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THE EFFECTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE STAFF'S
INCREASED AWARENESS OF PROGRAM CHANGES AT THE
WARREN E. SOOY, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

by
Renee' C. Clark
Jennifer Peeke

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree of The Graduate School at
Rowan University
May 2005

Approved by _____
Professor

Date Approved May 2011

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ABSTRACT

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THE EFFECTS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT ON THE STAFF'S
INCREASED AWARENESS OF PROGRAM CHANGES AT THE WARREN E.
SOOY, JR. ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

2004/2005

Dr. Ronald L. Capasso
Master of Arts in School Administration

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of professional development on elementary school teachers at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. The study did not result in an increased awareness about program changes at the school in order to inform educators. The study's findings were reported to the teachers, staff members, and administration.

Before the study, staff members completed a Needs Assessment which recorded the attitudes of staff members concerning the most important areas of need referable to professional development. After the study, a final survey was utilized to determine if the school's professional development opportunities provided teachers and staff with the assistance needed to become familiar with curriculum change.

It was concluded that professional staff development was not effective. Data obtained from the Hammonton School District Professional Development Evaluation suggests that the staff's perception of effective opportunities made available have not eased the transition of implementing curriculum changes.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Focus of the Study

Curriculum changes were overwhelming to teachers whose teaching styles have not changed for many years. Motivating teachers to take on the challenge was a necessary step in easing the transition of a curriculum change. Many teachers will not initiate educating themselves about the benefits of a new way of teaching. Providing professional development, however, helped teachers gain knowledge and make them more comfortable with curriculum changes that took place.

In the past, teachers at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School have been concerned with the amount of professional development opportunities that have been available. The school undertook a major curriculum change this past year by implementing differentiated instruction. The teachers were promised that resources would be available in order to ease the transition of implementing this curriculum change.

The intent of the Warren E. Sooy, Jr., Elementary School was to strengthen professional learning opportunities that focused on improving teaching, learning, and student achievement. The interns evaluated whether or not the professional development experiences increased teacher awareness and knowledge of anticipated program changes.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine the effectiveness of professional development on elementary school teachers at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School

utilizing quantitative research. The study did not result in an increased awareness about program changes at the school in order to inform educators. The study's findings were reported to the teachers, staff members, and administrators. The use of professional development meant providing educators with opportunities to innovatively and creatively enhance the learning process.

Definitions

Professional Development – Providing educators with opportunities to innovatively and creatively enhance the learning process.

Differentiated instruction – Teachers differentiate curriculum through content, process, and product based on student strengths and needs.

Lightspan Early Reading Program – A technological program that provides schools and teachers with tools to support the development of reading for every child.

EduTest – A web-based assessment that provides schools and teachers with tools to support placement, progress monitoring, and accountability requirements for reading, language arts, and mathematics.

CEIFA – Comprehensive Education Improvement and Finance Act. Under New Jersey law, this statute ensures that every school conducts business operations more efficiently and effectively in order that all students receive a thorough and efficient education.

Sending/Receiving district – Waterford Township will send their seventh through twelfth grade students to Hammonton Middle and High School, which makes Hammonton the receiving district and Waterford the sending district.

Limitations of the Study

The study may not be receptive to all teachers. Teachers felt overwhelmed with the many program changes and components of differentiated instruction being implemented all at once. Another limitation was the number of professional development opportunities the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School provided. Also, teachers felt time constraints on attending professional development workshops. Finally, this study targeted only elementary school teachers in the Hammonton School District. Its findings and resulting data have no bearing of teachers' attitudes towards professional development at the other schools in the district.

Setting of the Study

Incorporated in 1866, Hammonton's economy centered on a sawmill and glass factory. Long gone, Hammonton has become a community with an agricultural, industrial, retail, and medical/professional base located on the edge of the Pine Barrens in Southern New Jersey. The 40.8 square mile town is situated halfway between Philadelphia and Atlantic City. Rail lines running through Hammonton proved valuable to the development of the town. The railroad has now become the fast link to the Atlantic City Casinos. The Atlantic City Expressway, Route 30, Route 206, and Route 322 allow easy accessibility to Philadelphia, New York City, and the shore points. Because of its central location, Hammonton is known as the "Hub of South Jersey" (The Greater Hammonton Chamber of Commerce Information Guide, 2004-05). However, even though Hammonton has easy access to major highways, on any given day, you can be sure to find a farm tractor trundling along the town's roads.

The 2000 US Census reports that Hammonton's population density is approximately 12,604. Over the past couple of years, however, the Town has experienced an unprecedented increase in commercial and residential growth (The Greater Hammonton Chamber of Commerce Information Guide, 2004-05). Even though the band of green known as the Pinelands surrounds Hammonton, development is rapidly occurring. Housing developments with cul-de-sacs and potential businesses such as New Jersey Manufacturers and Home Depot are also opening stores in the town. It is a picturesque community with tree lined streets and a façade of stores. The Shade Tree Commission protects the 100-year-old trees throughout downtown. The stores and buildings located downtown have been renovated to their original ornate state. A group of volunteers formed Main Street Hammonton in an effort to revitalize and build a strong economic future for Downtown Hammonton where you can find locally owned stores and service from people you know.

The Town of Hammonton is very political and its political rivalries are often apparent in the town's forefront. The townspeople elect the mayor as well as six council members and all offices have two-year terms. The Republicans have outnumbered the Democrats for years. In fact, currently the Republicans hold all six council seats, as well as the mayor seat. The turmoil between the Republicans and Democrats is also very apparent with newspaper headlines and political slander.

Even though both political parties do not see eye-to-eye, September of 1984 proved different. President Ronald Reagan looked to target a predominately Italian-American, Republican farming community. Nonetheless, he sought Hammonton as one of his campaign stops. Republicans and Democrats alike worked together for the once in

a lifetime event. Ronald Reagan Drive and the “rock” where the President gave his speech will forever remind Hammontonians of this auspicious occasion.

In the past, Mayor and Council have supported the proposed Hammonton School District budgets and have approved the restoration of monies voted down by residents. However, times have changed and the lack of support for the school budget and Board threatened layoffs and program cuts throughout the school district.

Hammonton is a town like no other. It is a special town with many unique characteristics. Primarily an agricultural town, it is situated in the Garden State. With the highest concentration of cultivated blueberry acreage, Hammonton has been designated as the Blueberry Capital of the World (The Greater Hammonton Chamber of Commerce Information Guide, 2004-05). The pride resulting from this nickname is evident. As you enter the town of Hammonton, the billboards spotlight the State’s official fruit. Picking up the local town map or information guide, or, just logging on to the Town of Hammonton’s official website, the blueberry is front and center. One of the town’s unique festivals has become the Red, White and Blueberry Festival. This popular family affair pays tribute to the blueberry and has grown into one of the town’s largest outdoor community events. Patrons could enjoy arts & crafts, an antique car show, great food, and enjoy tasting many of the blueberry delights created by the cooks in this town.

Hammonton is a town with strong family values and families that care deeply about their community. According to the 2000 United States Census, the majority (94%) of the people living in Hammonton are white. Approximately 8.5% of the total population is of Hispanic origin. Even though Hammonton is also comprised of a diverse Hispanic community, strong Italian familial and cultural characteristics comprise this

primarily agriculture community. In fact, Hammonton has recently gained worldwide recognition as America's most "Italian" community. According to the U.S. Census, the largest concentration of Italians reside in the Town of Hammonton (The Greater Hammonton Chamber of Commerce Information Guide, 2004-05). Thousands of the Italians in the community can be found at yet another unique Hammonton celebration. For over 125 years, the Feast of Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, which is sponsored by the Mt. Carmel Society and St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Church, has brought worshippers from all over the country to participate in a weeklong celebration. The Feast Day, July 16th, is the most popular day with people participating in a religious procession and daily masses. Local businesses close for the day to enjoy a variety of Italian food and a carnival on the festival grounds.

Approximately 62.2% of Hammontonians are in the labor force with the median household income being approximately \$43,137. Though Hammonton is primarily an agriculture town, family-owned businesses flourish. Many farms have been family owned and operated for many generations. Second-generation family members now manage Galletta Brothers, the largest blueberry farm in the world. In downtown Hammonton, businesses such as gift shops, auto mechanic stores, drug stores, and law firms seem to carry on the family tradition. There are also many restaurants, gas stations, delis, and retail stores throughout Hammonton that are family owned and operated. It seems that people who live in Hammonton stay in Hammonton.

Even though outsiders consider the Town of Hammonton primarily wealthy, the district falls into the District Factor B factor group, with a total enrollment of 3,339 students. After passing a multi-million dollar referendum to build a new two-story

109,000 square-foot high school, times at the Hammonton School District have changed drastically. Veteran administrators have retired and been replaced with new fresh young minds. This turnover in administration ranges from the top position of superintendent all the way to the vice-principals.

For years the town has enjoyed an enviable reputation for its unusually competent staff and dedicated teachers for the instruction of the children of the town. The number of students per faculty member in the Hammonton School District has decreased from 16.1% in 2000-2001 to 13.2% in 2002-2003. Approximately 83.2% of the administrators and faculty possess a bachelor's degree, while 16.8% have received their master's degree. As a result of the number of retirees, there has been an influx of younger generation teachers. Currently many of these teachers have chosen to seek a graduate education.

The school district is comprised of a nine member Board of Education. The Board has a reputation of being a "split" board, which is clearly evident during the meetings. With recent proposed budgets rising to 40.25 cents, the tension amongst townspeople and the Board of Education has escalated. According to Board member, Skip Byrnes, prior budget years (with past Superintendent Dr. Benedetto and his administration) play a big factor in where the Hammonton School District is today. For years, the district never proposed an increase. Accordingly, past budgets always passed because there would be a 0-cent increase. The cost of living was never taken into consideration. The residents of this community, however, have since voiced their opinion. Seven of the last ten school budgets have been met with defeat, leading the school district to fall into the red. New administrators and Board of Education members have since been faced with unexpected costs such as the \$300,000 above the budgeted

energy bill, and the more than \$400,000 for out of district placements. These costs, as well as, current costs that keep the district running have brought the district to an all time low. Townspeople blame past board members and top administrators for misuse of funds. Administrators blame the arrogance of the State in not following the CEIFA law. The combination of an increase in enrollment with flat funding ultimately set up the district for disaster.

For the past few years, the Hammonton School District has not been in a good situation. To make matters even worse, recent resignations from the superintendent, business administrator, director of special education, and three board members have made the Town's morale even more pessimistic. The superintendent's and business administrator's positions have been replaced with interims.

The school district has seen nothing but financial hardship, ethics investigations, and claims of mismanagement concerning the multi-million dollar construction of the new high school. The current Board of Education, which has only three board members remaining from the Board that passed the referendum, has taken a step forward to stabilize the school district. During the August 2004 Board meeting, the Board approved the hiring of the New Jersey School Boards Association to oversee the development of an overall goal plan for the district. The overall plan will help the Board focus and move forward in one direction instead of dwelling on past practices.

Being formerly known as a small-town community, the Hammonton School District was very close knit. The district schools included an elementary, a middle school, and a high school. Times have changed and the walls that enclose the small town of Hammonton are expanding. The Hammonton School District is now comprised of

four schools. The \$27.5 million state-of-the-art facility opened its doors to Hammonton and neighboring Waterford Township students on September 5, 2002. The Hammonton High School has had a sending/receiving relationship with the nearby community of Folsom since its inception. In 2002, the Hammonton School District expanded its student population by entering into a sending/receiving relationship with the nearby community of Waterford Township.

Waterford felt their students would benefit greatly from Hammonton. They thought of Hammonton as being the “cream of the crop.” After all, Hammonton was building a new high school with numerous academic courses and electives. One year after the new state-of-the-art high school opened its doors, Hammonton was not the “ripest” pick for Waterford after all. The promised academics and extracurricular activities were cut drastically due to the defeated budgets.

The Hammonton High School houses students in grades nine through twelve. Its enrollment for the 2003-2004 school year was 1160 students. The Hammonton Middle School is now currently located in the old Hammonton High School building which is in closer proximity to the other district schools. The move was necessitated in order to accommodate the sending/receiving relationship with Waterford Township. This neighboring community will also be sending their seventh and eighth grade students to the Hammonton School District. The Middle School houses the seventh and eighth grade students from both towns. The enrollment for those two grades in the 2003-04 school year was approximately 620 students. The Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School, where this study takes place, has an enrollment of approximately 900 students. It houses second through sixth grade students. Located behind Sooy Elementary is the Early

Childhood Educational Center. This school provides hands on learning for pre-kindergarten and a preschool disabled classroom. The Early Childhood Center's first grade students are also benefiting from the newly implanted full-day kindergarten. Its enrollment for the 2003-04 school year was approximately 450 students.

Interestingly, prior to the building of the new Early Childhood Center, the total enrollment for the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School was approximately 950 students. With the opening of the new Early Childhood Center, three grade levels transferred to the new school. The total student enrollment for the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School would then be approximately 600 students. Currently, three years later, with the influx of people relocating in the Town, the Elementary School's enrollment has climbed back to 950 students.

Rivalry amongst the town's political parties is nothing compared to the rivalry that exists between the two local high schools. Thousands flock to see the Hammonton Blue Devils vs. The Saint Joseph's Wildcats football game on Thanksgiving weekend. The Town of Hammonton is also home to the Saint Joseph Catholic Schools, which is comprised of a regional elementary school and college preparatory high school. Saint Joseph's is comprised of five parishes: St. Joseph, St. Anthony of Padua, and St. Martin de Porres, all of Hammonton; Blessed John XXIII, Blue Anchor; and St. Anthony, Waterford (The Greater Hammonton Chamber of Commerce Information Guide, 2004-05). The total enrollment for both schools is approximately 730 students.

The philosophy of the Hammonton School District is to provide well-rounded, quality educational opportunities for all its students. The district focuses on creating positive atmosphere for its students in order to allow them to become productive and

responsible citizens. The district provides a full compliment of educational programs and opportunities for students. The Early Childhood Educational Center programs offer educational experiences, as well as the developmentally appropriate social skills necessary in order to promote student success at the elementary school level. The elementary programs reflect a central focus across the curricula. The learning experiences foster student growth by teaching critical thinking skills and positive character behaviors. New academic approaches aligned with state standards integrate technology across the curricula. The various educational opportunities help prepare students for a successful middle school experience. The middle school programs build upon the foundation set by the elementary school and help prepare students for the diversified programs at the high school level. The middle school focuses on higher level thinking skills and increased technology application, as well as extra curricular and athletic programs. The high school offers programs that allow students to take advantage of courses associated with future career goals. Curriculum at the high school provides academic, vocational, artistic, and technological opportunities in order to enhance the learning experiences for students.

With the instability among the top administrators and defeated budgets, the Hammonton School District has continued to move forward focusing on state initiatives and curriculum. Curricula in the four schools are aligned to the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards. In addition to students receiving reading, language, math, science, social studies, and health, they are also able to participate in physical education, music, art, fine arts, and technology classes. The district also provides programs for students with special needs, as well as ESL/Bilingual. At the middle and high school level,

student programs extend from vocational education courses to college preparatory, honors classes, and advanced placement college courses to students who qualify.

Professional development is at the forefront this year, as the Hammonton School District is implementing many new and innovative programs. The district wide, on-going professional staff development program provides the instructional staff with current methodologies, instructional strategies, and tools to help further promote student success. With educating the district's children as a primary goal, the Hammonton School system continuously looks for ways to improve teacher professional growth. This year, kindergarten through third will be utilizing the Lightspan Early Reading Program. Students will be able to utilize technology to support their reading instruction. Differentiated instruction is an instructional strategy the district has begun to incorporate into their curriculum. In order to target the needs of all learners, teachers will teach students at their academic level. The school district has purchased a component to this differentiated instruction curriculum change that will allow teacher to assess the academic ability of students. By utilizing the technology software, eduTest, teachers will be better able to assess student achievement. As a means of assessment, the district will now be able to monitor student achievement through quarterly benchmarks through eduTest.

The Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School, where this study takes place, was built in 1974. For years, it primarily housed Pre-K to fifth students. With the building of the new Early Childhood Education Center, the Sooy Elementary School is now home to second through sixth grade students. There are seven classrooms at every level. The second through fourth grade classes are primarily self-contained and each includes one

inclusion classroom. Fifth grade is mostly self-contained, but switches classes for social studies and science. The sixth grade students are in teams and follow a typical middle school block schedule. Together with physical education, art, music, and health, students also receive world language, enrichment, and computer technology.

The Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School is comprised of a fine, experienced, and dedicated staff. The school has over 80 instructional and support staff members. There are 36 classroom teachers, 15 resource/special education/inclusion teachers, three bilingual/ESL, 12 special area teachers, one facilitator, and approximately 20 support staff. The facilitator position was created this year for the purpose of having an individual experienced in differentiated instruction. The facilitator will assist the teachers in the early stages of the development of differentiated instruction in the classroom. This year was a turnover year at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr., Elementary School, with approximately 20 teachers gaining tenure status. Predominantly, the remaining staff members have been teaching less than 20 years, with only approximately five teachers attaining 25 plus years. The young, vibrant faculty, staff, and administration at Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School are dedicated to helping the students succeed. "Finding Ways to Make a Difference" is this year's school wide theme. Staff members are enthusiastic about having the opportunity to make a real difference in the lives of the students.

Significance of the Study

It is important for staff members to be comfortable with changes in the curriculum. It is also essential that administrators help facilitate curriculum changes by providing teachers with professional development in order to support and implement the

changes. This study will result in the effectiveness of professional development opportunities needed in order to facilitate and enhance the learning process of staff members.

Relationship of the Study to the ISLLC Standards

The State Board of Education adopted the Interstate School Leader Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards as the professional standards for school leaders. The standards shift the focus of the school leaders' role from management to teaching and learning. School leaders use the ISLLC Standards as a guide for the content and process of their professional learning experience.

This study gave the interns the opportunity to extend and enhance skills related to ISLLC Standard Two. According to ISLLC Standard Two, school administrators shall be educational leaders who promote the success of all students by sustaining a school culture of student learning and professional growth. Reflected in the Knowledge component of Standard Two, administrators should have an understanding of learning and motivational theory, effective teaching, assessment and evaluation strategies, professional development models, and change process. Under the Disposition component of Standard Two, administrators should value and be committed to continued professional development, a supportive learning environment, and successful adult building. The Performance aspect of Standard Two focuses on administrators engaging in activities ensuring that there are professional development opportunities aimed at achieving the school's vision and mission and that all program designed to meet student needs are implemented and evaluated.

In terms of leadership development, the purpose of this study includes, but is not limited to, staff professional growth. According to ISLLC Standard 2, “A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth.” With change in the school community, administrators need to have the knowledge and disposition of professional development plans that are successful for both students and staff. ISLLC Standard Two focuses on the values and beliefs of professional development that an administrator should promote.

Organization of the Study

The following addresses the subsequent chapters of the study and their contents:

Chapter Two encompasses a review of the literature relating to the effectiveness of professional development. Discussed are the rationales behind the utilization of professional development and the benefits and drawbacks that such practices can have on the students themselves, as well as the over school system.

Chapter Three of the study delineates the design of the investigation. Included are descriptions relating to the research design and methodology. Examined are the instruments utilized in the study and how, in fact, these tools were formulated. Also discussed in this section are the sampling techniques utilized in the investigation.

Chapter Four focuses on the actual research findings. These include all data gathered during the study and the significance to the theories mentioned in the study.

Chapter Five discusses the conclusions of the study, as well as the implications of the study. This section further discloses the implications that the research project has had

on the interns' leadership development. In addition, conclusions are presented as to how the organization has changed as a result of this study. Finally, the necessity for further study is addressed in regards to professional development.

CHAPTER 2

Review of the Literature

To meet the challenge of No Child Left Behind and provide the means for all students to succeed, educators need to participate in effective and ongoing professional development. "Many researchers agree that thoughtful, sustained professional development is one way to ensure that all teachers are able to rise to these new challenges" (Guskey, 2003). A valuable professional development plan is instrumental in creating and leading positive changes. "More challenging student performance standards paired with rigorous accountability policies call for significant changes in instructional practices that can't be accomplished through modest, short-term professional development efforts" (Guskey, 1999). Not all professional development achieves what it sets out to do. "Much of the professional development that is offered to teachers, however, does not meet the challenges of the reform movement" (Birman, B.F., Desimone, L., Porter, A. C., Garet, M.S., 2000). A goal for professional development is to foster the creation of a school in which the staff members constantly improve their performances. "Simply doing the same old stuff, however, is not necessarily better. It can actually lead to diminished results, higher levels of frustration, and increased cynicism" (Gentile, 1996). To conduct substantial professional development, the time devoted to training needs to be used efficiently, effectively, and wisely. "Awareness of professional development's value in advancing school improvement is evident in several state and national reports as well as in research reports on school restructuring initiatives" (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). Abdal-Haqq also states that "teachers need time to understand new concepts, learn new skills, develop new attitudes, research, discuss, reflect, assess try new

approaches and integrate them in to their practice; and time to plan their own professional development”. The New Jersey Association for School Administration created a professional development initiative for school leaders. The intent of the professional development guidelines from the New Jersey Association for School Administrators is “to strengthen school leadership through high quality, embedded and sustained professional learning that is focused on improving teaching, learning, and student achievement in all NJ schools and districts”. “Effective professional development addresses the flaws of traditional approaches, which are often criticized for being fragmented, unproductive, inefficient, unrelated to practice, and lacking in intensity and follow-up” (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). There are many arenas for professional development. “Choices for professional development probably will include study groups, coaching and mentoring, involvement with curriculum, or research-based approaches that build on the inquiry and collective problem solving begun while developing the itself” (Rasmussen, C., Hopkins, S. and Fizpatrick, M., 2004). This on-going, collaborative professional development plan is more effective than a few in-service training days over the course of a school year. A professional development plan is the process of making and facilitating positive changes.

“The New Jersey Professional Teaching Standards Board believes that educators must be dedicated to a continuous plan of professional development that begins with their induction into the profession, and that extends through the life of their professional career in education through on-going and sustained professional development endeavors” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 1). New Jersey has eight standards for the professional

development of teachers. It is the belief of the board that professional development should be an on-going process in which entails continually improving skills, searching for better practices, and developing current practices. It is important that the activities provided fulfill the needs of the educators as well as the goals and objectives set forth by the school. "Experimentation that is supported by a nurturing environment will encourage an atmosphere where educators constantly seek to learn about work and to grow from experience" (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 4). In addition, the emphasis must be placed on the elements that influences student learning. This needs to be aligned with the knowledge and ability provided by the professional development of the teachers to motivate students to become independent and analytical thinkers within the school environment and to stretch those skills beyond school to society as a whole. It is necessary for teachers to work with other professional colleagues in cooperative groups to discuss and extend their professional knowledge needed to facilitate students in the mastery of the curriculum outlined in the New Jersey Core Content Standards. "In addition, professional development must engage each educator in collegial and collaborative dialogue with other educators and education partners to broaden the knowledge and expertise needed to guide students toward the successful attainment and mastery of the New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards and to create supportive and effective schools" (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 6). It is also a necessity to have the support needed to implement such professional development. The individual and district professional development plans should incorporate and be consistent with the

standards, recognizing that not every standard needs to be addressed by every plan” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 5).

The first standard, “enhances the knowledge of subject content” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 7). This standard supports educators in obtaining knowledge in their own content area and how it applies to other disciplines. This standard allows teachers to assist students in the mastery of the New Jersey Core Content Standards. There is also continuous review of the content standards and how these align with the frameworks throughout the disciplines.

The standard 2, “improves understanding of the academic, social, emotional, and physical needs of each learner and ensures that educators utilize appropriate teaching skills to enable students to meet to exceed potential” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 8). It provides educators with the knowledge of how students learn and develop in order to plan and utilize strategies that reflect the development of learners. Under this standard educators are furnished with the tools to identify and respect the strengths and potential of all students. It also enables teachers to provide effective instructional approaches to meet the needs of students in the inclusive classroom. Within standard 2, the philosophy of the school is preserved and maximizes student achievement through critical thinking.

Standard 3 “reflects best available interpretations of relevant knowledge, including empirical research and the consensus of professional opinion in teaching, learning, and leadership” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required

Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 9). It allows professionals to stay informed about the latest research and apply it to their own teaching strategies. Student learning is improved through experiences gained through professional development. It allows educators to provide students with a curriculum that is challenging and engaging. It empowers educators to apply their leadership skills and knowledge within the school community.

Standard 4 “encourages educators to develop a variety of classroom based assessment skills” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 10). Instruction reflects the needs of the students, which are determined through observation and analysis of the students. Educators enhance their ability to develop and utilize assessment tools to assist in monitoring student progress and align them with the core content standards.

Standard 5 “provides for integrating new learning into the curriculum and the classroom” (Standards for Required Professional Development New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 11). Teachers are encouraged to apply the skills and combine new practices with prior knowledge. It is a basis for motivating teachers to use the new concepts to foster change in student learning and support professionals in the change process.

The standard 6 “is based on knowledge of adult learning and development” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 12). It identifies developmental stages, individual goals and desires, and quantity of experience. It motivates teachers to work as individuals and collectively as educators. What is understood about motivation is used to foster growth

and improve self-confidence. Different areas of staff development are integrated to reflect a variety of models, including self-guided staff development, assessment/observation, involvement in the growth process, and training designs.

Standard 7 is periodically assessed to show its impact on teaching practice and/or student learning” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 13). An analysis of data related to student learning and the school facilitate later staff development. Professionals self-evaluate or reflect to assess the impact of professional development.

Standard 8 “results from clear, strategic planning that is embraced and supported by the district’s governing body and by all levels of the school system” (New Jersey Department of Education, Standards for Required Professional Development of Teachers section, n.d., ¶ 14). It describes what students are required to know and are capable of doing. An alignment of the school’s vision and the district’s goals needs to be in place. There is an emphasis on theories backed by research in school management and the improvement of all involved in the school community. Reflection and self-assessment are key factors and allows professionals to strive for personal improvement. Educators are assisted in comparing student data used it to meet the goals of the district.

Designing and Implementing

The leaders of the school organization are the facilitators in creating an effective professional development plan. “Teacher professional development should be conceptualized as a cycle with six stages, beginning with teachers setting specific goals for student achievement and ending with reflection on how teachers have met goals for adult and student learning” (Guskey, 2003). New regulations for professional

development must be implemented into districts in the 2004-2005 school year. The model allows a school leader to “build your professional learning around nationally recognized standards, embrace authentic challenges and administrative and leadership practice, and engage in constructive and collaborative learning with your colleagues” (NJASA website). It is imperative to understand the role that other key factors play in a professional development plan that accomplishes what it is set up to do. There needs to be a support system and strong leadership from the administration that encourages and guides the staff, community members, the board of education, parents be support professional development. Within the school, study groups to analyze and reflect on the data collected needs to be formed and utilized. “Gathering and analyzing school data from several sources is the best way to identify trends and patterns in student learning so you can clarify what students need” (Rasmussen, C., Hopkins, S. and Fitzpatrick, M., 2004). Time needs to be allotted during the year as well as the day for the staff to work cooperatively to meet the goals of the professional development plan. “Professional development and collaboration generally must take place before or after school or in the summer, thus imposing on teachers’ personal time; during planning or peroration periods, which cuts into time needed for other tasks; or on the limited number of staff development days” (Abdal-Haqq, 1996). The plan needs to be aligned with the district’s mission statement.

It is essential that the professional development within the school reflects the standards set forth by the state and aligns the development with the standards. “But before any major implementation effort, educators should demand evidence and thoroughly examine its validity and relevance to their context” (Guskey 1999). A staff

development plan that is purposeful and meaningful to educators must produce notable, positive outcomes. “While teacher resistance is frequently blamed, research suggests it is often the staff development methods that are at fault (Morrow, L. M. and Casey, H. K., (2004). An effective plan will educate and improve not only the students, but the adults as well. School leaders are an important part of the professional development process. “The key function of school leadership is improving teaching and learning and a significant improvement in student achievement can result from effective school leadership” (NJASA website). The outcome of the staff development needs to be determined and a means for collecting data after the training has been in place before the training can begin.

There are significant details that were identified as important to teachers related to professional development. “We also must be careful not to mistake interesting activities, such as action research or study groups, for valid a meaningful professional development” (Guskey, 1999). Professional development can take place in a variety of forms, including study groups, teacher network, mentoring, or committees. The number of hours and the length of time spent participating in the training is a key factor. Who participates in the professional development can range from the whole school, specific grade levels, to teachers from other districts. The content in which the development is focused on needs to be able to improve student achievement and enrich teachers’ knowledge. It is essential that the staff participating is actively engaged in meaningful learning. Coherence, or encouragement to continue seeking professional dialogue between educators, is consistent with the goals of the teachers, and the mission of the school.

To initiate the design, components to guide the development of the plan need to be in place. “Just as successful teaching requires that teachers be adapt at using a variety of research-based instructional strategies, so too successful staff development require that planners select learning strategies that are appropriate to the intended outcome and other situational factors” (National Staff Development Council, 2004, The rationale, ¶ 1). The administration must believe in the plan before beginning. Current research on best-practices and theories needs to be collected. An allocation of time to allow the staff to engage in workshops and study groups to foster professional development is essential. A careful examination of the budget will determine if there are funds available to purchase new materials and provide the opportunities for professional development. In the article, *Professional Development That Works* (Guskey, 2003), the author states, “But that research rarely includes rigorous investigations of the relationship between noted characteristics and improvements in instructional practice or student learning outcomes. Instead, it typically involves surveys of the opinions of researchers and educators”. In other words, the research needs to show strong evidence that is supported by sound research efforts. The author of the article suggests using the National Institute for Science Education (NISE) examination or an Educational Testing Service investigation when considering designing professional development. It is within the study of both of these organizations that we can find a true link between characteristics and measurement of student achievement.

Peer collaboration, individualized professional growth, research and leadership, and application of experiences are found throughout most of the studies and articles. “If we were to pay close attention to the excellent teacher education models, we could

discern the elements of a strategy for the design for powerful staff development; that is, staff development where teachers are trained in such a way that the students of those trained perform at levels of excellence” (Hilliard, 1997). It seems that these four strands are vital in developing a professional development plan that the students, teachers, and the school can benefit from.

Evaluation

Professional development is a costly expense for school districts each year. “Traditionally, educators haven’t paid much attention to evaluating their professional development efforts. Many consider evaluation costly, time-consuming process that diverts attention from more important activities such as planning, implementation, and follow-up” (Guskey, 2002). Most districts are feeling the pinch on budgets and evaluating where money can be saved. With so many cut backs each year, the need to examine the affects of professional development on student achievement and determine if it is a worthwhile investment is greater than ever. Until now, many districts have never considered evaluating their professional development. “They simply require thoughtful planning, the ability to ask good questions, and a basic understanding of how to find valid answers” (Guskey 2002). Most school leaders spend their time planning, implementing, and completing follow-ups. Therefore, there seems to be little time to actually evaluate if the goals of the professional development have been reached. “This research, however, suggests that the behavior of school leaders is not effective in accomplishing four critical outcomes of curriculum development: (1) the creation of well-written documents that use common framework; (2) curriculum that is aligned with state and national standards; (3) an understanding and teaching of the curriculum by teachers; and (4) all students

successfully learning the curriculum” (Ruebling, C. E., Stow, S. B., Kayona, F. A., Clarke, N. A., 2004). However, with so little money to spare, districts are taking the time to determine if the professional development was worth the money.

The evaluation process does not need to be complex. It takes uncomplicated planning, the capability to ask meaningful questions, and a simple understanding of validity. “What’s more, they can provide meaningful information that you can be use to make thoughtful, responsible decisions about professional development processes and effects” (Guskey, 2002). Guskey outlines five levels of evaluation for professional development. He states the five critical levels needed to assess the participants’ reactions, participants’ learning, organization support and change, participants’ use of knowledge and skills, and student learning outcomes.

“The first level of evaluation looks at participants’ reactions to the professional development experience” (Guskey, 2002). Participants are given a questionnaire at the end of the training. The questionnaires may be comprised of rating scales and open-ended questions. Some questions that may appear on the evaluation form relate to materials, activities, speakers, or how comfortable they felt in the training. This kind of evaluation will not measure the quality or value of the activity. Rather, how improvement to the professional development design can be made to make educators more satisfied. “Completing a major program evaluation usually serves as the catalyst for serious reflection on the current designs, policies and practices of your professional development plan-their goals, content, processes, and context” (Champion, 2002). Although, many schools tend to use this as the evaluation tool for professional development.

A more useful evaluation describes the participants' learning during the professional development. "Level 2 focuses on measuring the knowledge and skills that participants gained" (Guskey, 2002). To evaluate what the educators gained can be determined by a participant's ability to describe the content of the training and apply the knowledge to classroom conditions. A more involved assessment can be a demonstration of the skills learned by participating in role play. Easier assessment tools are personal reflections and portfolios. In order for the data gathered to be analyzed meaningfully, progress indicators or goals need to be determined before implementation.

"At level 3, focus shifts to the organization" (Guskey, 2002). Educators are only one piece of the puzzle when it comes to establishing change. The organization needs to support and facilitate the change that is initiated. The policies, practices and procedures must be aligned to the content of the professional development. It is important the evaluation does not focus on the learning taking place, but also if the organization itself is supporting the changes that need to take place. "Steering committees, charged specifically with program evaluation, are important to focus attention and maintain the energy and momentum needed for evaluation" (Champion, 2002). In the evaluation process, some of the assessments need to focus on characteristics of the organization essential for accomplishing its goals. Some focal points of assessing professional development at the organizational level are the alignment of the professional development to the school's mission statement, the availability of resources, and collaboration between educators to share accomplishments. Tools to evaluate the success of the professional development include examining school records, analyzing minutes from follow-up meetings, questionnaires, and interviewing those participating. This is a

more involved and time consuming process, but this will make the evaluation of professional development more complete.

Data related to the effectiveness of the participants' use of knowledge and skills in their classrooms must be collected. "The key to gathering relevant information at this level rests in specifying clear indicators of both the degree and the quality of implementation" (Guskey, 2002). An ample amount of time must pass in order for the participants to apply the new information to their own teaching practices. This is an on-going process that takes place over time in which the changes are being implemented. This data can be collected utilizing questionnaires, interviews, personal reflections, participants' journals, or portfolios. "You can analyze this information to help restructure future programs and activities to facilitate better and more consistent implementation" (Guskey, 2002).

Level 5, the most important evaluation relates to the students' learning outcomes. It is important to determine if the goals of the professional development were achieved as well as any unintentional results occurred. For this reason, a variety of tools need to be used to gather data in this area of professional development. Information can be gathered through surveys, observations, group discussions, and informal discussions and interviews. "The purpose for collecting this information would determine how teachers felt about change in their classrooms and what elements of the staff development project they felt supported their change" (Morrow, L.M., and Casey, H. K., 2004). "The particular student learning outcomes of interest depend, of course on the goals of that specific professional development" (Guskey, 2002). Looking at grades, portfolios, test scores, performance, and evaluations are all important pieces of the effectiveness of training.

Data collection should not be limited to one perspective of the student, but must extend to the students' attitudes, classroom behaviors, study habits, attendance, and the completion of homework. "The two major purposes of conducting an evaluation of professional development are to inform the staff about the professional development process, and to assess the effects of that process" (New York Standards for Professional Development, 2004, Evaluating professional development, ¶ 1). This allows for an overall picture of the child rather than just focusing on the academic aspect. Increase in student achievement has focused on reduced classroom size, but this change is difficult. "Leaders must orchestrate multiple changes that provide opportunities for teachers to work in teams, focus on resources, especially on curriculum development and implementation, and establish accountability results" (Ruebling, C. E., Stow, S. B., Kayona, F. A., Clarke, N. A., 2004). Student records, observations, questionnaires, and interviews of students and parents can measure these areas. Guskey states that "Level 5 information about a program's overall impact can guide improvements in all aspects of professional development, including program design, implementation, and follow-up" (2002).

Evaluation furnishes evidence of the effectiveness of professional development and its ability to accomplish the goals of the professional development. It is hard to determine if professional development was effective "if you don't know where you are going, it's very difficult to tell whether you've arrived. But if you clarify your goals up front, most evaluation issues fall in to place" (Guskey, 2002). In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development plan, it is essential that the assessment is on going and reflects multiple resources. "But our results suggest a clear direction: To provide useful and effective professional development that has a meaningful effect on

teacher learning and fosters improvements in classroom practices, schools and districts should focus funds on high-quality professional development experiences, either by serving fewer teachers or by investing more resources” (Birman, B. F., Desimone, L., Porter, A.C., Garet M.S., 2000). Focusing only on student achievement leaves out the growth made by the staff members. The data can be qualitative or quantitative and represents all aspects of professional development.

“Regardless of the immediate focus, the ultimate goal of professional development is to effect change in practices that will lead students to achieving higher standards” (Standards for Professional Development, Evaluating the effectiveness of professional development section, ¶ 3). Research suggests that there is a strong correlation between effective professional development and student achievement.

“People learn best through active involvement and through thinking about becoming articulate about what they have learned. Processes, practices, and policies built on this view of learning are at the heart of a more expanded view of teacher development that encourages teachers to involve themselves as learners – in much the same way as they wish their students would” (Guskey, 2003). “The work of schools has never been more complex and demanding and the challenges school leaders face to improve student achievement has never been greater” (NJASA website). Therefore, every effort must be made to provide professional development that provides the opportunity for meaningful learning experiences to educators that allows for improved student learning.

CHAPTER 3

Design of the Study

Description of Research Design

To determine whether the introduction of the variables used in this study had any impact on its purpose, case study methodology in action research was employed. Using data from survey results from staff members, it was determined that there was a need for professional development in order to increase staff awareness about program changes at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr., Elementary School. In the past, teachers have been concerned with the amount of professional development opportunities that have been available. The school underwent a major curriculum change by implementing differentiated instruction. The teachers were promised that resources would be available in order to ease the transition of implementing this curriculum change. Comparisons of professional development opportunities were made for the 2003-2004 and the 2004-2005 school years. The study was structured, yet flexible enough to withstand the changes necessary to assure the efficiency of the design. The pre-survey and post-survey provided the opportunity to compare data and determine whether the effects were of a positive or negative nature. At least a four-month span ensued between pre and post survey.

The first phase of data collection began in August 2004, when the interns met with the Hammonton School District Curriculum Supervisor. The interns met with the supervisor on several occasions to discuss professional development opportunities for the 2004-2005 school year. The interns gathered data referable to the following questions: Are there workshops in place for the coming year? How relevant will the workshops be to meet the needs of the teachers? Will the timeline be effective? What were the

district's goals for professional development last year? Have those goals been met? Can the district financially provide meaningful workshops?

Next, the interns reviewed the material culture relevant to professional development opportunities. This provided the interns with a baseline data that was used in the comparison of professional development opportunities, focus of training, and evaluation of workshops. These data, in turn, enabled the interns to create a needs assessment.

To continue with the investigation, the interns informally recorded staff's views of areas in need of professional development. As a result of the staff's feedback, the interns were then able to reflect on the district's progress and reassess areas of priority. The interns were then able to establish focal topics in order to complete a preliminary needs assessment. A Memorandum (Appendix A) was administered to the Instructional Management Team and Home School Association in the summer in order to gain insight into specific areas that needed to be addressed.

Staff members also completed two surveys. The first survey, Hammonton School District Professional Development Needs Assessment (Appendix B), was administered at the beginning of the year. The Needs Assessment included having the staff choose five out of 16 topics that related to areas of professional development. Staff members were then asked to rate those five topics ranging from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest). This survey recorded the teachers' perspectives on the areas in need for professional development. The survey also asked staff members to list any other areas in need of professional development. At the end of the investigation, a second survey, the Hammonton School District Professional Development Evaluation (Appendix C), was utilized to determine if

the school's professional development opportunities provided teachers and staff with the assistance needed to become familiar with the curriculum changes. The first five areas on the survey reflect the Needs Assessment's top five responses based on rank order. The last three areas on the survey reflect the Needs Assessment's top five responses based on most frequent responses. Two of the top rank order areas were also identified as most frequent responses. This survey was designed to identify areas of professional development that were most effective. The results of the study were discussed with the teachers, staff members, and administrators of the Warren E. Sooy, Jr., Elementary School.

Description of the Development and Design of Research Instruments

The interns developed the instruments utilized in this study with assistance from the Professional Development Committee. To gather data to be used, the interns developed a memorandum, which was given out to a variety of stakeholders to assess the professional development needs. Stakeholders included the Instructional Management Team and the Home School Association. The memorandum included having the stakeholders list specific areas in which they feel current professional development needed to be more effective. The memorandum consisted of specific topics regarding key elements for professional development. This allowed for stakeholders to express any concerns relevant to the needs of the staff and addressed the learning needs of the students.

The interns also designed the Hammonton School District Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey. This survey was developed based on the data collected from the stakeholders. It consisted of questions concerning the teacher's grade

level and/or subject area. The survey was utilized to address the attitudes of staff members concerning the most important areas of need. It employed 16 Likert scale questions followed by one open-ended response.

A final survey was utilized to determine if the school's professional development opportunities provided teachers and staff with the assistance needed to become familiar with the curriculum changes. It, too, employed Likert scale questions.

Description of the Sample and Sampling Techniques

The samples consisted of the second through sixth grade teachers at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. Forty-six out of seventy-two staff members participated in the first survey administered. They included seven second grade teachers, six third grade teachers, six fourth grade teachers, six fifth grade teachers, nine sixth grade teachers, six special area teachers, nine special education teachers, three bilingual teachers, and four related services teachers. The interns decided to include the entire sample population for several reasons; to reduce sampling error, to ensure statistical significance, and to generalize results to the entire population. The intention of this project was to evaluate the effectiveness of professional development on elementary school teachers in order to determine whether said professional development increased staff awareness about program changes.

Description of Data Collection Approach

Data obtained prior to the investigation consisted of a needs assessment, in memorandum form, completed by stakeholders. The data collection procedure began in August 2004. The instruments were hand-delivered to the collection point specified. The interns reflected on the type of survey to utilize for data collection of staff members.

Originally, the interns planned to create an open-ended questionnaire based on the specific areas targeted by the stakeholders. The interns decided, however, that this method would deter staff members from completing the instrument, leaving little data to evaluate. As a result, the interns created the Hammonton School District Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey from information compiled.

In September 2004, the Hammonton School District Professional Development Needs Assessment Survey was administered to faculty members in attendance at the faculty meeting. The instruments were distributed to staff as they received their agenda for the meeting. The instruments were completed and returned to the collection point specified after the faculty meeting. This instrument was used to help determine the areas of need for professional development.

At the end of the investigation, faculty members were asked to complete a follow-up survey. The instrument was distributed to staff members in attendance at the January 2005 faculty meeting. The instruments were completed and returned to the researchers. This instrument was used to record the views of the school's professional development opportunities and experiences.

Description of Data Analysis Plan

The researchers analyzed the material culture and data from the surveys. The percentage and mean of each Likert response was recorded. Open-ended questions were qualitatively analyzed to identify commonalities and themes. Once the percentages were derived, comparisons were made to evaluate the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities and experiences. Surveys were also compared to ascertain

whether the workshops and training provided an appreciable positive or negative impact from those sampled.

The most informative data, however, lay in the informal oral comments from staff members. The experience of each teacher, the training process, and the level of comfort felt by each teacher had an impact on their perception of successful professional development plans.

By analyzing the information gathered from the material culture, meetings, surveys, and informal comments, the interns were able to determine the effectiveness of professional development in increasing staff awareness about program changes.

In Chapter 4, the results of the data collected and analyzed will be presented.

CHAPTER 4

Presentation of Research Findings

Data Collection and Analysis

A major goal of the assessment strategy was to identify the professional development needs of the staff in grades second through sixth. The researchers developed and utilized the Hammonton School District Professional Development Evaluation to accomplish this task. Input gathered by the researchers was utilized as the basis for the professional development needs of the school. The following reflects the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School's professional development needs:

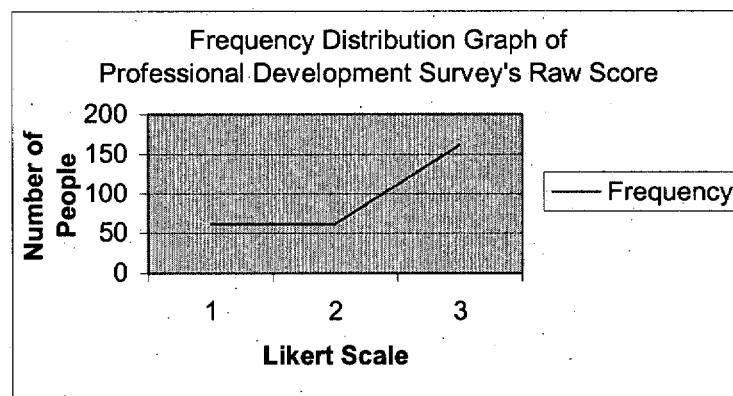
AREAS	1	2	3	4	5	Average
Technology (video, scanners, digital cameras, etc.)	2	3	2	0	4	3.1
Computers as an Instructional Tool	2	2	4	0	2	2.8
Computers for Professional Use (lesson plans, grades, etc.)	2	1	4	4	3	3.3
Instructional Strategies	3	3	2	2	4	3.1
Classroom Management	4	1	2	3	1	2.5
Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom	4	3	3	4	0	2.5
Inclusion	1	2	0	2	0	2.6
Subject Area Workshops (content specific)	5	2	0	0	2	2.1

Baseline data from the September 2004 Needs Assessment were indicative of the need for professional development support at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. In February 2005, the researchers evaluated the effectiveness of professional development in order to determine whether or not said professional development increased staff awareness about program changes. Baseline data from the January 2005 survey found that a significant number of staff members indicated that the professional development opportunities provided were ineffective.

Fifty-four percent of the overall staff completed and returned the January 2005 survey. One-hundred percent of the second grade staff returned same, 57% of the third grade staff, 86% of the fourth grade staff, 29% of the fifth grade staff, 100% of the sixth grade staff, 33% of the special area staff, and 14% of the special education staff completed and returned the survey.

In this investigation, the opinions of staff members were assessed using a Likert-type questionnaire, with (1) effective, (2) somewhat effective, and (3) not effective. To understand the overall results, the researchers first created a frequency distribution graph, illustrated in Table 1, in order to calculate the number of times each Likert item was obtained. The most frequently occurring score revealed that most staff members felt that professional staff development was not effective.

Graph 1



A total raw score for the Professional Development Survey, Table 2, was calculated by adding the raw scores obtained for each area of assessment. These included: Special Area Workshops (content specific), Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom, Classroom Management, Inclusion, Computers as an Instructional Tool, Instructional Strategies, Computers for Professional Use, and Technology.

Table 2
Raw/Percentage Data from Professional Development Surveys

AREAS	Raw	%	Raw	%	Raw	%
	Data 1	Data 1	Data 2	Data 2	Data 3	Data 3
Special Area Workshops (content specific)	8	24	7	21	19	56
Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom	9	27	8	24	17	50
Classroom Management	1	3	10	29	23	67
Inclusion	6	18	9	26	19	56
Computers as an Instructional Tool	6	18	9	26	19	55
Instructional Strategies	11	32	12	35	23	33
Computers for Professional Use	18	53	3	9	13	38
Technology	2	6	3	9	29	85

Data collected from special Area Workshops (56%), Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom (50%), Classroom Management (68%), Inclusion (56%), Computers as an Instructional Tool (56%), and Technology Workshops (85%) indicated the participants strongly felt that the professional development in these areas was ineffective. Thirty-five percent of the participants indicated that the Instructional Strategies Workshops were somewhat effective, while 53% of the participants indicated that Computers for Professional Use Workshops were effective.

In looking at the top percentages for each assessment, the only positive feedback that professional development was effective related to Computers for Professional Use. Fifty-three percent of the subjects found the workshops relating to attendance and report cards appealing. This high percentage is an obvious indicator that they benefited from the workshops provided by the school. These workshops were held during school hours and support personnel were available for follow-up support.

To further an understanding of the opinions these data represent, each assessment was broken down and calculated according to each subgroup. Specifically, comparisons were made between each grade level. The following are the eight areas this study focused on.

Table 3 Subject Area Workshops						
	1		2		3	
Grade Level	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	1	14	0	0	6	85
3 rd	3	75	0	0	1	25
4 th	2	33	4	67	0	0
5 th	1	50	1	50	0	0
6 th	0	0	0	0	9	100
Special Area	1	25	0	0	3	75
Special Education	0	0	2	100	0	0

Table 4 Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom						
	1		2		3	
Grade Level	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	1	14	0	0	6	85
3 rd	3	75	0	0	1	25
4 th	2	33	2	33	2	33
5 th	0	0	2	100	0	0
6 th	2	22	2	22	5	56
Special Area	1	25	0	0	3	75
Special Education	0	0	2	100	0	0

Table 5 Classroom Management						
	1		2		3	
Grade Level	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	0	0	1	14	6	85
3 rd	0	0	2	50	2	50

4 th	1	17	3	50	2	33
5 th	0	0	2	100	0	0
6 th	0	0	0	0	9	100
Special Area	0	0	1	25	3	75
Special Education	0	0	1	50	1	50

Table 6 Inclusion						
Grade Level	1		2		3	
	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	0	0	0	0	7	100
3 rd	2	50	1	25	1	25
4 th	2	34	3	50	1	17
5 th	0	0	2	100	0	0
6 th	0	0	1	11	8	89
Special Area	1	25	2	50	1	25
Special Education	1	50	0	0	1	50

Table 7 Computers as an Instructional Tool						
Grade Level	1		2		3	
	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	0	0	3	43	4	57
3 rd	0	0	1	25	3	75
4 th	2	33	1	17	3	50
5 th	1	50	0	0	1	50
6 th	3	33	0	0	6	66
Special Area	0	0	2	50	1	25
Special Education	0	0	2	100	0	0

Table 8 Instructional Strategies						
Grade Level	1		2		3	
	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	1	14	1	14	5	71
3 rd	3	75	0	0	1	25
4 th	4	67	2	33	0	0
5 th	0	0	0	0	2	100
6 th	2	22	5	56	2	22
Special Area	0	0	3	75	1	25
Special Education	1	50	1	50	0	0

Table 9 Computers for Professional Use						
Grade Level	1		2		3	
	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data
2 nd	1	14	0	0	6	86
3 rd	3	75	0	0	1	25
4 th	2	33	1	17	3	50
5 th	0	0	1	50	1	50
6 th	9	100	0	0	0	0
Special Area	2	50	1	25	1	25
Special Education	1	50	0	0	1	50

Table 10 Technology						
Grade Level	1		2		3	
	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data	Raw Data	% Data

3 rd	0	0	0	0	4	100
4 th	0	0	2	33	4	67
5 th	0	0	0	0	2	100
6 th	2	22	0	0	7	78
Special Area	0	0	0	0	4	100
Special Education	0	0	1	50	1	50

The above data bears relevance to the professional development provided to teachers during the 2004-2005 school year. Overall, the majority of the second grade staff indicated their strong attitudes that all eight of the assessed professional development areas were not effective. Such negative responses suggest that the amount of program changes can have a significant effect on the quality of any one professional development area. At the second grade level, more variables were introduced than in any other grade level. The second grade staff was subjected to numerous program changes and implementations. Not only were they responsible for the school-wide implementation of differentiated instruction, data-driven decision making, and computerized report cards and attendance, a new reading program was introduced, as well as the differentiated instruction component of LightSpan. Interestingly, however, 14% of the second grade staff surveyed reported that they agreed that the professional development opportunities were effective on four out of the eight indicators. This teacher obviously had a more positive outlook on the workshops provided and could have very well been the second grade team leader.

Fifty-six percent of the staff surveyed reported that the professional development was not effective in Subject Area Workshops. In this domain, when viewed at the individual grade levels, evidence shows that the sixth grade staff and special area staff,

100% and 75%, respectively, exhibited the majority of the percentage. These staff members obviously felt a greater need in this area in order to better equip them for their content area.

Although 6% of the staff surveyed reported that the Technology workshops were highly effective, 85% percent of the staff surveyed agreed that the Technology workshops were ineffective. Such an overall agreement by staff members constitutes the lack of training in the technological areas of video, scanners, digital cameras, and the like.

The interns also evaluated material culture in order to gain an understanding of the number of professional development opportunities offered by the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. The following table represents the number of hours per grade level.

Table 11

Professional Development Provided by the District		
	In-District	Out-of-District
Second Grade	44 hours	0 hours
Third Grade	38 hours	12 hours
Fourth Grade	14 hours	0 hours
Fifth Grade	14 hours	0 hours
Sixth Grade	14 hours	0 hours
Special Area	14.5 hours	12 hours
Special Education	22 hours	18 hours
Total	188.5	42 hours

Interestingly, second grade had the most hours offered. Two additional workshops for second grade were offered in the summer. Teachers were given a choice of receiving professional development hours or a monetary amount for their attendance. Out of the seven second grade teachers, only one attended the optional reading workshops. This data contradicts the overall attitude of the second grade staff in that professional development was not effective in easing their transition to new curriculum changes.

Subjects were also asked to give free responses as to their perceptions of professional development opportunities. With reference to the opinions expressed in these surveys, the second grade staff, sixth grade staff, special education staff, and special area staff reported the lack of comprehensive training in areas of need.

A major concern of the second grade staff was the lack of continual training and support for the implementation of new programs. Several second grade staff members remarked that they were promised a lot of professional development and it was not delivered.

In addition, some of the participants surveyed felt that the professional development workshops should be aligned to our district's goals and objectives. The comments regarding this concept reflected the participants' discontent with the mandated district Professional Improvement Plan. There were also participants' comments regarding the necessity of providing hands-on resources and approaches to incorporate in the classroom.

CHAPTER 5

Conclusions, Implications, and Further Study

The interns conducted a study to evaluate the effects of professional development on the staff's increased awareness of program changes at the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. Conclusions were based on responses from the survey that was administered to staff members.

Conclusions and Implications

The data from the study indicated that current professional development opportunities were not effective in increasing staff awareness about program changes. As the results reveal, a majority (57%) of the staff surveyed indicated that the professional development workshops were not effective in increasing their awareness. Out of the eight areas assessed, six of the areas were considered to be ineffective.

For many schools, professional development simply means exposure in areas deemed relevant. Few districts, however, take the steps necessary to successfully implement opportunities for professional development. Effective professional development should focus on building the knowledge and skills of educators. The data of this study stands to prove that if a school district is going to implement changes, the quality of training, not quantity, should be a priority. It should be a process, not an event. The short-term activities are not designed for staff members to leave with mastery of a technique. Also, school districts need to take into consideration the number of program changes/implementations that occur in a given year. Staff members are unable to focus, develop, and strengthen their skills in a new area if overwhelmed by numerous changes. Having one day or a preparatory period of professional development related to each new

area that is being implemented or changed does not effectively increase the awareness of staff members to the point of mastery. It basically just exposes them.

Data obtained also indicated that the second grade staff strongly felt that professional development opportunities provided were ineffective. It is interesting to note that second grade teachers were given the most opportunities to attend the workshops and receive the training that is so important for all of the program changes implemented. A very important aspect of familiarizing oneself with a new program or teaching strategy is attending the training.

Feedback from the participants communicated the need for follow-up support. Establishing a committee in order to utilize two-way communication is vital in promoting effective professional development, especially when program changes are implemented. Participant input would allow administrators to evaluate and analyze the work in progress. Therefore, any new issues or problems can be rectified. When analyzing the Instructional Teaching Strategies' results, 32% found professional development training to be effective and 35% found the training to be somewhat effective. Evidence gathered found that most participants valued the impact from the newly hired "facilitator." This teacher, who is highly trained in differentiated instruction and instructional teaching strategies, has been a wealth of knowledge to the staff. She has been a solid resource for staff members, as well as an asset for follow-up support.

Leadership Development

The interns demonstrated many of the ISLLC standards during this research project. These standards included promoting the success of all students by advocating,

nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

By participating in the study, the interns furthered their knowledge and understanding of adult learning and professional development models that would create a more effective learning environment for staff members. The interns also acquired the skills needed to ensure that there are multiple opportunities provided for the diverse learners and different learning experiences of staff members.

During the investigation, the interns took part on the Professional Development Improvement Plan Committee. The experience helped the interns gain invaluable experience of developing professional development aimed at achieving the school's vision and mission. The interns also worked closely in scheduling and preparing the professional development workshops. Communication in regards to workshop effectiveness was maintained with staff, supervisors, and administrators on a daily basis. Furthermore, the interns used a variety of problem-solving strategies and techniques to help facilitate professional development opportunities for the next year.

Further Study

Although professional development is an important aspect of professional growth, only a limited number of days are designated by the school district for training in areas of need. An area requiring further study would involve the comparison of a school that is successful in their professional development goals to the Warren E. Sooy, Jr. Elementary School. Research would include data gathering referable to number of days for professional development, presenters, funds available, and extended learning opportunities.

Another study would involve the collection of data based on student achievement. With additional research, the teaching and learning practices of staff members that are associated with student achievement would be able to be analyzed.

School districts need to invest more time and resources towards professional development in order to be effective. As Guskey implies, professional development "... can't be accomplished through modest, short-term professional development efforts" (1999). Naturally, school districts lack the necessary funds for providing in-depth content and duration training that is vital to effective professional development. A less-expensive alternative to workshops conducted by college presenters would be to incorporate permanent resources. The interns recommend a Learning Library wherein resources would be available to reinforce skills for current faculty and introduce to new faculty members. Videotapes, books, and websites could serve as a low-cost lab. However, as the interns already stated in Chapter 1, many teachers will not initiate educating themselves. Most of our faculty meetings were consumed with quarterly assessments and grade level meetings focused on the Instructional Management Team initiatives. The interns recommend utilizing IMT meetings and part of faculty meetings as a learning community amongst grade levels. Each team will then be able to focus on their goals, objectives, and needs. Accordingly, further study is needed on the successful implementation of the Learning Library, which is already a progress in the making. Since the same goals will be in place next year, and no new program changes will be implemented, staff should be comfortable with what has already been implemented. Thus, any future professional development would build upon the foundations already

established. These extended opportunities would make professional development a part of the everyday life at school.

Traditional lecture sessions, or one-time workshops are not effective in making staff comfortable with program implementation and changes. Ongoing professional development opportunities that are aligned to the school's goals, and designed with evaluations (both staff and student), and support is essential in promoting the learning amongst all participants.

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APPENDIX A

Memorandum

Memorandum

TO:

FROM: Jennifer Peek & Renee' Clark

DATE: September 2004

RE: Needs Assessment

We would appreciate your cooperation in order to assess our district's professional development needs. We are asking that you help develop questions for a survey regarding the current status of professional development opportunities at the Hammonton School District.

It would be greatly appreciated if you could generate three questions related to each of the following topics:

- Morale
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Content
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Technology
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Current Programs
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.
- Out of district workshops
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

APPENDIX B
Needs Assessment

HAMMONTON SCHOOL DISTRICT

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT NEEDS ASSESSMENT

2004

Grade Level/Subject Area: _____

In an effort to plan for meaningful professional development, the Professional Development Committee would like your input. **Please choose 5 topics that are most important to you from the list. In the ranking column, rate those 5 topics from 1 (highest) to 5 (lowest). You may add any others at the bottom of the form.**

Professional staff development is needed in the following areas:

	Ranking
Technology (video, scanners, digital cameras, etc.)	
Computers as an Instructional Tool	
Computers for Professional Use (lesson plans, grades, etc.)	
Instructional Strategies	
Classroom Management	
Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom	
Parental Involvement	
Character Education/Harassment Prevention	
Student Assessment (rubrics, tests, grading, portfolios etc.)	
Inclusion	
Gifted and Talented (Honors/AP, elementary)	
Interdisciplinary Teaching (cross-curricular)	
Collaborative Planning and Teaching	
Communication within and between Grade Levels	
Subject Area Workshops (content specific)	

**** Please list any other areas you feel are relevant and needed:**

APPENDIX C

Professional Development Evaluation

HAMMONTON SCHOOL DISTRICT
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EVALUATION
2004-2005

Grade Level/Subject Area: _____

Please complete the following survey:

Circle the response that best describes your feelings.

1
effective

2
somewhat effective

3
not effective

Professional staff development was effectively provided in the following areas:

Subject Area Workshops (content specific)	1	2	3
Teaching and Learning in a Diverse Classroom	1	2	3
Classroom Management	1	2	3
Inclusion	1	2	3
Computers as an Instructional Tool	1	2	3
Instructional Strategies	1	2	3
Computers for Professional Use (lesson plans, grades, attendance, etc.)	1	2	3
Technology (video, scanners, digital cameras, etc.)	1	2	3

Comments:
