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A PLAN TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR TEACHERS THAT IS SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE

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A PLAN TO IMPROVE IMPLEMENTATION FOR PROFESSIONAL

LEARNING FOR TEACHERS THAT IS SUSTAINABLE AND EFFECTIVE

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Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment

of requirements of

Doctor of Education

In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

DISSERTATION ORGANIZATION STATEMENT

Despite my projects having different topics, teacher professional learning was a critical lever in all three as a means to improve academic achievement. Effective and sustained learning will not only improve teachers' practice but will also give them agency over their learning. As a result of my research I will continue to work with schools and leaders to develop cohesive learning structures for all teachers.

For the **Program Evaluation,** candidates are required to identify and evaluate a program or practice within their school or district. The "program" can be a current initiative; a grant project; a common practice; or a movement. Focused on utilization, the evaluation can be formative, summative, or developmental (Patton, 2008). The candidate must demonstrate how the evaluation directly relates to student learning. In this program evaluation, an overall theme that emerged was that while teachers received professional learning to implement strategies, they did not use what they learned to improve academic achievement. In the **Change Leadership Plan**, candidates develop a plan that considers organizational possibilities for renewal. The plan for organizational change may be at the building or district level. It must be related to an area in need of improvement and have a clear target in mind. The candidate must be able to identify noticeable and feasible differences that should exist as a result of the change plan (Wagner et al., 2006). An overall theme from this change plan was that teachers have to receive professional learning that enables them to be successful when implementing learned content in the classroom. In the **Policy Advocacy Document,** candidates develop and advocate for a policy at the local, state, or national level using reflective practice and research as a means for supporting and promoting reforms in education. Policy advocacy dissertations use critical theory to address moral and ethical issues of policy formation and administrative decision making (i.e., what ought to be). The purpose is to develop reflective, humane, and social critics, moral leaders, and competent professionals, guided by a critical practical rational model (Browder, 1995). In this Policy Advocacy document, one common theme was teacher preparation and development. Teachers that were hired during turnaround were sometimes novices. However, unlike many schools, turnaround ensures that a robust learning structure for teachers is a priority.

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ABSTRACT

Every school seeks to heighten student achievement. Committed and skilled teachers are instrumental in reaching this goal. Focused professional learning opportunities help support the ongoing growth of all staff. Unfortunately, a number of factors, including finances, teacher turnover, and an absence of trust, work against efforts to implement sound professional learning strategies with fidelity at Lady Academy.

This change plan sought to develop a sustainable plan to address that issue. Surveys with fourth-grade teachers revealed several key steps that must be taken. First, professional learning should be individualized for teachers but developed collaboratively. In addition, Lady Academy should work to retain quality teachers, increase their efficacy, and provide ample professional learning time. By doing so, Lady Academy can realistically see its educators implement sound instructional strategies effectively and continuously.

PREFACE: LESSONS LEARNED

Throughout my career, I have worked with veteran and novice teachers in education. I have worked as a teacher, dean, and administrator. One of the biggest lessons I have learned is the importance of professional learning for teachers and its impact on the academic achievement of students. Because of my concerns a structure has to be prepared to ensure that teachers get effective and long-lasting professional learning to improve their practice. I have learned preparing teachers to ensure academic success for students means ensuring consistent professional learning for teachers.

Preparing teachers to be life-long learners is not an easy task; it requires high expectations. We also need to examine what we are offering our teachers and must provide learning experiences to ensure teachers are effectively able to meet the daily academic challenges they face with their students. Teachers will participate in professional learning that is focused, personalized, and effective. As a result, they will have strategies and resources to ensure academic success for all students.

As I grow as a leader, my goal is to continue to develop a robust structure for the development of teachers and principals. Throughout this process I have realized that the common theme was ensuring teachers are supported. My next journey will include engaging with universities to work on training programs for teachers and leaders. I would like to become an adjunct professor so that I can work with potential teacher and leader candidates, and in doing so prepare them for an urban setting.

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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of Problem

Increasingly, school leaders are thinking about how to provide focused, systematic, professional learning opportunities to support the ongoing growth of all staff in order to increase student achievement. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) acknowledged the need for well-implemented professional learning communities. Also, DuFour and Fullan (2012) identified three core ideas of effective professional learning communities:

- Focus on student learning

- Collective collaborative culture to support adult and student learning

- Concentration on results for continuous improvement

Unfortunately, providing a high-quality professional learning community becomes challenging because of finances, teacher turnover, the absence of teacher trust, a lack of support from districts and schools, and so much more. Another problem is that many professional learning strategies can be too simplistic and administrator-controlled (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). Despite the challenges, providing teachers with a professional learning community is vital to helping them be successful at their craft.

My change plan focused on effective implementation of instructional strategies studied during professional learning done to improve teachers' practice and help them reach the school's goals. The problem addressed in this action research is the school's inability to create and develop an effective professional learning community for teachers. Professional development should be differentiated, and administrators must be conscientious of its implementation. The problem being addressed in this change plan is a lack of sound implementation of these types of

learning experiences, which, when implemented with fidelity, improves instructional practice and impact student achievement.

Based on my own professional observations, professional learning often has been provided many times during the school year and summer; however, the strategies taught by the professional learning were either partially implemented or not implemented at all. Some teachers emerge from these learning experiences with excitement and urgency, but as time passes both fade and the key strategies are not evident in their practice. It seems the most effective teachers incorporate the strategies into their regular methods, compared to the ineffective teachers, who use the strategies haphazardly.

Administrators are reluctant to budget funding for professional development due to this pattern of inconsistent implementation. As an administrator with minimal funding for professional learning, I cannot prioritize these learning experiences especially since most of the time administration will facilitate the professional learning.

 Change is needed, but it must take place with the support of the administrative team and teaching staff. According to DuFour and Fullan (2012), systematic change is required to influence student achievement. This plan aimed to outline a structure to implement for professional learning paths that are strategic and targeted to teachers.

In recent years, the perception of schools as learning organizations has influenced school reformers (Senge, 2000). Although changing any aspect of school structures can be difficult, many current school improvement initiatives focus on the restructuring of school culture to improve teaching and student achievement (Senge et al., 2000).

Senge et al.'s (2000) theory focused on the concept that when members of an organization learn, the entire organization learns. This particular professional learning

community model is moving into the realm of education. Senge et al. (2000) believed that organizations see improvement when they are structured as learning organizations. Fullan (2014) stated that an organization has more power in creating pedagogical changes. Members of the organization will be focused on their practice, what they can learn from each other, and the support provided by the principal.

Change is difficult and it carries consequences. If my change plan is implemented, I can envision the following negative consequences, the lack of network support and mandating changes to my school's schedule, which would affect our weekly professional learning time, limited financial resources, and compliance tasks that continue to overwhelm teachers. The positive consequences such as a sustained setting that educators can collaboratively and continuously enhance their knowledge and as a result acquire strategies and resources to address students individual academic challenges.

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Rationale

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Teachers want and need support to develop their practice so that students can succeed. Many times, this support comes in the form of professional learning on a broad array of topics. Most of these topics, however, are not of interest to teachers or may not provide what a specific teacher needs to continue to grow. These professional learning opportunities are not the type of support that our teachers need. There are many definitions, common terms, and phrases associated with the concept of professional learning throughout literature on the topic. These include relationships, collaboration, shared ideas, shared leadership, shared goals, vision, improved teacher practices, data-driven decision-making, commitment to teaching and learning, strong culture, and lifelong learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Karhanek, 2004; Hipp &

Huffman, 2003; Hord, 1998; Senge, 2000; Senge et al., 2000). These components should be the focus of the support we provide our teachers.

Before the 2013–2014 school year, Lady Academy had no evidence of implementation of specific reading strategies to improve students' reading abilities. As a result, the students showed growth in the area, but not attainment. One of the problems was that there was no systematic professional learning structure in place to help teachers support students achieve in reading. During my research for my program evaluation, I found that teachers needed structure and support to help them consistently implement their professional learning strategies (Starks, 2015). Teachers' growth and development are vital, as they impact students' learning (DuFour, 2004). It is my responsibility as a school leader to make sure the teachers get the learning opportunities they need to experience growth and development.

This change plan examined the processes and activities involved in teacher preparation, implementation, and continued evaluation of differentiated instruction regarding professional learning. Our schools exist to educate; regardless of variations in mission and vision, there is an agreement that supporting teachers and helping them grow is critical for preparing students to be competitive in a global society. In a study conducted by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (2014) teachers stated that the ideal professional development experience treats teachers like professionals. In addition, that ideal experience is relevant to teachers' current work, interactive and hands-on, delivered by someone who understands their experience, and sustained over time (p. 4). As a principal and a former teacher, I have found that success arose from collaborative settings that provided sustained coaching and feedback. Such settings greatly impacted both teacher personal growth and student academic achievement.

Effective teacher preparation translates to solid implementation. Implementation with fidelity leads to continuous improvement through progress monitoring. Steady and consistent evaluation leads to sustainable student achievement.

Successful change is a collaborative endeavor. My collaboration with faculty and other stakeholders consisted of communicating the purpose and description of the change plan. It was important for faculty and stakeholders to understand the "why" and thus buy in to it. To support each teacher's individual development, we created focus groups to develop a process for targeting educators and developing learning paths. The process by which we created the individual professional learning involved using data from two sources: the deliberate practice plan (DPP) and coaching and feedback sessions. After reviewing both sets of data, there is a meeting with the teacher to reflect and collaboratively create an individual professional learning plan by using data and focusing on areas in which the teacher personally would like to improve. There are also sometimes other items that may not have been captured in the deliberate practice plan or the coaching and feedback sessions that will be addressed.

Goals

The goal of this change plan was to develop a sustainable plan to ensure that professional learning strategies taught to teachers are implemented consistently and sustained to improve academic achievement. The individual professional learning plan built to accomplish this goal needs to be a collaborative effort that involves administrators and teachers.

According to DuFour (2004), there are four building blocks that lay the foundation for professional learning communities: "(a) mission, (b) vision, (c) shared values, and (d) goals" (p.25). The first building block in creating professional learning communities is to state the mission or purpose for the existence of the community—in this case, a focus on improved

teaching and learning. The second building block requires establishing a vision to provide a sense of direction; this begins with a dialogue across the curriculum about the school's current reality and eventually evolves into a vivid picture of what the organization hopes to become and compels professionals to work together to make it a reality. The development of shared values provides the direction that enables individuals to act autonomously.Shared values allow for the building of trust and setting expecations to enusre consistency for adult behavior. For the fourth building block, we have to determine goals that are linked to the vision. This is accomplished by establishing priorities, setting specific and measurable objectives, establishing a timeline, and determining how to evaluate progress toward the defined goals. DuFour (2004) further stated that "once the four building blocks are in place and balanced, the school has a solid foundation for implementing school improvement efforts and becoming an effective professional learning community" (p. 102)

Over the last four years at Lady Academy, teachers have been provided with several instructional initiatives for professional learning based on thoughtful planning, data, and preparation. However, the teachers seemed to alienate themselves from what they learned in these initiatives in as little as three weeks, based on my research during my program evaluation (Starks, 2015). Also, there were a few problems with the teachers and the past professional learning experiences. The teachers, because of their varied levels of experience, approached professional learning in many different ways. The more tenured teachers, in my estimation, were sometimes the most reluctant to implement new strategies, as opposed to the novice teachers, who always seemed to want to improve. The professional learning that teachers had experienced in the past consisted of presenters who were not enthusiastic and not able to capture their audience. Professional learning is not always collaborative, and some teachers were resistant

because they felt it was not something they needed. However, novice teachers were more eager and motivated to continue their development. In most cases, they sought out development opportunities on their own to sustain the learning. These teachers became more reflective and collaborative with themselves and administrators. In turn, administrators were more deliberate with ongoing support and coaching.

Effective leadership is the key to establishing and sustaining successful professional learning communities (Huffman & Hipp, 2003). Educational research has reinforced the principal as the important component to creating the conditions for an effective school (Smith & Andrews, 1989). According to Huffman and Hipp (2003), most schools are unable to solve their many problems because their principals lack the necessary leadership skills. DuFour (2004) stated, "the general agreement in educational research has been that the best hope for school improvement is found in the leader's office" (p.182). In addition, DuFour (2004) stated that the characteristics of principals in learning communities, rather than rules and procedures, lead to a shared vision and values. Principals of learning communities also involve the faculty members in the school's decision-making process and empower individuals to act. "The principals in the learning communities also provide staff with the information, training, and parameters they need to make good decisions" (DuFour, 2004, p. 185). DuFour (2004) believed that empowered teachers and strong principals are not mutually exclusive goals. Schools that operate as learning communities will have—and develop—both.

Demographics

Lady Academy, a charter school, is in an urban educational environment and serves 1,300 students in grades 3–12. Lady Academy's student population is 99% African American and 1% Hispanic. The school offers a supportive environment meeting the needs of English language

learners (0.1%), economically disadvantaged (14.3%), and diverse learners (14.3%) in all grade levels. For, the 2014–2015 school year, Lady Academy Charter earned a Level 2+ (out of 3) on the School Quality Rating based on the Chicago Public Schools Quality Rating Policy. This rating evaluates a school's culture, climate, and attendance, as well as academic growth and attainment, among other factors.

Every school in District 299 receives this rating. The students at Lady Academy Charter in grades three through eight take the statewide assessment administrated by the Northwest Evaluation Association (NWEA) three times a year. This measures student growth from spring to spring. Lady Academy's overall average growth on the NWEA in is in the 66th percentile for reading and the 42nd percentile in math, which is considered average. The NWEA also measures student attainment, or the percentage of students on grade level. Lady Academy fell short in this measure, with reading at the 42nd percentile and math at the 27th percentile.

Instructional staff at Lady Academy were diverse in race, age, and experience. I have a total of 80 teachers, and of those, 50% have only been in the profession for three years or fewer. Furthermore, of that 50%, 10% percent were career changers. Among the other 50%, experience ranged anywhere from three to 20 years. Five percent of this group have served as a principal or assistant principal.

SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4 CS

I applied the 4 Cs framework detailed in Wagner et al.'s *Change Leadership: A Practical*

Guide to Transforming Our Schools (2006) to ensure that I examined all areas of professional

learning for teachers in preparation for implementing change. In diagnosing the "As Is," it was

first important to identify the prpblem, which was the lack of effective implementation of

professional learning for teachers. After the problems was identified, it was important to consider

related areas that encompass sustainability, collaboration, consistency, and individual learning

paths.

Context

Wagner defined *context* as the larger organizational systems within which we work, and

their demands and expectations, formal and informal (Wagner et al, p. 104, 2006). Lady

Academy is in an urban educational environment and serves 1,300 students in grades 3–12. Lady

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Charter School supports a high level of student achievement and teachers' professional growth of

teachers. Currently, more than 60 percent of our students are growing from spring to spring on

the Northwest Evaluation Assessment (NWEA), the state assessment given to all third- through

eighth-graders in Illinois. However, only 35 percent of our students are performing at grade

level. While growth is good, so few students are performing at grade level is clearly problematic.

Moreover, we have a 40% teacher turnover rate due to several factors, the biggest being

competitive pay. Charter schools cannot compete with the district's pay rates, so we pay the

price for not paying the money. That high turnover makes it so hard to build trust among staff,

because many of them change from year to year. This is a challenge that I face as a charter

school leader. Building trust is also difficult because of education being a transit field in many

areas. According to Lencioni (2002), a lack of vulnerability among leaders (i.e., not allowing teachers to see their weaknesses, mistakes, fears, and behaviors) further increases the difficulty of building trust, because in response, teachers are not willing to be vulnerable and admit the needs for professional growth.

Conditions

Conditions are defined by Wagner as the external architecture surrounding student learning, the tangible arrangments of time, space, and resources (Wagner et al, p. 101, 2006). Currently, Lady Academy has no professional learning time that focuses on specific learning paths for teachers. Teachers' learning paths must be structured and focused so that academic achievement can be acquired. Teachers are able to meet only every Monday, and that time is split between the content and grade-level meetings. Each of those meetings lasts about an hour and half. The grade-level meeting focuses on academics, behavior, and attendance needs of individuals and groups. The content meetings focus on planning and data alignment. That is, we have no time dedicated to individualized professional learning.

Like everywhere else, even though Lady Academy is a charter school, financial resources are still a matter of concern. As a district, we have seen a 7% or more cut in per-pupil funding over the past five years. Therefore, classroom sizes have increased classes such as art, music, and foreign language have been reduced or completely eliminated. This, in turn, does not allow for teacher prep time—in some instances teachers have only their lunch period.

Because of the instructional demands on teachers' time, we are unable to have teachers come out of the classroom to implement peer-to-peer coaching. According to Robbins (1991), peer coaching is a form of differentiated professional development that supports various teachers at different levels. This form of professional development provides opportunities for classroom

observations and feedback sessions. The lack of sustainable and consistent professional learning within the building also limits the effectiveness of peer-to-peer coaching, which requires that teachers support each other with strategies aligned to professional and individual learning. Peer-to-peer coaching represents another avenue to help teachers stay consistent with the implementation of professional learning.

Moreover, there is also a lack of structures or processes in place to build a thriving, data-driven professional learning community. For example, in the past teachers met, and everyone used the same agenda. However, data was rarely analyzed and used to facilitate individual professional learning for teachers. There was no learning design protocol in place to facilitate effective learning communities. The current teams look at student work, but do not do so in a clear, consistent process across all grade levels. Furthermore, the teachers may use various protocols, which makes it difficult for teachers to implement one protocol with fidelity.

Culture

Wagner defined *culture* as the shared values, beliefs assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning, teachers and teaching, instructional leadership , and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school (Wagner et al, p. 102, 2006). The teachers at Lady Academy had professional learning time every Monday for three hours. The teachers had collaboration periods for forty minutes, three times a week. Lady Academy also offered professional learning based on data received from student achievement and coaching and feedback. Teachers were required to attend these professional learning experiences, but those who did not find the professional learning relevant were not attentive. As a result of the lack of interest, teachers continued to receive the professional learning, but did not implement it effectively.

Additionally, teachers lamented the frequent turnover among their colleagues. Many teachers did not feel involved in the professional learning process. Turnover at Lady Academy is at the level it is because of (among other factors) the lack of support and competitive pay and benefits, teachers leaving the undergraduate level unprepared for the classroom, and staff just not being a fit for teaching. Turnover at Lady Academy averages anywhere from 30% to 40% percent per year.

Competencies

Competencies are defined by the repertoire of skills and knowledge that influnces student learning (Wagner et al, p. 99, 2006). Currently, many teachers at Lady Academy lack the skills to increase academic achievement. Teachers hired at the school, particularly those who are recent graduates, lack planning knowledge, classroom management skills, and instructional strategies. Unfortunately, many of the new educators are not proficient with their content. Teachers are trying to find their purpose and fit into the school's culture while simultaneously building on their content. As an administrator, I understand that planning professional learning is centered on continuously building content knowledge, as opposed to individualized professional learning, which is focused on growth for teacher practice. Many of the novice teachers do not have an adequate level of content expertise, which requires more resources. As a result, it makes it difficult for them to take ownership of their professional learning.

The tenured teachers are not reflective, and lack the urgency and motivation to continue their growth. However, you do have some who utilize and implement professional learning that has minimum impact on student achievement. Overall, all the teachers at Lady Academy continue to struggle with time management, classroom management, and relationship building. Although the school has many support mechanisms, both novice and experienced teachers have

difficulties meeting deadlines and staying abreast of the school's initiatives and the demands of teaching. Teachers often are behind in submitting lesson plans, grades, and parental contacts.

For the most part, experienced teachers are proficient with classroom management; however, because of the increase in class size, teachers are experiencing the constant need to redirect and manage classroom interruptions. These teachers tend to be unrealistic about the need to implement clear classroom management strategies.

In addition, to enhance effective classroom management, teachers must build relationships with their students. Relationships will assist teachers in implementing new strategies, because students tend to want to do their best for teachers with whom they have relationships.

Lastly, there are a few teachers who are committed to growth and development. Through coaching and feedback, these teachers are reflective, and small changes happen within their classrooms as a result. These teachers are chosen to develop other teachers in hopes that it will ultimately influence professional learning among staff at Lady Academy.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

I used action research with both qualitative and quantitative data collection. Ultimately, action research is an approach to improve an organizational practice. It is characterized by an iterative cycle that includes diagnosing, planning, implementing, evaluating, and reflecting on a real-life problem involving the researcher and members of the school (Coghlan & Brannick, 2009). The problem addressed in this action research is the school's inability to create and develop an effective professional learning community for teachers. To improve one's practice, a person must be intimately involved. Throughout the research, the teachers became more aware of how important consistency is in implementing professional learning; they also became more knowledgeable about an effective professional learning community and its impact.

My change plan does not have a specific end time, but it focuses on a school developing and implementing a professional learning community that is collaborative, sustainable, and consistent. The baseline data I gathered in the fall of 2016 were surveyed from fourth-grade teachers. Also, I used the data from the professional learning evaluation forms from 2015 and 2016 to create a survey that will also include open-ended questions to get the teachers' perspective regarding professional learning in their current school community.

Participants

Professional learning involves numerous stakeholders, including the administrators who plan for and implement change, the teachers who contribute ideas to the change process, and the students who ultimately benefit from teachers being in an ongoing professional learning community. However, this change plan focsued solely on teachers. Personal learning for teachers should be the responsibility of the school and the district.

The research site is located on the south side of a large Midwestern city. Lady Academy is an urban educational environment serving 1,300 students in third through twelfth grades. I used a convenience sampling to select the teacher participants; I did not use a pre-determined criterion for the selection. My participants consisted of three female African-American fourth-grade teachers who ranged in age from thirty to fifty years old. All the teachers had at least two years of teaching experience, and the teacher with the most had 15 years' experience. Teachers' performance evaluations, their length of time at the site, or their leadership roles at the school were not considered.

According to Stringer (2007), the sample should reflect the primary stakeholders who will be affected by the study. All fourth-grade teachers were invited to participate, and I received a consent form from this group of three teachers who volunteered. All were female and African-American. The research was conducted at the participants' school. The three completed a survey that focused on their perception of professional learning currently at Lady Academy.

Data Gathering Techniques

As the researcher, I used qualitative and quantitative data to guide me (and the participants) in understanding the research problem clearly. Teachers being allowed to complete an anonymous survey provided an opportunity to analyze the data deeply to gain better insights into the problem in its natural setting (Stinger, 2007). The study used a survey that included open-ended questions (Appendix A).

During the fall of 2016, I administered surveys with the fourth-grade teachers. I gathered information on what professional learning is most important. I used the survey to get ideas and suggestions on how to implement professional learning tracks that are individualized for teachers.

Data Analysis Techniques

An instrument was used to assess the alignment of the professional development training and teachers' perceptions and attitudes regarding both the consistency of use of professional learning and the impact of their professional growth. The researcher used a survey to collect data (Appendix A). The survey questions focused on the effectiveness of professional development from the teachers' perspective. The survey data was analyzed by calculating the number of times the participants agreed, disagreed, strongly agreed, and strongly disagreed. The open-ended question data was analyzed in a similar manner. The goal was to have a better understanding of what helps the teacher to implement professional learning consistently and effectively.

SECTION FOUR: REVELANT LITERATURE

It seems today, everyone refers to public education system as a broken system; similarly, it seems everyone has ideas on how to fix it. One prominent suggestion is that school districts should get rid of all the "bad" teachers who are unskilled and unmotivated, yet protected by tenure or their union. In response to the notion of the unskilled teacher, new ideas about how to improve teacher professional learning have emerged over the past few years. DuFour and Marzano (2011) stated that good teaching matters—a lot. Quality of teaching has been observed as the most important factor affecting student learning (Dufour and Marzano 2011). However, developing teachers' knowledge and skills does not necessarily mean developing the interdependence, collaboration, and collective effort essential to improving results. Strategies that focus solely on improving individuals will fail to improve schools, because meeting the challenge requires building collective capacity. Leaders must shift from helping individuals become more effective in their isolated classrooms and schools to instead creating a collaborative culture based on interdependence, shared responsibility, and mutual accountability. My focus in this literature review will be on developing teacher professional learning that is both school-wide and individualized for teachers, the qualities of effective professional learning community and teacher efficacy.

Teacher Professional Learning

Professional learning is the most powerful way for teachers to influence student achievement in the classroom. Unfortunately, there has been a long history of unsuccessful professional learning in education in the United States. For too long we have relied on the standalone professional learning model, one that most public schools in the United States still use. For example, in the district in which I work we have brought in multiple presenters for a

single day, but there has been a very little follow-up on those one-day trainings. This issue has been addressed in an *Education Week* article:

> Historically, administrators have favored the workshop approach, in which a district or school brings in an outside consultant or curriculum expert on a staff- development day to give teachers a one-time training seminar on a garden-variety pedagogic or subject-area topic. (*Education Week*, 2011, p. 1)

This method needs to change if we are to get more out of the limited time we have for professional learning in education. In fact, according to Joyce and Showers (2002), standalone training has a less than 5% chance of improving instructional practices in the classroom. Effective professional learning is continuous learning with a focus on student outcomes. Professional learning can impact individual teacher growth to aid in continuous personal improvement (DuFour, 2004). High-quality professional learning focuses on deepening teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical skills; includes opportunities for practice, research, and reflection; is embedded in educators' work and takes place during the school day; is sustained over time; and is founded on a sense of collegiality and collaboration among teachers—and among teachers and principals—in solving important problems related to teaching and learning (Sparks, 2002, p. 5).

Considering the demands placed on educators, the realities of economics, and the state of standalone professional development, a better solution for increasing teachers' effectiveness and students' learning should be implemented. As asserted by Darling- Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009), "The time and opportunities essential to intense, sustained professional development with regular follow-up and reinforcement are simply not in place in most contexts, as evidenced by the short duration of most professional learning activities" (p 27).

According to Generation Ready (2008), professional development serves three often overlapping functions: (1) improving school performance, (2) improving the quality of classroom instruction, and (3) supporting the implementation of new initiatives. However, in order for this to be accomplished, professional learning has to be planned over time, sustained, and embedded with the context of the school. The learning must also foster collaboration across the district, and data must be used to link the school goals directly. Finally, the professional learning should be evidenced-based, data driven, and differentiated to ensure an intensive focus on the teaching-learning relationship (Generation, 2008). Professional learning accomplishes the first because it is driven by school metrics, such as attendance and discipline. However, the main focus is always academic achievement. Likewise, classroom instruction is impacted by the use of data collected through coaching and feedback. Based on the strategic plan, we identify the goals that address the school's initiatives and the students' needs. As a result, the professional learning is tailored to help reach these goals. Generation Ready (2008) defined professional development as a comprehensive, ongoing, and intensive approach to improving teacher and principal effectiveness in raising student achievement. One highly effective type of professional development is the professional learning community, which I will describe next.

Professional Learning Communities

According to DuFour (2004), there are six characteristics of effective professional learning communities: (1) shared mission, vision, and values; (2) collective inquiry; (3) collaborative teams; (4) action orientation and experimentation; (5) continuous improvement; and (6) result orientation. DuFour defined the terms as follows:

Shared Mission, Vision, and Values

The *sine qua non* of a learning in community is shared understandings and common

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values. What separates a learning community from an ordinary school is collective commitment to guiding principles that articulate what people in the school believe and what they seek to create. Furthermore, these guiding principles are not just articulated by those in positions in leadership; even more important, they are embedded in the hearts and minds of people throughout the school. (DuFour, 2004, p. 25)

Collective Inquiry

Collective inquiry enables team members to develop new skills and capabilities, which in turn lead to new experiences and awareness. Gradually, that heightened awareness is assimilated into fundamental shifts in attitudes and beliefs. Ultimately, it is this ability to examine and modify beliefs that enables team members to view the world differently and make significant changes in the organization's culture. (DuFour, 2004, p. 26)

Collaborative Teams

The basic structure of the professional learning community is a number of collaborative teams that share a common purpose. Some organizations base their improvement strategies on efforts to enhance the knowledge and skills of individuals. Although individual growth is essential for organizational growth, it does not guarantee that outcome. Thus, building a school's capacity to learn is a collaborative task, rather than an individual one. People who engage in collaborative team learning can learn from one another, thus creating a momentum to fuel continued improvement. (DuFour, 2004, p. 26–27)

Action Orientation and Experimentation

Professional learning communities are action-oriented. Members of such organizations turn aspirations into action and visions into reality. Not only do they act, they are

unwilling to tolerate inaction. They recognize that learning always occurs in a context of taking action, and they believe engagement and experience are the most effective teachers. Even seemingly chaotic activity is preferred to orderly, passive inaction. An important corollary of action orientation is the willingness to experiment—to develop and test hypotheses. While traditional organizations tend to brand such experiments as failures and then seek to assign blame, learning organizations consider failed experiments to be an integral part of the learning process, opportunities to learn and then proceed more intelligently. (DuFour, 2004, p. 27–28)

Continuous Improvement

A continuous improvement is evident in an environment in which innovation and experimentation are viewed not as tasks to accomplish or projects to complete, but as ways of conducting day-to-day business, forever. Members of a professional learning community recognize and celebrate the fact that mission and vision are ideals that will never be fully realized, but must always be worked toward. In short, becoming a learning community is less like getting in shape than staying in shape—it is not a fad diet, but a never-ending commitment to an essential, vital way of life. (DuFour, 2004, p.28)

Results Orientation

Finally, a professional learning community realizes that its efforts to develop shared mission, vision, and values; engage in collective inquiry; build collaborative teams; take action; and focus on continuous improvement must be assessed on the basis of *results* rather than *intentions*. Unless initiatives are subject to ongoing assessments on the basis of tangible results, they represent random grouping in the dark, rather than purposeful improvement. (DuFour, 2004, p.29)

All of these characteristics will have a sustainable impact on professional learning, which will in turn that affect school improvement.

DuFour and Marzano (2004) believed that creating the conditions to help others succeed is one of a leader's highest duties. If school and district leaders are to create the conditions that help more students succeed at learning at higher levels, they must build the capacity of educators to function as members of high-performing collaborative teams. As Fullan (2010) wrote, "Time and again we see the power of collective capacity. When the group is mobilized with focus and specificity, it can accomplish amazing results" (p. 9). To create the conditions for high-performing collaborative teams, leaders must develop the clarity of purpose, as well as the priorities, structures, and support essential to successful teams. They must be willing to be "tight" about the work teams must do, and they must accept the obligation of providing teams with what they need to succeed in their tasks. The focus for professional development should be on ensuring that it is of high quality. Professional development should be guided by research and provide teachers both the time and space to collaborate to improve all aspects of their professional knowledge. As a result, the learning experience will improve their practice and ultimatley improve academic achievement for thir students.

In a research study by Dunne, Nave, and Lewis (2000), it was found that teachers who observed other teachers and then provided constructive feedback became more student-centered. Instead of simply covering the material, these teachers focused on ensuring that their students mastered it. The study also found that these teachers had a greater desire to improve continuously than did teachers who did not participate (Dunne, Nave, & Lewis, 2000). DuFour (2004) agreed that the needed increase in collaboration can certainly be achieved through the use of

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professional learning communities, since one of the tenets of a professional learning community is developing high-performing collaborative teams.

Teacher Efficacy

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

Klassen, Tze, Betts, and Gordon (2011) stated that "Teacher efficacy—the confidence teachers hold about their individual and collective capability to influence student learning—is considered one of the key motivation beliefs influencing teachers' professional behaviors and student learning" (p. 1). According to Bandura's (1986; 1997) model of self-efficacy, there are four sources of efficacy: (1) mastery experiences, (2) vicarious experiences, (3) social persuasion, and (4) reduced stress and negative emotions. If teachers have experiences that are successful for them and lead them to believe they are capable of doing the job, those teachers

will experience a heightened sense of self-efficacy. They can observe other teachers or coaches, and through these vicarious experiences determine that they are capable of doing the same thing. They can be a part of a group of teachers in which the majority believe in a certain approach that has been successful for them, and thus increase their efficacy through social persuasion. Teacher efficacy is one of the major ways in which professional learning communities can improve. Teachers realize through practice, effort, successful student outcomes, and support that the hard work impacts overall academic acheivement and their own practice. Teachers begin to develop an understanding of their competence, thus shaping their belief in themselves.

Bandura (1997) argued that the sources of individual and collective self-efficacy information are similar. The most powerful source of efficacy information is mastery experience. Teachers who perceive themselves to have been successful on a particular task develop belief in their ability to perform the task again and grow to anticipate success in future encounters. Teachers who learn and implement new strategies and see immediate impact on academic achievement become hopeful and excited. Therefore, the more strategies they can grasp and implement immediately, the more effective teachers will be at differentiating for individual student learning.

SECTION FIVE: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Lady Academy currently has a professional learning program that is not differentiated. As a result, oftentimes the professional learning does not address the teachers' individual needs. Three fourth-grade teachers who ranged in teaching tenure and experience completed the questionnaire (see Appendix A). The questionnaire focused on their professional learning experiences at Lady Academy.

Questionnaire Analysis

The following responses to the questions below are represented in Figure 1:

- Question One: "At my school, implementation of professional learning strategies is important."

- Question Two: "At my school, consistent implementation of professional learning strategies is important."

- Question Three: "I only implement professional strategies when I feel it addresses my area of weakness."

- Question Four: "I only implement professional strategies that I find interesting to me."

- Question Five: "If the professional learning strategies were monitored, I would implement them more consistently regardless of the topic."

- Question Six: "Professional learning strategies support my learning and growth. List three strategies."

- Question Seven: "Professional learning strategies align to what I need to impact students' achievement."

- Question Eight: "Professional learning has maximized my capacity as an educator."

- Question Nine: "My administrator or coach provides opportunities for safe practice after introducing new professional learning strategies."

- Question 10: "I receive coaching and feedback support on the professional learning strategies I learn and are required to implement."

- Question 11: "I feel competent to implement professional learning strategies."

Figure 1. Current professional learning for teachers in their current setting.

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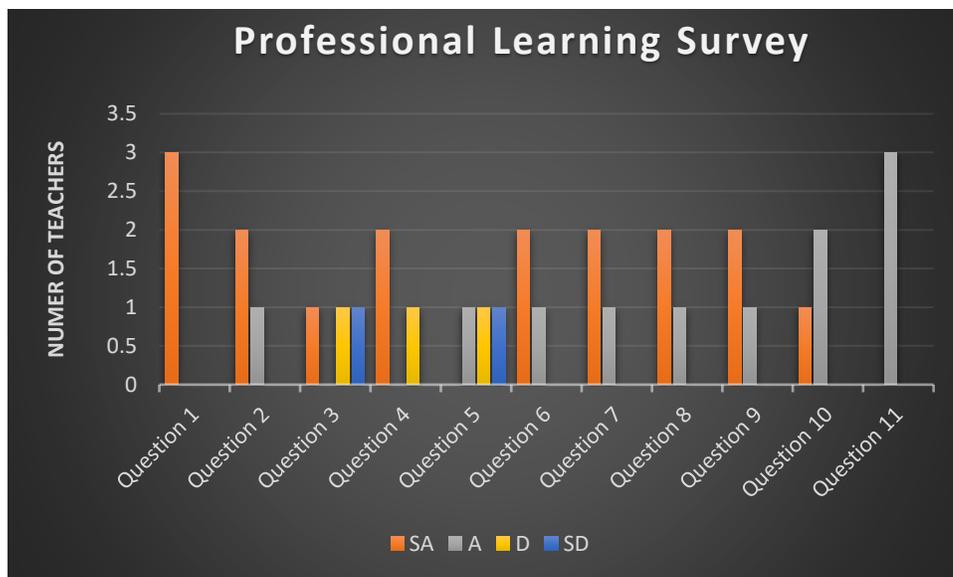
Overall, the data show that teachers are satisfied with some parts of the professional learning process. Further, the data indicate that the teachers do not mind continuing to grow, but would like the learning to be based on their choices about what they feel is best for them. Most of the teachers felt as though the school-wide professional learning is helpful but does not always apply to them. As a result, effective implementation and consistency were partially implemented or not implemented at all.

Question One: "At my school, implementation of professional learning strategies is important."

All the teachers strongly agreed on the importance of the implementation of professional learning strategies. Teachers A and B felt that it was an expectation to practice and implement the professional learning strategy. The school expectation requires teachers to provide evidence of implementing the strategy and their progress in doing so over time, with safe practice being the first step. Teachers A and B explained in an open-ended quesitons that they felt the administrators continue to provide opportunities to learn and perfect strategies that promote student growth. In addition, teachers have opportunities to strengthen those strategies, such as through coaching and feedback sessions and ongoing professional development. Teacher C noted the increase of high-quality learning after teachers have perfected the strategies and the impact it had on student achievement.

For the most part, teachers are lifelong learners with a desire to continue their education. Although professional learning is a requirement at the school, teachers nonetheless appreciate the opportunities. Teachers know that their improvement has a direct impact on students. In addition, teachers appreciate learning with their colleagues and sharing ideas.

Question Two: "At my school, consistent implementation of professional learning strategies is important."

Two of the three teachers strongly agreed on the importance of consistency when implementing professional learning. Teacher C felt the more consistent the teacher can be, the better the students become. Teachers A and B noted a belief that accountability through teamwork, coaching, and professional learning encourages consistency.

Oftentimes, teachers receive an uneven amount of support. Implementing school-wide professional learning strategies evens the playing field. By doing do, at the very least, teachers will gain a set of strategies that they can reference for their practice. In this question, the word

"consistent" is the key to ensuring teachers learning transfers over to thier practice for continued growth and academic success for students.

Question Three: "I only implement professional strategies when I feel it addresses my area of weakness."

Teachers B and C disagreed with implementing strategies only when they address areas of weakness. Regardless of teachers' strengths or weakness, both are willing to implement professional strategies. While strategies that address weakness are indeed implemented, so too are those that interest teachers. However, Teacher A agreed with the statement provided, saying that some areas of professional learning may have already been implemented and thus only those that address weaknesses need to be put into action. However, Teacher A stated that if a strategy can improve instruction, s/he would use it.

Question Four: "I only implement professional strategies that I find interesting to me."

All the teachers disagreed with the notion that only strategies of interest to them should be implemented. Very similar, to question three, all said that regardless of a teacher's professional interests, they are willing to implement professional strategies.

Question Five: "If the professional learning strategies were monitored, I would implement them more consistently regardless of the topic."

Teachers B and C disagreed that monitoring would affect the consistency with which they implement professional learning strategies. The two teachers also felt the strategies that are monitored kept them consistent and on target. However, Teacher A agreed, stating that having feedback and coaching encourages teachers to stay on task.

Question Six: "Professional learning strategies support my learning and growth. List three strategies."

All the teachers agreed that professional learning supported their personal development, impacted student growth, and built their capacity as educators. In particular, the teachers cited Kagan—a cooperative instructional strategy to promote student engagement and cooperative learning—as a strategy to promote classroom instruction rigor. In addition, all three teachers cited differentiated instruction as a professional learning strategy that has improved their pedagogy.

Question Seven: "Professional learning strategies align to what I need to impact students' achievement."

Teachers B and C agreed that the professional learning strategies are aligned and have an impact on their students' achievement and improves their development. However, Teacher A strongly agreed that the strategies would be impactful for student achievement. All teachers felt the professional learning is aligned to the needs of student achievement.

Question Eight: "Professional learning has maximized my capacity as an educator."

All of the teachers agreed they felt competent when implementing professional learning strategies. Similarly, all felt that they have been stretched and pushed out of their comfort zones. All embraced the professional learning. In addition, all three stated that their planning has improved as a result of their learning being maximized.

Question Nine: "My administrator or coach provides opportunities for safe practice after introducing new professional learning strategies."

Teachers A and B agreed that opportunities for safe practice are provided when learning strategies are introduced. The process of collecting data from walkthroughs and providing non-evaluate feedback has encouraged teachers to implement the strategies. All respondents felt their coaches provided adequate time for safe practice.

Question 10: "I receive coaching and feedback support on the professional learning strategies I learn and are required to implement."

Teacher A and C agreed, and one strongly agreed, that they receive coaching and feedback for implementation of professional strategies. After walkthroughs and observations, teachers felt there was an opportunity to receive constructive feedback. In addition, teachers felt that face-to-face interaction, e-mail, and notes on their desks were effective ways of receiving feedback.

Question 11: "I feel competent to implement professional learning strategies."

All of the teachers agreed they feel competent implementing professional learning strategies. Coaches model the strategies, allow time for implementation, and release the teachers to begin self-implementation. Teacher A stated that receiving coaching and watching videos encourages her to at least try the strategy in question. Teacher B summarized her experience by saying that the professional learning support helped improve her lack of confidence.

Results

Based on the results of the survey, 37% of the answers to the questions were in the form of disagreement; of note was that two teachers indicated they disagreed on implementing strategies only to address a weakness. This data indicated that teachers are willing to continue to develop in all professional areas. Although some strategies can enhance teachers' strengths, as well as advance their growth, one teacher indicated a preference to use strategies only in the area of weaknesses.

Similarly, 100% of the teachers disagreed that only strategies of interest should be implemented. DuFour and Fullan (2013) supported this idea, stating that people do not recognize

what is needed. Administrators must be sure to design and provide professional development based on what will have an impact on the student achievement, not based solely on what will be of interest to staff members.

Per the survey results, 33% of the teachers indicated they would have been more consistent with the implementation of professional learning strategies if the process was closely monitored. If teachers are to take ownership and responsibility for their learning, the agreed-upon strategies must be implemented regardless of being monitored. This does not mean that administrators should avoid monitoring the professional development plan. Rather, they should focus on specific strategies that will most effectively leverage the highest student outcome results and teacher practice.

SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

As detailed in my "as is" and "to be" charts, along with my "Strategies and Actions" chart (all in Appendix B, C and D), Lady Academy should focus on a number of considerations when implementing professional learning for teachers: the professional learning should be sustainable, collaborative, consistent, and provide individualized learning paths for every teacher. However, before improvements can be made, a clear expectation of success must be developed and communicated. Boyatzis and McKee (2005) discussed their intentional change theory, which began with an analysis of the ideal self, followed by a comparison to the real self, and concluded with the development of strategies and experiments to reach the ideal self. Beginning with an end gaol in mind is key to transforming not only individuals, but also an entire organization.

My change plan focuses specifically on implementation and the transfer of strategies that are consistently executed during classroom instruction.

Context

As discussed in Section Two, Lady Academy supports a high level of student achievement and professional growth for teachers. Despite the high staff turnover, administrators need to continue to build trust. With that trust, teachers will consistently and collaboratively implement professional learning strategies that can impact their personal growth and student achievement. There would be no turnover, as administrators have made retention a priority, creating trust and sustainability. The individualized learning paths will be implemented, and teachers will receive professional learning based on their individual growth as well as school-wide needs. So, even when turnover occurs, teachers who come in mid-year will develop their individualized learning plans, and school-wide professional learning will be tied into those plans.

In an ideal context, all teachers will take ownership for their learning. Teachers will develop

individualized learning plans and best practices that are impactful to student achievement.

Conditions

As explained in Section Two, Lady Academy has no professional learning that focuses on

specific learning plans for teachers. It is important that teachers' learning paths are structured

and focused so that academic achievement can be enhanced.

Three main ways in which Lady Academy can improve its "conditions" for teacher

learning would be the implementation of peer-to-peer coaching. Peer coaching would allow for

teachers to learn from each other and contribute to both teacher's professional practice as

described earlier, per Robbins (1991), peer coaching is a form of differentiated professional

learning that supports various teachers at various levels. Implementation of differentiated

professional learning will allow teachers to receive professional education at their personal

growth level. Dufour and Fullan (2013) stated that when professional learning communites are

implemtented in schools teachers are engaged in exactly what the PLC process calls for:*learning*

together.

In addition, the administrators need to restructure the current planning time to address the

individual learning paths for teachers. Changing how the current professional learning time is

structured would allow the teachers and coaches to develop and practice specific learning for

each individual teacher. The teachers' learning would be scheduled on Mondays and time would

be allotted to address at least 50% of the teachers being coached. The meetings will consist of

planning, practicing, and mastery of skills.

Competencies

Lady Academy has a high number of teachers who have acquired the skills and expertise necessary to impact academic achievement. Administrators at Lady Academy would monitor and ensure that professional learning is implemented by effective follow-up and feedback, peer-to-peer coaching, and most important, through individualized learning paths that are impactful to the teachers' professional growth. Administrators would prioritize consistent implementation and the practice of frequent walkthroughs that focus on each teacher's learning plan. The walkthroughs, in turn, can help administrators plan more efficient coaching and feedback sessions as well as develop professional learning based on targeted professional learning activities.

Culture

More than any others, culture represents the area in which Lady Academy has the greatest potential for growth. Lady Academy teachers have three hours of professional learning every Monday. The teachers also have weekly collaboration for forty minutes. Trust will continue to be of concern until some contributing factors (e.g., competitive pay) can change. With Lady Academy's largely positive context, well-structured conditions, and strong foundation around teacher competencies, school administrators should focus on improving the culture in several ways. Some specifics include (1) creating a culture of shared accountability; (2) working alongside teachers or attending meetings that involve collaboration; and (3) designing professional learning that is differentiated and addressing learning plans that will help teachers develop and expand skills, which will in turn have meaningful impact on student academic achievement.

The ideal culture for professional learning will empower teachers to take ownership of their professional growth. In such a culture, teachers are asked to share their expertise with other

teachers and administrators and are given a voice in determining the vision for professional learning. They have sense of pride and trust within the professional learning communities. As a result, more teachers collaborate with peers inside and outside their departments. They strongly believe that their role is to impact student achievement, and this belief leads them to want to learn and develop as much expertise as possible.

SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

Introduction

For Lady Academy to reach the vision for success outlined in Section Six, many strategies must be put in place. A number of these focus on providing individual learning plans, structured and impactful collaboration, and peer-to-peer to observations. Drago-Severson (2009) stated, "Just as we adapt our instruction to care for the differences among children, we must differentiate our leadership practices to attend in how adults learn and what they need to grow" (p. x).

Strategies and Actions

Hire and Retain Quality Teachers

The first strategy for improving professional learning is to hire and retain quality educators. This is a difficult strategy to implement, as discussed in Section Five, but doing so overcomes one of the barriers to building trust. To meet this challenge, the school must become more creative with hiring techniques. For example, the school should consider recruiting from across the country, and pursuing aggressive advertisements (through TV, radio, and social media), and offering incentives, including retention and sign-on bonuses, moving expenses, and competitive salary and benefits.

Another action would that would be beneficial for hiring teachers would be to develop partnerships with local universities. If Lady Academy can form partnerships with the education department, it can offer student teaching placement; in turn, this will familiarize potential teacher candidates with the school and increase the chances of future employment upon graduation. The final action would be sharing job ads with colleges and universities across the nation.

Recruiting teacher candidates will not be enough to keep them over time. It will be important to administer surveys throughout the school year to keep a pulse on teachers' satisfaction with and trust in the school. Teachers must feel supported; when they do, they feel more connected to their colleagues and school. Thus, by providing teacher support from the curriculum resource teacher and administrator, the school will benefit greatly.

Increase Efficacy of Teachers

Another strategy that is essential for making change with professional learning is to increase teachers' knowledge about their work. Surveys help to get their input about coaching and feedback that focuses on their areas of growth and classroom observations. Observations revealed teachers were hesitant about their ability to teach effectively. A great deal of this hesitation sprung up when the teacher was not familiar with a particular skill or strategy. Teachers need opportunities to receive recognition for their skills, present their expertise outside of their content, and and be known and seen as leaders. To that end, teachers must have the opportunity to have a voice and take on leadership. Teachers will then feel appreciated, and more ready to take ownership for their own personal growth.

Professional Learning Time

With the change in the implementation of professional learning at the school, it will be imperative to ensure that time for learning is consistent and structured. Thus, providing teachers with half-days on Mondays for professional learning will benefit their growth greatly. Teachers will have a total of three hours a week—so, twelve hours a month and approximately one hundred hours a year—including the estimated Mondays off based on their school calendars. The school will need to ensure that each teacher has an individualized plan and that during professional learning time, teachers work with their coach or collaboratively with their teams. It

will be essential that (as mentioned in the previous strategy) once a teacher has mastered a growth area, they can share their growth and now expertise with their colleagues.

Lady Academy's sustainable professional learning community will use the five characteristics identified by Dufour et.al. (2008) to ensure sustainability.

1. A shared mission, vision, and values

2. Collective inquiry by stakeholders

3. The application of collaborative teams

4. A systemic process of action orientation and experimentation

5. The commitment to continuous improvement towards results

It is critical that school leadership and the teachers as role players understand these characteristics at the PLC"s initiation phase and throughout the development process

Building and sustaining PLC requires a cultural shift that involves continuous thriving relationships. Relationships are the core of professional learning communities. Professional learning communities visions and values must be embedded in day to day interactions and become the norm of the school. Dufour et.al. (2004) offered some best practices or cultural shifts in the PLC as: (1) a shift in purpose of a school PLC from teaching to learning, (2) emphasize what is taught to what is learned, (3) coverage of content that gets students to content proficiency and (4) engaging all staff in collaborative teams to share knowledge and expertise about their views on the curriculum.

It will be important to emphasize that the PLC is not just another meeting, but rather an opportunity to focus on the improvement and practice of the teacher. The PLC must have a clearly defined goal and outcome based on school goals and teacher needs. It is important that there a clear coaching model exists, one that is differentiated based on teachers' needs. The

teachers would have a deliberate practice plan that is monitored and focused. The plan consists of three goals—two that are personal and one that is school-wide. In addition, the plan is monitored based on the coaching and three-tiered feedback structure for the teachers, who are marked as red, yellow, or green based on performance. Those marked as red need intense support and would receive coaching and feedback weekly. The yellow teachers need moderate support and would receive coaching and feedback every other week. The green teachers need little support, but are being nonetheless pushed to continue to improve their practice. Green teachers are observed once a week.

Finally, because this structure is not common in many schools, it requires funding so that the school can continue to have common planning time for all teachers. Effective scheduling serves as the priority in budgeting money to ensure this possible. Fullan (2001) stated, "There is the explicit link and intimate link between knowledge building and internal commitment on the way to make good things happen" (p. 81).

Summary

The successful implementation of a change plan begins with the evaluation of what is currently happening, a clear vision for success, and a review of strategies and actions to move forward. In this change plan, time and collaboration for individualized professional learning is at the center of all strategies and actions to improve the overall professional learning community in the school. Teachers must have differentiated learning experiences that will enable them to understand the purpose of their personal professional growth and its impact on student achievement. With individualized learning for teachers, increased efforts to retain and recruit teachers, and consistent time for learning, Lady Academy will become the model for individualized professional learning across the nation.

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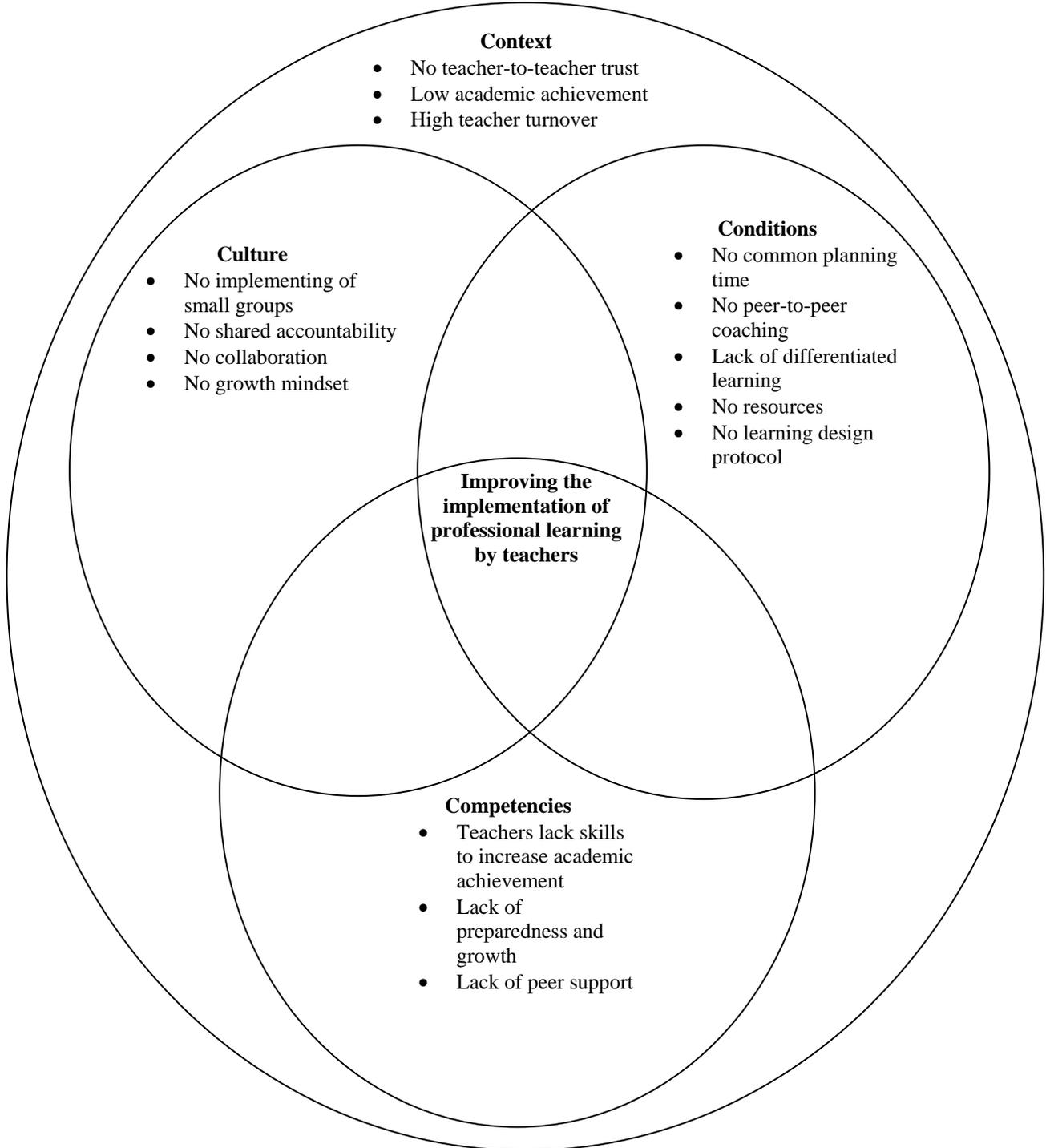Lencioni, P. (2002). *The five dysfunctions of a team*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

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APPENDIX A: AS-IS 4 CS ANALYSIS

Context
- No teacher-to-teacher trust
- Low academic achievement
- High teacher turnover

Culture
- No implementing of small groups
- No shared accountability
- No collaboration
- No growth mindset

Conditions
- No common planning time
- No peer-to-peer coaching
- Lack of differentiated learning
- No resources
- No learning design protocol

Improving the implementation of professional learning by teachers

Competencies
- Teachers lack skills to increase academic achievement
- Lack of preparedness and growth
- Lack of peer support

APPENDIX B: TO-BE 4 CS ANALYSIS

Context
- Teacher-to-teacher trust
- Increased student achievement
- Low teacher turnover

Culture
- 100% of teachers implementing small groups
- Shared accountability
- Collaboration
- Growth mindset

Conditions
- Common professional learning planning time
- Peer-to-peer coaching
- Differentiated professional learning
- Resources for peer-to-peer observation
- Learning design protocol

Improving the implementation of professional learning by teachers

Competencies
- Teachers are experts at implementation of professional learning
- Implementation of effective professional learning increases academic achievement
- Effective peer-to-peer support

APPENDIX C: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS CHART

Strategy	Action
Focus on developing implementation of professional learning for teachers	Establish professional learning specific to individual teachers • Survey the teachers • Give the teachers autonomy • Allocate resources
Develop a structure for consistent monitoring to ensure professional growth	Develop personal learning plans • Develop criteria for the learning plans • Create a consistent timeline for check-in • Have principal and/or coach \ work collaboratively with teachers
Increase time for teachers to focus on their professional learning.	Create a professional learning calendar • Effective professional learning three or more times a week • One-on-one coaching bi-weekly

APPENDIX D: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING SURVEY

Please read the following questions and select the response that fits best with your experiences as it relates to your current school culture.

Scale:
1-Strongly Disagree (SD)
2-Disagree (D)
3-Agree (A)
4-Strongly Agree (SA)

	SD	D	A	SA
At my school, implementation of professional learning strategies are important. Please explain your rating:	SD	D	A	SA
At my school, consistent implementation of professional learning strategies are important. Please explain your rating:	SD	D	A	SA
I only implement professional strategies when I feel that it addresses my area of weakness. Please explain your rating:	SD	D	A	SA
I only implement professional strategies that I find interesting to me. Please explain your rating:	SD	D	A	SA

If the professional learning strategies were monitored, I would implement them more consistently regardless of the topic. Please explain your rating :	SD	D	A	SA
Professional learning strategies support my learning and growth. Please list three strategies:	SD	D	A	SA
Professional learning strategies align to what I need to impact student's achievement.	SD	D	A	SA
Professional learning has maximized my capacity as an educator.	SD	D	A	SA
My administrator or coach provides opportunities for safe practice after introducing new professional learning strategies.	SD	D	A	SA
I receive coaching and feedback on the professional learning strategies I learn and are required to implement.	SD	D	A	SA

How and when do you implement professional learning strategies?				
What barriers are there to implementing professional learning strategies?				
Where do you learn the most effective professional learning strategies?				
How could the school help you learn more professional learning strategies?				
Is there anything else about professional learning strategies that you would like me to know?				
How competent do you feel to implement professional learning strategies?				