a mentor teacher, Dana continued to be a full-time classroom teacher and had a duel responsibility as an instructional coach to educators assigned to her.

Jordyn and Ashley shared their experiences as special area career teachers that had to implement instructional strategies in physical education classes and the library. Jordyn reiterated that his instructional practice was changed because he was given new ideas and instructional strategies that he could immediately use. Jordyn stated:

I think cluster gave me new ideas and strategies on how to deliver instruction. I learned how I talk to the kids. I learned how to get them to think and reflect on their learning. Cluster meetings help put more strategies into my instructional toolbox. (Interview)

Ashley shared how participating in cluster helped her change her instructional delivery by giving her focus with what she had to teach students. Ashley said, "It made me focus on specific things to go into my plan that maybe I hadn't thought of putting in there before but it has been modified a little bit but it was a good modification." (Interview) After strategy implementation, educators are observed and given feedback. Observations are scripted and evidence from the observation matched to the instructional rubric to provide educators with specific evidence about their instructional practices.

Cameron noted that that the only time her instructional practice changes is when she would use that strategy with the students she counseled. Cameron shared:

If I was doing ones that truly fit, yes. If I was trying to create something based on what they had presented to us it became uncomfortable and there were a couple times during the last few years I'm in the room trying to do what they've asked and after a few minutes it's clear it's not working. I let it go and I go back to what I know how to do. (Interview)

Impact. I asked educators to share the impact that implementing the instructional strategies from cluster had improved student achievement in their classroom and to provide specific examples of student success they encountered. Tracy, Renee, Jordyn, Carmen, and Dana shared specific successes they experienced with the impact implementing instructional strategies from cluster had on student achievement. Tracy mentioned how student achievement was inevitable when educators actively applied the research-based strategies from cluster. Tracy said:

The cluster strategies definitely helped in showing student growth when the teachers

readily and actively applied them in the classroom. Teachers targeted certain areas where

students were not experiencing success and then selected student groups to target and

monitor their growth throughout the weeks during implantation of the strategy.

(Interview)

Renee focused on how students performed on state assessments as a factor for determining

student academic achievement and how the school was able to retain teachers. Renee stated:

I hate to always talk about test scores, but at School Alpha we watched our test scores go

up and up and up every year. When they're going in the right direction, it's good. When

they're not, it must be something else, but we were watching our test scores go in the right

direction. Our teacher retention was positive. We were retaining teachers. We were seeing

kids apply strategies that they could use from one grade level to the next. (Interview)

Jordyn expressed how in his current position in special area as a physical education

teacher how he was able to help students think through and reflect on their own personal learning.

Jordyn was able to model instructional expectations for students with read alouds. Jordyn said:

I think it really made me help the kids think through what they are doing. Students

reflected at the end of the lesson about their learning. We did think alouds and things like

that where they really had to think through what they were trying to accomplish.

(Interview)

When Carmen was asked about successes she experienced with implementing

instructional strategies, she recounted an experience working with students on fluency and seeing

their growth as a major success. Carmen said:

I didn't know how many gaps my kids were going to come to me with especially with

their fluency in 6th grade. So, we had some really focused and strong strategies on fluency

that really assisted me in the classroom. (Interview)

In contrast, Dana shared how obtaining student achievement was a challenge with the

strategies she had to implement. Dana noted that only certain strategies would work with her

students. Dana shared:

 I don't feel like it always worked. Certain ones, such as turn and talk…certain ones I felt

were beneficial to their achievement I used more often. I implemented the strategies

because I knew they were successful with my students. Other ones, I tried them and if

they didn't work I didn't try them again. (Interview)

Summary

In this chapter I presented the results of research conducted with educators (master

teachers, mentor teachers, and career teachers) that participated in TSTSA ongoing, applied

professional growth for a minimum of three years. From the data analysis four themes emerged

with subthemes to help understand the perceptions of educators that participated in ongoing,

applied professional learning.

Research question one gave all participants the opportunity to share their perspectives

about ongoing, applied professional growth. Participants highlighted the benefits and the

challenges they encountered while implementing and sustaining ongoing, applied professional

growth. Research question two allowed participants the opportunity to highlight successes and

challenges they experienced with collaboration and the impact it has on professional relationships

and instructional practices. Research question three allowed each educator the opportunity to

define their specific roles and responsibilities according to their experiences and perceptions during TSTSA implementation. Master teachers and mentor teachers highlighted how they supported career teachers and one another throughout this process. Research question four allowed educators to share successes and challenges with changes to their instructional practices and the impact that was made on student achievement. Within this chapter I shared the perceptions and experiences of the participants and provided answers and insights to the four research questions.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSION

Overview

The purpose of this collective case study was to examine the perceptions and experiences of educators that participated in TSTSA ongoing, applied professional development within the School District of the Southwest. First, I will present a summary of findings. Next, the discussion will be presented as it relates to empirical and theoretical concepts mentioned in the literature review. Additionally, implications are presented based on the evidence from this study. Finally, limitations of this research and recommendations for future research are discussed.

Summary of Findings

The purpose of this case study research was to examine the experiences and perceptions of educators that had been a part of TSTSA for a minimum of three years. According to Creswell (2007) "Case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bonded system or multiple bounded systems over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case based themes" (Creswell, 2007, p. 97)." Data collected answered each of the four research questions. Data was collected from seven participants. Three of the participants served as master teachers, one as a mentor teacher, and three as career teachers. In addition, four of the participants previously served as classroom educators, two served as special areas educators, and one as a support area educator. The modes of data collection were face-to-face interview, documentation, direct observation, and participant observation.

The four themes that emerged were factors based on having a systematic process in place to ensure that professional learning and growth is an ongoing process, successes and challenges with ongoing, applied professional growth and collaboration, having ongoing, applied coaching

support for all educators, and the impact of ongoing, applied professional growth. The following

is an overview of each research questions and answers.

First, I used Research Question one to highlight participant's perceptions about TSTSA

ongoing, applied professional growth. Participants shared their perceptions about ongoing,

applied professional growth through face-to-face interviews. Participants shared their views of

ongoing, applied professional growth by personally defining their perception of ongoing, applied

professional growth. Participants shared training experiences, as well as, benefits and challenges

of being a part of ongoing, applied professional growth for three or more years. Overall, the

participants described their experiences as positive because of how the overall process of

TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth helped booster collaboration and positive

relationships.

I designed Research Question two to focus on how ongoing, applied professional growth

impacted collaboration. I identified the subthemes: comparisons about collaboration and

collaboration and professional relationships. Participants compared and contrasted their personal

experiences with collaboration. Most of the participants described their experiences with

collaboration prior to implementation of TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth as

limited. However, after implementation collaboration improved over time because of the

framework and structure that TSTSA's clusters provide.

Next, I designed Research Question three to explore participant's experiences with

implementing concepts and instructional strategies from cluster meetings. Two of the seven

educators, Ashley and Cameron, noted extreme challenges because of their job assignments as a

librarian and school counselor. The career teacher, Dana, noted how some strategies did not work

for all her students. Four of the educators shared positive aspects about implementing

instructional strategies and concepts because of the coaching support that was provided along with collaboration that foster relationship building across grade levels.

Finally, I designed Research Question four to examine how collaboration contributed to changes in the classroom setting with respect to the educator's instructional practice. Educators shared the successes and challenges they encountered implementing instructional strategies along with the impact on student achievement. Several educators explained how collaboration helped them to keep the focus on students and student achievement. The essence of the experiences of educators that participated in TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years included the following emerging themes:

1. Successes with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration

2. Challenges with Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth and Collaboration

3. Ongoing, Applied Coaching Support

4. Impact of Ongoing, Applied Professional Growth

Discussion

In this section I share the findings of this study in relation to the review of research literature, found in Chapter Two. The evidence found in the literature review gives an overview about the components of TSTSA and their link to research. In addition, the discussion includes a link between research findings and the theoretical framework with Knowles' Adult Learning Theory and Mezirow's Transformational Learning Theory.

Theoretical

I decided to use two theoretical frameworks because of their specific focus on adult learning. Knowles' (1990) theory focused on foundational premises such as: (a) the need to know,

(b) the learner's self-concept, (c) the role of the learner's experience, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation to learn in order for learning to be meaningful. Mezirow (1991) used Knowles (1990) theory as a foundation to build his theory of transformational learning. While Knowles (1990) theory and Mezirow's (1991) theory focused on what was needed for adults to effectively learn, Mezirow's (1991) theory required adults to become active participants in their learning.

Learning is the result of interaction between educator and learner (Brundage & MacKeracher, 1980). O'Toole and Sussex (2012) argued that it is important for adults to have an active role in their learning. Education and learning for adults must be personally meaningful and beneficial enough to add to previous learning experiences and designed to impact change in the learner's knowledge base and attitude (Holton, Knowles, & Swanson, 2005). Adult learning relies on the learner's self-direction and readiness as well as, meeting the learner's environmental and physiological needs.

Knowles theory focused on foundational premises such as (a) the need to know, (b) the learner's self-concept, (c) the role of the learner's experience, (d) readiness to learn, (e) orientation to learning, and (f) motivation to learn (Knowles, 1990; Forrest & Peterson, 2006; Merriam et al., 2007). Mezirow (1991) used Knowles' (1990) theory as a foundation to build his theory of transformational learning. Mezirow (1990) argued that adult learners have to be given the opportunity to implement new learning and go through to process of critical reflection in order to see a change in their work habits.

Empirical and Practical Foundation

Limited studies have been conducted on TSTSA's ongoing applied professional growth component. There are research studies that focus on professional development overall, however,

none of them outline a specific process for implementing and sustaining professional development over a long period of time (Eaker & Keating 2008; Knight, 2007). As stated in Chapter One, professional development had not been utilized as a sustainable event that related to improvement in the instructional practices of teachers, yet embedded professional development was connected to education evaluations, performance-based compensation, and instructional practices (Eaker & Keating 2008; Knight, 2007). As noted in this research, there are factors such as time requirements to properly implement and learning how to effectively collaborate with colleagues across content areas that hindered proper implementation of professional learning. In addition, understanding the crucial nature of mentoring and coaching before, during, and after professional development sessions can cause or hinder educator's growth and development (Barkley et al., 2005; Hord & Tobia, 2012; Musanti & Pence, 2010; Sparks, 2013). Additionally, barriers, such as resistance to change, impede the "knowledge-doing gap" that impacts instructional practices (Fullan, 1996; Pfeffer & Sutton, 2000).

Theme one: impact of ongoing, applied professional growth. As mentioned in Chapter One, TSTSA is a research-based, comprehensive reform model that uses embedded ongoing, applied professional development and coaching to help strengthen educator's instructional practices and improve student outcomes. Even though this process was implemented consistently in The School District of the Southwest however, no systematic investigation regarding the impact or effectiveness of this program has been studied (Keller, 2008).

In addition, current literature focuses on teacher preparation. There was a need to investigate the effectiveness of programs such as TSTSA to determine its influence on the implementation of instructional practices in the classroom and its subsequent impact on student achievement (Kinnucan-Welsch et al.,2006; Knight, 2009; Skiffington et al.,2011).

Educators in this study noted that TSTSA is a systematic process that is utilized for professional development. The chart below shows the steps used to implement weekly cluster meetings.

Evaluate the impact on student outcomes → Identify the problem → Obtain new learning → Develop new learning → Apply new learning
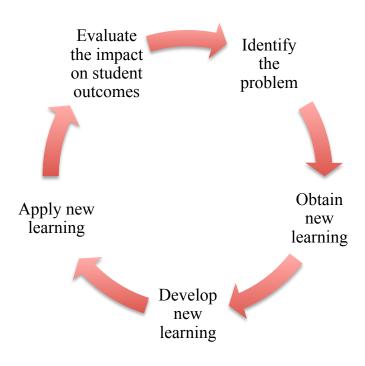
Figure 1. Weekly Cluster Process.

The first impact that ongoing applied professional growth has made with educators in The School District of the Southwest is using a process for weekly cluster meetings. This process is used with fidelity during cluster meetings. Each week master teachers and mentor teachers use the five effective steps to design and implement cluster meetings. Since the structure of ongoing, applied professional growth is clear educators can learn new strategies to implement in their classrooms. Next, master teachers and mentor teachers followed up with weekly coaching sessions with educators. This time provided master teachers and mentor teachers the opportunity to observe educators and provide scripted feedback or to model lessons for educators.

The second impact that ongoing, applied professional growth had on educators in The School District of the Southwest was the establishment of a culture of collaboration. Educators were provided the time to collaborate with their peers. Through collaboration educators built instructional capacity with one another (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). In addition, collaboration was a factor in relationship building with the staff at School Alpha and School Bravo. Educators could forge new collegial relationships through weekly collaboration with other educators across content areas and grade levels. The space for collaboration was safe to the point that educators took risks and shared their weaknesses.

The final impact was educators were given the chance to strengthen their instructional capacity by participating in cluster meetings. Through cluster meetings educators learned new strategies that they readily implemented in the classroom. Prior to introducing the instructional strategy into cluster meetings, master teachers and mentor teachers field-test the strategies. Conducting field-tests entailed deploying the strategy in several classrooms and collaborating about whether the strategy worked well with students. If the strategy does not work, mentor teachers and master teachers collaborated about what is needed to get the strategy to work. Sometimes that involved teaching students some prerequisite skill prior to implementing the strategy again.

Theme two: successes. The first success was having a system in place that was systematic that made expectations clear for educators. Professional learning is an engaging process that required educators to be actively involved in constructing knowledge and applying that knowledge into the classroom setting (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997). During the implementation of TSTSA, cluster meetings played a huge role in TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth. Cluster was the vehicle in which professional learning was delivered. The meetings provided an

opportunity for educators to learn from their colleagues while building positive relationships across content areas. Schmoker (1999) explains, "People accomplish more together than in isolation; regular, collective dialogue about an agreed upon focus sustains commitment and feeds purpose; effort thrives on concrete evidence of progress and teachers learn best from other teachers" (p. 55). Through consistent weekly meetings educators were able to develop a shared purpose focused on educator growth and student achievement.

During cluster meetings educators learned research-based strategies to immediately implement in their classrooms that would positively impact student achievement. Oliver, Huffman, and Hipp (2003) described professional learning:

> When professionals, school wide, come together frequently and regularly to reflect on their practice, to assess their effectiveness, to collectively study in a social context what they consider to be areas in need of attention, and to make decisions about what they need to learn to become more effective (p. 7).

The next success was consistent, evidence-based feedback and reflection helped educators to identify their instructional strengths and weaknesses. Effective educators are those who have a positive outlook about education because they are reflective about their instructional practices and have high expectations for themselves and their students (Hindman, 2003). Schmoker (1999) confirms that it takes collective effort to impact student learning and to build effective instructional teams.

As stipulated earlier, adult learning theory provided an avenue for facilitators to use specific strategies to engage adult learners (Tallerico, 2005). Mezirow (1981) stipulated that adult learning experiences must provide an avenue for educators to have a time to reflect on their learning. Through reflection, educators evolved in their learning experiences. Hoggan et al.,

(2009) stipulated that it is crucial that adult learners position themselves as active participants and as a reflective observer. Through various activities such as: (a) collaboration with colleagues, (b) examining student work, and (c) reflection allows educators to be active participants in their learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

Another success participants experienced was the feeling of teamwork. Educators mentioned that they felt a part of something bigger than themselves. They could keep their focus on students and student outcomes as they strengthened their instructional capacity. They felt as though they were set for success. Educators designed cluster meetings, implemented cluster meetings, conducted field-testing, observations, and provided coaching. Administrators led leadership meetings with master teachers and mentor teachers.

Theme 3: challenges. As with any new program, change can be hard for adult learners. The first challenge was a resistance to change. Fullan (2008) noted that change is hard for adult learners. It can be difficult to abandon practices that educators have used for an extended period. Initially, it was difficult to get buy-in from administrators and educators. One participant noted that it took several years for her school to become comfortable with the TSTSA process for ongoing, applied professional growth.

The next challenge participants experienced was not having enough time to implement strategies in the classroom setting. At times, too much information was given out in cluster meetings. Even though there was enough time allotted to implement cluster every week, there was not enough time to implement strategies and determine student outcomes.

The third challenge mentor teachers and master teachers encountered was having difficult conversations with educators. Difficult conversations were part of the coaching process. Often, educators had a hard time hearing there were areas of their teaching that may need improvement.

The TSTSA model required that observations be scripted and evidence matched with the instructional rubric. This is the information that mentor teachers and master teachers used to have conversations with educators. The process was not subjective nor was it a checklist. It was a time consuming, yet necessary, process.

The final challenge was the intense training that was required for mentor teachers and master teachers. Educators go through TAP core training. The training took place after the planning year and lasted 9 days. During training, educators were taken through the process of designing cluster meetings using the school improvement plan and student data. Next, educators learned how to evaluate educators using the instructional rubric. Administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers practiced conducting numerous evaluations and matching evidence with the instructional rubric. Prior to observations being conducted at the school campus, administrators, master teachers, and mentor teachers passed an evaluation test to become a TSTSA certified evaluator. The final training component that educators learned was how to coach based on the instructional rubric. The coaching process with TSTSA was a scripted model that aligned with the instructional rubric. As part of the TSTSA process, each educator was given a reinforcement, an area in which they performed well, and a refinement, an area which needed more work. Even if an educator was proficient in an area, that area could be an area of refinement.

Theme 4: ongoing, applied coaching support. Ongoing, coaching support was a crucial component of ongoing, applied professional growth because it provided an avenue for educators to collaborate. First, support was provided by administrators for master teachers. The school administrators lead the TSTSA leadership team. They were part of the planning process, but not the cluster implementation process. School administrators planned with master teachers and set the academic expectations for the school. During this research, the master teachers shared that

their school administrator delegated the entire cluster planning process to them. They had the freedom to configure cluster meeting and choose the research-based instructional strategies to introduce.

Next, coaching support was provided by master teachers for mentor and career teachers. Mentor teacher provided support with the implementation of cluster meetings and coaching of career teachers. Mentor teachers were part of the TSTSA leadership team and aided in planning cluster meetings. In addition, the mentor teacher's classroom served as field testing rooms where the master teachers could implement instructional strategies and get feedback on their effectiveness.

Finally, mentor teachers supported career teachers through observations and weekly coaching sessions. Mentor teachers were assigned career teachers to support. They were given this responsibility while they were still full-time classroom teachers. Mentor teachers met with career teachers to collaborate about instructional strategies, plan modeling and co-teaching sessions, and offer support with implementing instructional strategies.

Implications

This section provided the implications based on the summary of research. Research into professional development indicated that it was not implemented consistently nor tailored for educator learning (Kinnucan-Welsch et al., 2006; Knight, 2009; Skiffington et al., 2011). For this study, implications focused on improving overall professional development while outlining how having a systematic process such as TSTSA could have longitudinal benefits such as improving instructional practices and student outcomes.

Implications for Educational Leaders and Administrators

Educational leaders and administrators were tasked with the assignment to design professional learning for teachers based on campus data. In addition, leaders must be willing to provided needed and necessary time in which professional learning can be effectively deployed. In the case of TSTSA, educators built capacity and efficacy with one another. Administrators served as coaches to the teacher leaders. Educators designed professional learning and deployed it according to the needs of the campus, educators, and students. Administrators were only involved with the leadership meetings in which coaching was provided for master teachers and mentor teachers. This process allowed administrators to delegate some of the instructional responsibilities to teacher leaders.

Implications for Educators

For learning to occur, it is crucial that effective teaching is deployed. When designing professional development for educators, it is important that professional development facilitators deploy best practices for adult learning (Knowles, 1990). Professional development activities are not stand-alone, but must include follow-up coaching and collaboration with educators in order to build instructional capacity.

Next, educators must be responsible to search out professional learning that will simultaneously impact their instructional practices and student achievement. Professional learning is a collective effort that bolsters instructional effectiveness for professional educators. In the case of TSTSA, educators are provided the opportunity to transition to teacher leadership roles and design professional learning for educators across different content areas. Educators do not have to

leave the classroom to work in a leadership role with the TSTSA model of professional development.

Implications for School Districts

With the pressures of high-stakes testing and the pressures of student achievement, TSTSA is an innovative and robust option for those school districts that desire to raise student achievement. All the participants in this study voiced the positive attributes and benefits of ongoing, applied professional growth coupled with the ongoing, applied coaching support system because it fostered consistent collaboration school-wide, embedded coaching for career teachers and mentor teachers, and embedded professional learning that is focused connecting research-based instructional strategies and educators instructional practice while simultaneously impacting student achievement.

Implications for Policymakers

Former U.S. Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, endorsed the TSTSA reform initiative because the model focuses on creating school-wide collaboration in order to impact educator's instructional practice and student achievement (National Institute for Excellence in Teaching, 2012). Despite efforts to reform schools, policymakers continue to demand innovative ways to improve student achievement in public schools (Coleman et al, 1997). Political and educational leaders should investigate innovative reform models such as TSTSA to address the complexities of the achievement gap between minority student and their Caucasian counterparts.

Implications for Future TSTSA School Sites

For those school districts that are looking for innovate ways to deliver robust professional development, this collective case study can provide information to help those schools understand how a TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth could be a valuable resource. The TSTSA process is designed to build educator capacity and efficacy by providing embedded supports. This research provides future TSTSA school leaders a view of what they can expect during implementation and sustainability of ongoing, applied professional growth.

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Delimitations and Limitations

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The human instrument is the most critical instrument in qualitative research (Creswell, 2007). Boundaries were set to frame and narrow the scope of this study. Participants who participated in this study struggled with having time to complete the interview questions. Once IRB approval was granted I was living in another state. I contacted both school administrators to ask permission to recruit educators for this study. Once I moved back to town, it was the last three days of school and I used two of those days to conduct all the interviews. Educator attitudes at that time could have been inflated because of the timing of the interviews.

In this collective case study examining the perceptions and experiences of educators who participated in ongoing, applied professional growth, there were several limitations present. The first limitation presented was the lack diversity. Of the seven participants, one was African-American, one was Latino, five were Caucasian. In addition, of the seven participants, one was male and six females. Even though race and gender were not considered during this study, the lack of diversity was a limitation.

All participants in this study participated in TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. The experiences and perceptions of educators with zero to two

years of experience with ongoing, applied professional growth were not examined. Further, the perceptions of paraprofessionals, school and central district administrators, parents, and students were not examined in this study. Only the experiences of professional educators were targeted for this study.

Participants in this study were limited to two elementary schools located within the School District of the Southwest that implemented ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. School Alpha and School Bravo implemented TSTSA for 10 years. Both schools were chosen because of the demographic of students served. The experience and perceptions of career teachers, mentor teachers, and master teachers in middle schools and high schools were not a part of this study. Their experiences were not captured during the data collection phase.

Participants shared their perceptions and experiences about one component of TSTSA. This study was limited to only studying educators' experiences with the ongoing, applied professional growth component of TSTSA. Educators' perceptions and experiences of the other components: (a) multiple career paths, (b) instructionally focused accountability, and (c) performance based compensation were not examined during this study.

Researcher bias is a limitation of this case study. I am a former mentor teacher who helped implement TSTSA in another school district. I received training on coaching, evaluating, and designing cluster meetings.

The final limitation of this case study was the location of the study. This study was conducted in the state of Texas in one school district within two schools. Schools in other parts of city that implemented TSTSA were not examined.

Recommendations for Future Research

This research study provided an avenue to examine the perceptions and experiences of elementary educators who were a part of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. My focus was to capture participant's experiences through face-to-face interviews. Future research that can be conducted is another case study examining the perceptions and experiences of educators during the first three years of implementation TSTSA to analyze their perceptions of ongoing, applied professional growth, ongoing coaching, and collaboration. This will allow for a deeper understanding about the challenges and successes schools experience in the beginning stages of program implementation.

Another recommendation is to conduct another collective case study like this one in an urban school district and examine the perceptions and experiences of educators. Many times, urban school districts face the challenges of educating at-risk students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. The result of this type of research would hopefully show that teacher capacity can be built and students can academically achieve regardless of their demographics.

A third recommendation would be to conduct quantitative expost facto research to examine longitudinal data of a school's performance over time that implemented TSTSA over a minimum of five years. This would showcase the school's performance during the implementation and sustainability of TSTSA ongoing, applied professional growth. The results would give a deeper insight into how ongoing, applied professional growth impacts student achievement over time.

The next suggestion would be to conduct a narrative case study examining the relationship between the school principal and the master teacher as they work closely and collaboratively together to develop and facilitate leadership meetings and weekly cluster meetings.

Summary

This collective case study provided insight into the experiences and perceptions of educators who have been a part of TSTSA's ongoing, applied professional growth for a minimum of three years. Through across and within case analysis four major themes emerged: success with ongoing, applied professional growth and collaboration, challenges with ongoing, applied professional growth and collaboration, ongoing, applied coaching support, and impact of ongoing, applied professional growth. There is limited research about the implementation and sustainability about TSTSA even though it has been implemented in numerous school districts across the southern United States. Even though this study may not reflect the experiences of all the schools that have implemented TSTSA for more than three years, it does provide a glimpse into the perceptions of educators who have been a part of ongoing, applied professional growth for more than three years.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A

Consent Form for Participation in a Research Project for Liberty University

Doctoral Student: LaConti Shantell Bryant, M.Ed., Ed.S.

Study Title: THE SYSTEM FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT ADVANCEMENT AND EMBEDDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY

1.   Invitation to Participate
You are invited to participate in the dissertation process about TSTSA.

2.   Purpose

I am a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University in Lynchburg, Virginia. I am completing my dissertation about The System for Teacher and Student Advancement ongoing, and applied professional growth. My specific interest is examining the perceptions of educators that have been a part of embedded professional development over a minimum of three years. In addition, I will examine the impact embedded professional learning has had on instructional practices and collaboration. The purpose of the study is to gain an understanding of how TSTSA has impacted the collaborative process and instructional practices over a minimum of three years of implementation. Your participation is requested because your school has been a part of TSTSA since the 2005-2006 school year.

3.   Description of Procedures
Participants will be interviewed in person and on campus. This will allow the researcher to observe participants in their education setting and foster written reflections. I will also conduct observations, direct and participant, of cluster and TLT meetings. In addition, documentation from cluster and TLT will be collected and examined.

4.   Risks and Inconveniences
This project does not involve any risks of harm to you. The only possible inconvenience is time to conduct face-to-face interviews.

5.   Benefits
Through this research I hope to develop a scholarly resource that districts and schools can use when considering embedded professional learning. In addition, provide a resource that outlines the perceptions and experiences educators have had extended experience with embedded professional learning over a sustained amount of time.

6.   Economic Considerations
You will incur no cost as a result of participation in this study or be compensated for participation in this study.

7.   Confidentiality

ALL data recorded will be kept strictly confidential and no names will ever be reported. Your name and school's name will be assigned a pseudonym to protect their identity. All data is stored in a secured, password protected system. You will be asked to check your responses to interview questions for accuracy to ensure a precise account of your experiences have been captured. Your response will remain in a secure, locked location for three years after the publication of this dissertation, and then destroyed. Additionally, audio recordings of face-to-face interviews will be stored in a secured location and then erased after three years.

You should also know that the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) may inspect study records as part of its auditing program, but theses reviews will only focus on the researchers and not on your responses or involvement in this research. The IRB is a group of people that reviews research studies to make sure they are safe for participants.

8.   Voluntary Participation

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you agree to be a part of this study, but later change your mind, you may drop out at any time. There are no penalties or consequences of any kind if you decide that you do not want to participate. Take as long as you like before you make a decision. I will be happy to answer any question you have about this study. If you have further questions about this project or if you have a research-related concern, you may contact the researcher, LaConti S. Bryant at lsbryant@liberty.edu or lacontibryant@gmail.com. If you have any questions concerning your rights as a research subject, you may contact the Liberty University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at 434-582-2000. Again, the IRB is a group of people that reviews research studies and protects the rights of people involved in research.

Authorization:

I have read this form and decided that will participate in the project described above. Its general purposes, the particulars of involvement and possible hazards and inconveniences have been explained to my satisfaction. In addition, my signature also indicates that I have received a copy of this consent form.

Signature:

Relationship:

Appendix B

Personal Information

Name (Pseudonym):_____

Gender: ___Male ___Female

Professional Role:_____

Highest Degree Obtained:_____

Years of teaching experience:_____

Years of leadership experience:_____

Years of experience with ongoing, applied professional growth:_____

Interview Protocol for Career Teachers

Interview 1-Program Questions

1. Describe the training you received that helped prepare you to implement TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in your classroom.

2. What are some of the positive aspects of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth that you have encountered?

3. What are some negative aspects of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth that you have encountered?

4. Describe the time and work requirements you are expected to fulfill as part of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth.

5. Overall, if you could give a definition explaining The System for Teacher and Student

6. Achievement and ongoing, applied professional growth what would that definition be?

Interview Questions-Collaboration (Whether it changed)

1. Describe collaboration before the implementation of TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional growth?

2. Describe collaboration after the implementation of TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional growth?

3. What has been the benefit of weekly ongoing, applied professional growth has had on collaboration?

4. What has been the challenge of weekly ongoing, applied professional growth has had on collaboration?

Interview Questions-Collaboration (How it changed)

1. How has collaboration in your school changed since the implementation of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth?

2. How has TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth contributed to collaboration in your school? Give examples.

3. Has ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted your growth as an educator? If so, how?

4. What effects has collaboration had on professional relationships in your school?

5. How might you do your job as career teacher differently if the workload remained the same, but the incentive pay was not available?

6. How has collaboration impacted your instructional practice?

Interview Questions-Coaching

1. What type of support do you receive from the mentor teacher?

2. What type of support do you receive from the master teacher?

3. How has support from the mentor teacher impacted your instructional practice?

4. How has support from the master teacher impacted your instructional practice?

5. What has been a benefit of working with the mentor teacher?

6. What has been a benefit of working with the master teacher?

Interview Questions-Experiences with Applications and Concepts

1. What are some of successes you have had with implementing instructional strategies from cluster in your classroom?

2. What are some of the challenges you have had with implementing instructional strategies from cluster in your classroom? Did you overcome the challenges? If so, how?

3. Do you think that implementing the instructional strategies from cluster have improved student achievement in your classroom? How?

4. Has classroom implementation of instructional strategies from cluster cause a change in your instructional delivery? How?

5. Has ongoing, applied professional learning impacted your instructional practice? If so, in what ways?

6. How does the mentor teacher support you with implementing strategies in your classroom?

7. How does the master teacher support you with implementing strategies in your classroom?

Appendix C

Personal Information

Name (Pseudonym):_____

Gender: ___Male ___Female

Professional Role:_____

Highest Degree Obtained:_____

Years of teaching experience:_____

Years of leadership experience:_____

Years of experience with ongoing, applied professional growth:_____

Interview Protocol for Master and Mentor Teachers

Interview 1-Program Questions (Mentor and Master Teachers)

1. Describe the training you received that helped prepare you to implement TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth in your classroom.

2. What are some of the positive aspects of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth that you have encountered?

3. What are some negative aspects of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth that you have encountered?

4. Describe the time and work requirements you are expected to fulfill as part of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth.

5. Overall, if you could give a definition explaining The System for Teacher and Student Achievement and ongoing, applied professional growth what would that definition be?

Interview Questions-Collaboration-Whether it Changed (M&M)

1. Describe collaboration before the implementation of TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional growth?

2. Describe collaboration after the implementation of TSTSA ongoing, and applied professional growth?

3. What has been the benefit of weekly ongoing, applied professional growth?

4. What has been the challenge of weekly ongoing, applied professional growth?

Interview Questions-Collaboration (How it changed) (M&M)

1. How has collaboration in your school changed since the implementation of TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth?

2. How has TSTSA and ongoing, applied professional growth contributed to collaboration in your school? Give examples.

3. Has ongoing, and applied professional growth impacted your growth as an educator? If so, how?

4. What effects has collaboration had on professional relationships in your school?

5. How might you do your job as career teacher differently if the workload remained the same, but the incentive pay was not available?

6. How has collaboration impacted your instructional practice?

Interview Questions-(Mentor Teachers)

1. What type of support do you receive from the master teacher?

2. How has your duel role as a classroom teacher and mentor teacher impacted your instructional practice?

3. How has your duel role as a classroom teacher and mentor teacher impacted your relationships with your peers?

4. How has support from the master teacher impacted your instructional practice?

5. What has been a benefit of working with the mentor teacher?

6. What has been a benefit of working with the master teacher?

7. What is challenging about being a mentor teacher?

8. What is rewarding about being a mentor teacher?

9. What skills does the master teacher need in order to be effective?

10. How has providing ongoing, and applied professional development weekly impacted your instructional practice?

11. How has participation in ongoing, and applied professional development weekly impacted your instructional practice?

Interview Questions-(Master Teacher)

1.What type of support do you receive from the principal to implement ongoing, and applied professional growth?

2. What is challenging about being a master teacher?

3. What is rewarding about being a master teacher?

4. What skills does the master teacher need in order to be effective?

5. How has providing ongoing, and applied professional development weekly impacted your instructional practice?

Interview Questions-Experiences with Applications and Concepts (M&M)

1. What are some of successes you have had with implementing instructional strategies from cluster in your classroom?

2. What are some of the challenges you have had with implementing instructional strategies from cluster in your classroom? Did you overcome the challenges? If so, how?

3. Do you think that implementing the instructional strategies from cluster have improved student achievement in your classroom? How?

4. Has classroom implementation of instructional strategies from cluster cause a change in your instructional delivery? How?

5. Has ongoing, applied professional learning impacted your instructional practice? If so, in what ways?

6. How does the mentor teacher support you with implementing strategies in your classroom?

7. How does the master teacher support you with implementing strategies in your classroom?

Appendix D

Observational Protocol
Date:_____
Time:_____
Activity:_____

Descriptive Notes	Reflective Notes

Appendix E

Within Case Pattern Matching

Pattern 1	
Pattern 2	
Pattern 3	
Pattern 4	
Pattern 5	
Pattern 6	
Pattern 7	

Appendix F

Cross Case Analysis Protocol

	Case 1	Case 2	Case 3
Pattern 1			
Pattern 2			
Pattern 3			
Pattern 4			
Pattern 5			
Pattern 6			
Pattern 7			

Appendix G

Documentation Analysis Protocol
Date:_____
Time:_____
Meeting:_____

Type of Document	Summary of Document Content	Purpose of Documents Use	Other documents that need to be obtained