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A Change Plan For District Professional Learning And Teacher Collaboration In The Area Of Elementary English Language Arts Instruction

Scott Carlson
National Louis University

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A CHANGE PLAN FOR DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
AND TEACHER COLLABORATION IN THE AREA OF
ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION

Scott R. Carlson
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements of
Doctor of Education
In the Foster G. McGaw Graduate School

National College of Education
National Louis University
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This document was created as one part of the three-part dissertation requirement of the National Louis University (NLU) Educational Leadership (EDL) Doctoral Program. The National Louis Educational Leadership EdD is a professional practice degree program (Shulman et al., 2006). For the dissertation requirement, doctoral candidates are required to plan, research, and implement three major projects, one each year, within their school or district with a focus on professional practice. The three projects are:

- Program Evaluation
- Change Leadership Plan
- Policy Advocacy Document

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 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).

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).

Works Cited


6.20.16
A THREE-PART DISSERTATION:

A PROGRAM EVALUATION OF DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PRACTICES USING THE STANDARDS ASSESSMENT INVENTORY

A CHANGE PLAN FOR DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING AND TEACHER COLLABORATION IN THE AREA OF ELEMENTARY ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS INSTRUCTION

ALIGNMENT OF SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS WITH DISTRICT PROFESSIONAL LEARNING PLAN: A POLICY ADVOCACY DOCUMENT

Scott R. Carlson
Educational Leadership Doctoral Program

Approved:

Chair, Dissertation Committee

Member, Dissertation Committee

Dean's Representative

Director, EDL Doctoral Program

Dean, National College of Education

Date Approved
ABSTRACT

This change plan used Wagner et al.’s (2006) framework to assess the arenas of culture, context, conditions, and competencies of a small suburban school district to create a plan for professional learning and teacher collaboration in the area of English Language Arts instruction. However, a backmapping approach could be used to plan professional learning in any subject area. Building on the judgements and recommendations from my program evaluation, I hope to move the Shermerville School District toward a more comprehensive model of transformational learning. A secondary goal of this change plan is to build the capacity of the district’s staff development committee by increasing their knowledge of adult learning theory and models of powerful professional learning design. Finally, I address the change levers of data, accountability, and relationships in regards to planning for professional learning, job-embedded vehicles of professional learning, and the evaluation of professional learning.
PREFACE

As a building principal in a small school district, I spend a fair amount of time involved in the planning and execution of professional learning. If I consider myself the “lead learner” (Fullan, 2014) of the building, I need to model curiosity and a mindset of growth. I need to make the collective learning of the school (and district) a priority. This includes reacting to the curriculum review cycle, discovering innovative practices alongside my teaching staff, and responding to trends from the teacher appraisal process. My teaching staff require a clearly articulated plan for their adult learning and growth. They want to know how their learning is connected to the goals of the organization.

In addition, my involvement on the district’s staff development committee revealed a need for a more detailed process of planning, implementation, and evaluation of our professional learning efforts. I often hear teachers question the purpose of their learning or the priorities of district administration. Teachers have stressful jobs. Without a clear vision or an articulated plan, district-led professional development is often received as just another stressor in a teacher’s work day. As an administrator, it is my duty to provide that clarity and coherence. I am concerned our current practices do not meet this need, as found in my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018).

I hope this change plan will provide some guidance on how our administration and teaching staff can deliver high quality professional learning to the larger organization. While this change plan targets English Language Arts instruction at the elementary level, it could be replicated for the benefit of any content area/academic domain. Surely, a process for planning professional learning and collaboration will benefit the existing district staff and serve as an effective tool for those that follow me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the sacrifices my family made in pursuit of this doctoral degree, specifically my wife. She is my coach, mentor, and biggest fan. I love you. There were many nights and weekends spent at the public library or secluded in the guest room. I could never have achieved my goal without support and encouragement from Tammy, Kyle, and Luke.

Thank you to Dr. Brian Wegley and the support of our administrative team. Thank you for investing in my professional development. It is a privilege to work for a school district that is committed to the continuous improvement of staff and the success of all children.

Thank you to my dissertation chair, Dr. Harrington Gibson, for all the meetings, virtual conferences, and thoughtful feedback. You made me a stronger writer and helped me to become a more critical thinker. I would also like to thank Dr. Sandra Stringer for her insights and perspectives.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the support and encouragement I received from my classmates. In particular, I am grateful for my friendship with Andy and Lauren. I’ve got your back!
DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my boys,

Kyle Richard


I am proud of you and I look forward to seeing you grow into
curious, passionate, life-long learners.
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SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The Shermerville Board of Education has established a strategic goal of increasing child-centered instruction within rigorous and coherent educational programs. The corresponding administrative goal includes strengthening the vision and systems for job-embedded professional learning. The administration has devoted a significant amount of time and resources to the professional development of teachers, with the majority of the training prescribed. This is especially true in the area of reading and writing instruction. The results of my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) suggest the district could evolve to include more teacher voice in the planning and evaluation of professional learning. We have talented educators with a passion for refining their craft. They would benefit from a structure or process that provides them with some of the responsibility for designing their learning. Furthermore, our teaching staff has asked for greater focus and coordination between their professional learning and the school/district improvement goals. They often do not see how their current learning activities build upon previous learning or how it falls into the school board’s strategic priorities, school improvement plans, and curriculum review cycle for the district.

The goal of my change plan is to shift some ownership of professional learning from administration to teaching staff. The administration can still establish priorities, craft strategic goals, and control the allocation of resources. However, we can provide teachers with greater input on the design of their learning and build their competency with professional collaboration. Ultimately, a comprehensive professional learning plan
for English Language Arts instruction should lead to higher rates of students meeting their growth targets in reading.

The Shermerville School District has a long history of high academic status on standardized assessments of both reading and math. The 2017 PARCC results placed us near the top of elementary districts in the state, according to the state's proficiency targets. However, we remain focused on the rate of student growth as a more sensitive measure of learning. Historically, modest growth rates on the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress (MAP) suggest our students' reading progress lags behind math. The school district transitioned from a basal reading series to a reading and writing workshop model four years ago. Under the direction of an outside consultant, our teaching staff has written curriculum maps aligned to the Common Core State Standards and currently combine a variety of published teaching materials to construct a balanced literacy model (Pressley & Allington, 2014) of instruction. The planning and preparation required to build cohesive instruction with this instructional approach are complex, and the district curriculum maps are under a state of revision.

While there is shared responsibility for student growth and a desire for academic excellence, teachers have expressed a perceived disconnect between the district's professional learning efforts and the school improvement plans. Teachers have also described a feeling of being overwhelmed with the breadth and pace of curriculum change. They have grown frustrated with the perceived top-down nature of professional learning and curriculum decision-making. Teachers desire greater input on the planning of their professional learning and more differentiated learning experiences. They have asked for a road map or notice of what and how they are focusing their learning. Also, I
believe we need to increase their level of engagement and intrinsic motivation for professional learning.

A district staff development committee, comprised of talented teachers from each of our three buildings, meets once a month to plan upcoming school improvement half-days and institute days. I believe this group could be empowered to make sensitive decisions on behalf of their colleagues. It begins with developing their background knowledge (e.g., professional learning standards, adult learning theory, learning design) and the creation of a district professional learning plan aligned to both the curriculum review cycle and the strategic priorities set by the board of education and administration. Ultimately, this committee can become effective advocates for standards-based professional learning and contribute to the district's strategic allocation of resources.

With greater alignment between our professional learning activities and the individual school improvement plans, teaching staff will have clarity around the allocation of time and resources. They will be able to draw a connection between the content of their professional learning to the strategic goals of the school district. Furthermore, our leadership teams will be able to link areas of teacher growth (i.e., skills, dispositions, and practices) to specific student learning outcomes. As we get better at measuring teachers’ application of learning, we may become more sensitive to changes in student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2000; Guskey, 2002; Killion, 2008).

The formation of professional learning communities may be the next step in establishing a balance between instrumental learning and transformative learning. Regardless of the configurations chosen (e.g., interest or issue-based, grade-level), these smaller learning communities can serve to create greater balance between district-driven
and educator-driven learning. Of course, there are specific skills and structures that are needed for these communities to be successful. Teachers will need training in professional collaboration. The district will also need to establish common formative assessments (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Bailey & Jakicic, 2012; Bailey, Jakicic, & Spiller, 2014; Moss & Brookhart, 2010) to measure student attainment of essential learning targets in reading and writing. Finally, we may need to revisit the master schedule with potential implications for future teacher contract negotiations. The teacher association and management will need to work together to consider how we currently utilize time and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of collaborative professional learning.

**Rationale**

The Shermerville School District staff have reported strong administrative support for their growth and development. There are a total of three institute days and five school improvement half-days dedicated to professional development currently on the school calendar. Also, a wide variety of professional learning activities are scheduled during student attendance days. These activities involve the contractual services of reading and writing consultants and a nascent peer learning lab initiative (lab classroom). Professional growth funds and generous tuition reimbursement are available for all staff. Despite this incredible focus on professional learning, my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) suggested general frustrations with the planning and delivery of professional development. Most teachers feel that professional development is "being done to them" and not "with them." I feel strongly that our district possesses the human capital and
necessary resources. What we need is a more strategic investment in our professional capital.

Like most school districts, we are committed to continuous learning and refining our craft of teaching. We wish to bring effective teaching practices into our school district, identify pockets of excellence, and cross-pollinate ideas. Educational leaders have struggled with the idea of focusing organizational structures and professional learning on ‘best practices’ or ‘next practices’ (Hannon, 2008; McNulty, 2011). Best practices are touted as those techniques or methods that have been proven effective in controlled research studies. However, the problem often lies with adapting them to the school’s specific context and student population. One size does not fit all. A research-based teaching strategy cannot simply be learned and implemented. It requires adaptation, experimentation, and thoughtful modification at the hands of teachers.

There needs to be some time allocated for innovation and developing new ways to reach students. Next practices or innovative practices come from confident and motivated teams of teachers focused on a common goal. Just as Tony Wagner (2008) has argued, our students require additional "survival skills" in the area of thinking, problem-solving, and communicating to compete in the twenty-first-century marketplace. Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) suggest communities of learners can come together to build their professional capital by focusing on both best practices and next practices. I believe this can be accomplished best through professional learning communities and vehicles for job-embedded learning. Adult learners require differentiated opportunities to collaborate and reflect on their practice (Drago-Severson, 2009).
As a building principal and member of the district’s staff development committee, I am sensitive to the work and lives of teachers. Consistent with national surveys (Day et al., 2011; Markow, Macia, & Lee, 2013), our teachers point to increasing workloads (e.g., paperwork, meetings, emails), student behavior, and a lack of administrative support as negative pressures. Strong leadership and supportive colleagues build resilience and a commitment to teaching. I know that a focus on continuous growth and development is important for our students’ achievement, but research has also shown that it is critical for the satisfaction and commitment of teachers in all phases of their career (Day, 2012). My staff frequently requests more time for collaboration and collegial support. However, there are some who fear this allocation of time will not be used productively. I believe we must improve upon our systems for professional learning and collaboration. We must build our teachers’ skills and capacity for teaming and collegial inquiry. The result will be increased levels of purpose and passion in our teaching staff.

Finally, the focus of this change leadership plan is on professional learning in the area of English Language Arts instruction. I plan to collaborate with the district's staff development committee on building a strong vision for professional learning and empowering teachers to monitor the effectiveness of their growth and development. While this change plan may positively impact the professional learning of teachers in all academic domains, I have decided to focus my attention on reading and writing instruction at the district's two elementary buildings. The teaching staff has reported that literacy continues to be the most complicated area of instruction. The reading/writing workshop model or Literacy Studio (Keene, 2009) requires significant planning and
preparation, strong professional judgment, formative assessment, and comfort with a certain degree of ambiguity.

**Goals**

The primary goal of this study is to collect teacher input to enact a professional learning plan for English Language Arts instruction. I aim to gradually shift the ownership for professional learning from the district administration to the teaching staff. In the end, I hope to establish a greater balance between instrumental and transformative learning (Dirkx, 1998; Mezirow, 1991; 1997; 2008; Kitchenham, 2008) in the Shermerville School District. Using Tony Wagner's ecology of change framework (2006), I have charted a course that takes into consideration the phases (preparing, envisioning, enacting) and levers (data, accountability, and relationships) of change. This study builds on the judgments and recommendations from my program evaluation of professional learning (Carlson, 2018) and can extend beyond a professional learning plan for English Language Arts to a more comprehensive model of transformational learning in the Shermerville School District.

In my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018), teacher perception data was collected and analyzed via survey and focus groups. I compared those perceptions to the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). Our teachers perceive strong administrative support for professional learning and understand its importance. However, they do not feel that they have much input on the design and planning. There is also confusion on how the content or focus of their learning related to school improvement efforts and the curriculum review cycle. We need a vehicle for teachers to provide greater input on the district's professional learning goals and a way to assess our progress or
effectiveness. Finally, teachers have expressed a desire to meet regularly for dialogue and reflection on their instructional craft. Job-embedded forms of professional learning support teachers as they manage change and complexity. A comprehensive professional learning plan could provide the district teaching staff with a clear vision and connect the various forms of learning cohesively.

Preparing Phase

The first step to creating a professional learning plan is to gather data on practices that support a cohesive framework for English Language Arts instruction, resulting in improved student achievement. Joellen Killion and Patricia Roy (2009) offer a backmapping model for planning results-based professional learning. It begins with analyzing student learning needs, establishing clear outcomes for professional learning, and conducting an assessment to identify educator learning needs. Thomas Guskey's backward planning model (2014; 2001) also begins with establishing student learning outcomes ahead of deciding which instructional practices should be targeted. I wish to avoid focusing on topics that will dilute our efforts to increase student growth in reading and writing. Our school district will benefit from a targeted plan that holds the staff development committee, literacy consultants, and building school improvement teams accountable.

A district needs assessment identifies specific evidenced-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction (Gambrell, Mallow, Marinak, & Mazzoni, 2014) that deserve attention. This assessment also explores various structures for teaming and collegial inquiry. Finally, we create a system of accountability for the professional learning plan with input from the teaching staff. We explore structures such as walk-
through protocols, informal observations with targeted administrative feedback, and the analysis of common formative assessments to drive professional learning communities.

**Envisioning Phase**

The second goal of my change plan is to work with the district's staff development committee to build their knowledge base of adult learning theory and models of powerful professional learning. Ellie Drago-Severson (2009) offers a model for transformational learning that takes into account developmental differences in adult learners. I can develop a series of learning modules on Robert Kegan's Constructive-Development Approach to Transformative Learning (2000), John Mezirow's Transformative Learning Model (2008), Drago-Severson's Pillar Practices (2009), and the Standards of Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). This foundational knowledge can serve to build a common set of beliefs and assumptions for this important leadership team. It can also provide a common language for teachers and administrators. Finally, addressing the change levers of accountability and relationships, the staff development committee may establish a set of meeting norms and expectations for this stipend position. We may also develop a cycle of rotating membership and a district map illustrating the various learning communities within the district and their connection to administrative and teacher teams.

**Enacting Phase**

The third goal of my change plan is to form a time study committee (Killion, 2013) that includes teacher association representatives, grade level representatives, building administrators, and central office administrators. The objective of this committee is to make a set of recommendations on how to capture time for collaborative
professional learning. This committee could look at ways to add consistent collaboration time at the elementary schools. This may begin with considering how we currently utilize time and evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of our collaborative professional learning. My work addresses gaps in opportunities that build teacher capacity to improve teaching and learning.

**Setting**

Shermerville School District consists of one middle school and two elementary schools. However, the focus of this change plan is on the elementary buildings. Both schools are located in affluent suburbs north of Chicago about two miles apart. The district has a per-pupil operating expenditure of $18,800 with an elementary school student to teacher ratio of 12:1. Greater than 80% of district teaching staff holds a master's degree. According to results from the 2016 Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers (PARCC) assessment, 54% of students met standards and 24% exceeded standards. In that same period, approximately 55% of students met their growth targets in reading on NWEA's Measures of Academic Progress.

School A services students in grades 1-5. There are 19 classroom teachers. It has an enrollment of 390 students with 12% identified as English Learners, 12% as students with disabilities, and 3% Low Income. The racial/ethnic mix of students is 60% White, 34% Asian, and 3% Hispanic. School B services students in grades preK-5. There are 18 classroom teachers. It has an enrollment of 341 students with 11% identified as English Learners, 16% as students with disabilities, and 0% Low Income. The racial/ethnic mix of students is 69% White, 27% Asian, and 2% Hispanic.
SECTION TWO: ASSESSING THE 4C’S

As a building principal and member of the district’s staff development committee, I took a systemic view of the Shermerville School District’s approach to professional learning and teacher collaboration in the area of elementary language arts instruction. Below is an explanation of how I applied the 4C Framework described in Tony Wagner’s *Change Leadership: A Practical Guide to Transforming our Schools* (2006). The 4Cs refer to the change arenas of context, conditions, competencies, and culture. This framework can be used as a diagnostic tool for assessing an organization's effectiveness. Combined with the change levers of data, accountability, and relationships, this framework can help "generate a fuller picture of where you might need to add to your initiative or circle back to address some earlier phase work" (p. 161). This exercise helped me appreciate how these four arenas work in conjunction with one another to produce the current professional learning experience for my teaching staff.

**Context**

Wagner et al. (2006) describes context as the “larger organizational systems within which we work, and their demands and expectations” (p. 104). Our school district enjoys strong parent support and involvement. As described above, we have a talented teaching staff and students who perform well on standardized measures of achievement. In addition to the PARCC, elementary students in grades 2-5 are assessed twice a year with the Northwest Evaluation Association’s Measures of Academic Progress. Our school improvement teams closely monitor MAP data trends. Last year, the percentage of students who met their reading growth targets ranged from 52% in 2nd grade to 64% in 5th
grade. We hope to increase these percentages with more focused professional learning and teacher collaboration.

Approximately 11 years ago, the school district created a professional development committee handbook. It borrowed heavily from the work of Stephanie Hirsh and Dennis Sparks (1997) as a foundation for the purpose and philosophy of professional learning. While the district administration and current staff development committee have not revisited this document, the stated goals of the professional development program remain relevant today. The goals include: (1) Adopt research-based standards for professional development inclusive of context, process, and content to enhance student achievement; (2) Review and monitor student needs utilizing quality assessment data; (3) Explore and implement new professional learning strategies; (4) Support the teacher appraisal system, and (5) Oversee the district's induction and mentoring program.

The district professional development handbook also includes a process for developing professional development goals. It begins with an assessment to determine which skills and knowledge students need to learn and where gaps exist in their learning. It goes on to delineate between the district, school, and individual professional development goals. Currently, the results of the annual professional development need assessment, and professional learning goals are not shared with building administration or teaching staff. The results of my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) suggest our teaching staff do not see a link between their professional learning and the school improvement plans or the curriculum review cycle.
Conditions

Wagner et al. (2006) describes conditions as the "visible arrangements and allocations of time, space, and money" (p. 102). The Shermerville School District has allocated a significant amount of time and resources toward professional learning. Our school calendar includes three full institute days and five school improvement half-days. The district employs one instructional math coach and one differentiation specialist. There have been some discussions about adding a literacy coach in the future. However, the administrative council has not yet reached consensus on a model for coaching. Between $60,000 and $80,000 are spent on literacy consultants each year. These consultants have provided valuable modeling and training to our teaching staff on the delivery of the reading and writing workshop instructional model (Calkins, 2013; Calkins & Tolan, 2010; Keene, 2009). Also, significant money has been spent on substitute teachers to provide release time for job-embedded learning. A lack of common grade-level plan time continues to be a topic of discussion with both management and the teacher association.

Teachers wrote our current English Language Arts curriculum maps under the direction of an outside consultant. They are aligned to the Common Core State Standards and include a spiraling approach to the teaching of explicit comprehension strategies (Keene, 2009; Keene & Zimmermann, 1997). Teachers are invited to use a wide variety of published materials to reach the learning targets in the curriculum. Some have expressed confusion or feelings of being overwhelmed with these different materials.

The district has historically maintained strong centralized control over professional learning and curriculum implementation. Just as Andy Hargreaves cautioned
(1994), this format has resulted in contrived collegiality. While it has increased the predictability of curriculum implementation, it has not served the role of providing teachers with spaces to collaborate, build instructional leadership skills, or develop methods of collegial inquiry (Drago-Severson, 2009; Fullan, 2010). Furthermore, building principals and school improvement teams lack time to address individual building needs or topics of interest.

Under the direction of an outside literacy consultant, the elementary schools identified two primary and two intermediate lab classrooms (Margolis & Doring, 2012; Reeves, 2009) to introduce best practices in reading and writing instruction. These lab classrooms also serve as a vehicle for lesson studies (Stepanek, Appel, Leong, Mangan, & Mitchell, 2007) and offer an exciting new vehicle for job-embedded professional learning and true collaboration. The district administration is beginning to ask how these lab classrooms can support the district’s professional learning goals. How can we move away from topic labs to long-term action research projects? How can we use the lab classrooms to inspire professional learning communities? If these lab classrooms do not evolve, we run the risk of losing teacher interest or satisfaction in this model of professional learning.

**Competencies**

Wagner et al. (2006) defines this arena of change as the "repertoire of skills and knowledge that influences student learning" (p. 99). As previously mentioned, we have experienced teachers and leaders within the school district. However, there is universal agreement that we are still refining our practice of delivering balanced literacy instruction. Reading and writing instruction is highly complicated. The skills our students
need require targeted and sophisticated systems of professional learning. We can enhance these educator competencies with coordinated changes in the arenas of Conditions and Culture.

With input from the district's two reading consultants (M. Griffith, personal communication, February 24, 2017; E. Keene, personal communication, April 17, 2017), a few key aspects of reading and writing instruction have been targeted for "next steps" in our professional learning plan. Our teachers will benefit from developing greater facility using the techniques of observation and conferring as formative assessment. In addition, our teachers could grow their skill with assessing students' surface (Grapho-phonic, Lexical, Syntactic) and deep reading structures (Semantic, Schematic, Pragmatic) based on their examination of student work samples (e.g., writing samples, writing in response to reading, art depicting student thinking during reading or writing). Finally, the management of an integrated reading and writing workshop is a significant goal. Ellin Keene (2009) refers to this as the Literacy Studio. These instructional techniques and practices were added to the needs assessment survey used in this change plan (see Appendix E).

The results of my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) suggest the district staff development committee lack a general understanding of adult learning theory and best practices in professional learning. The committee members could be more engaged in the planning, advocacy, and evaluation of a district professional learning plan. I also believe our teaching staff is limited in their ability to conduct collaborative conversations around instruction and their skill in analyzing student data. They would benefit from structures and protocols to create professional learning communities.
Culture refers to the "shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 102). Our school district's mission statement boldly states that we "exist to create a community that craves learning, fosters resiliency, and cares deeply for every child." I would argue this captures our culture. The administration and teaching staff share responsibility for student growth. Teachers place high expectations on themselves and their colleagues. The administration values innovation and risk-taking. These qualities come from a supportive school board focused on the educational and social-emotional experiences of the students we serve.

While our teaching staff express a desire to collaborate, there are some predictable obstacles that need to be addressed (Garmston, 2007; Garmston & Wellman, 2016). We have not given them opportunities to develop skills for peer feedback, planned dialogue, and data analysis. There are still some feelings of competition among teachers, and I believe many might find many collaborative learning designs (e.g., instructional rounds, Critical Friends Groups, video clubs) to initially feel threatening. Finally, we continue to work through some feelings of competition and resentment over the administration's selection of lab classroom teachers. Our success in processing these feelings and communicating with each other will define our next steps with collaborative professional learning.

Finally, teachers have expressed a feeling of being overwhelmed by the volume and pace of curricular change in the past 5-7 years. We have a culture of teachers who want to please or even impress the administration. Some feel that administrative expectations and their definition of high-quality performance are vague at times, or even
a shifting target. I believe we need to be careful with our early adopters and courageous teacher leaders. Just as Little and Bartlett (2002) describe, there is a paradox that exists with teacher leaders. Leadership and growth opportunities are stimulating. However, these very same opportunities may also lead to burnout and feelings of dissatisfaction with school administrators.
SECTION THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design Overview

The primary focus of my change project was to collect teacher input data (i.e., needs assessment) to craft a professional learning plan that supports a cohesive framework for English Language Arts instruction. The findings of this survey research design will become an instrument of action (Patton, 2008). Data collection will be used to inform steps three and four of the Killion and Roy (2009) backmapping model for planning results-based professional learning. Step three involves the development of specific student outcomes, and step four consists of the identification of teacher learning needs. These steps also connect with the Data and Outcomes Standards (Learning Forward, 2011).

Participants

I sent an electronic survey to all certified teaching staff in the two elementary buildings to develop a comprehensive plan for professional learning in English Language Arts instruction. Since nearly all certified staff are involved in the delivery of reading and writing instruction, it was important to sample as many as possible (Patton, 2008). The well-being of these respondents was taken into account. At a faculty meeting presentation, staff were provided with the purpose and scope of this data collection. They were asked to provide informed consent, assured their responses would be anonymous, and given the choice of participating.

A total of 67 certified staff members completed the survey. On the third question, participants indicated the grade level they served. Nineteen of the participants represented fine arts, PE, and related services. Another eight participants represented grades 6
through 8. The survey ended after the first three general questions for these 27 participants. The remaining 40 participants represented 87% of the teaching staff (i.e., classroom, English language, special education resource) at Kindergarten through 5th grade. These 40 participants were given an additional four questions to assist in setting educator and student learning goals in the area of English Arts instruction.

Data Gathering Techniques

My method of data collection was a small-scale, self-administered, quantitative survey (Punch, 2003). In collaboration with members of the staff development committee and English Language Arts curriculum committee, I constructed the questions using both categorical and continuous variables. Next, these questions were added to the district's annual professional development needs assessment. Appendix D contains the informed consent form explaining the purpose, format, and confidentiality of my data collection. The survey was delivered electronically to participants via an online survey tool and staff completed it during their spring institute day faculty meetings. The survey had three objectives and can be found in Appendix E.

1. Investigate staff perceptions of our elementary students’ performance relative to the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards in reading. This data will assist in setting student learning outcomes in our professional learning plan.

2. Investigate which aspects of literacy instruction our teachers feel deserve immediate attention (the content of their professional learning). These instructional strategies and practices were generated with input from the district’s ELA committee and literacy consultants.
3. Identify what aspects of the nascent (studio) lab classroom have been beneficial for teachers. Teacher feedback will lead to future directions for this form of job-embedded professional learning.

With guidance from outside reading consultants, our school district's English Language Arts curriculum committee has been focused on delivering explicit reading comprehension instruction at all grade levels. Teachers have written their grade-level curriculum maps around the explicit instruction of comprehension strategies. Our teaching staff shares the belief that reading and writing instruction should be integrated to the greatest extent possible. The school district's ELA curriculum maps follow a spiraling format that places a grade-level focus on specific comprehension strategies, but these strategies are repeated and reviewed at subsequent grade levels.

Given the complex set of reading behaviors that successful readers must possess, I needed a common or agreed upon list to use in this survey. Different lists may be adopted or created by the curriculum committee in the future, but for this initial professional planning effort, I selected the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (see Table 1). These ten standards represent the set of skills that experts in the field believe students should possess by the time they graduate high school (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). While there are grade-level progressions for each of these standards, I selected this common set to compare and plan across grade-levels.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Ideas and Details</th>
<th>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craft and Structure</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning and tone.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text (e.g., a section, chapter, scene, or stanza) relate to each other and the whole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integration of</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge and Ideas</td>
<td>Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity</td>
<td>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.CCRA.R.10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Data Analysis Techniques

Descriptive statistical methods were used to analyze the responses to the professional learning needs assessment. Percentages of Likert scale responses were used to determine teacher perceptions of how their students are performing relative to the Common Core Reading Anchor Standards. A rank order question answered which literacy instructional practices teachers are interested in studying. A dichotomous (check box) question was included to collect teacher perception of the district’s (studio) lab classroom.

Also, the survey included an optional open-ended question regarding the lab classroom. Comments were analyzed and categorized with a deductive process similar to one described by Crabtree and Miller (1999, ch. 9). Comments were grouped into four categories and sorted within a spreadsheet format. These comments were used to provide greater detail and context to the previous survey question.
SECTION FOUR: RELEVANT LITERATURE

Some educational researchers have found examples where measured improvements in instruction and student performance are associated with a highly “connected professional learning” design (Miles, Rosenberg, & Green, 2017). Specifically, they found three critical elements: (1) Rigorous, comprehensive curricula and assessment, (2) content-focused, expert-led collaboration, and (3) frequent, growth-oriented feedback. Effective school districts have organized their personnel, time, and money to connect these three elements for continuous teacher growth and improvement. I believe we can strengthen the connected professional learning in the Shermerville School District with a focus on planning, job-embedded learning designs that promote teacher collaboration, and the evaluation of professional learning. In this section, I address the relevant literature in these three areas.

Planning for Professional Learning

The impact of professional learning is highly dependent upon how well it is designed. A recent nationwide survey conducted by Corwin, the National Education Association, and Learning Forward (2017) found that many teachers feel they lack a voice in the planning of their own learning. They desire more time and support to bring new skills and strategies into their classrooms (i.e., job-embedded professional development). Furthermore, teachers feel their professional development plans should be driven by a variety of student data. Other surveys have shown that much of the professional learning activities teachers experience is perceived as fragmented or disconnected (Gates & Gates, 2014). My program evaluation of professional learning within the Shermerville School District (Carlson, 2018) found these same themes.
A systematic approach can be used to plan professional learning. Killion and Kennedy (2012) suggested effective plans connect student learning goals, educator performance standards, and learning content. This approach creates cohesion and clarity within the organization. Thomas Guskey (2014; 2001) has suggested that planning for professional learning should begin with the end in mind. He offers a backward planning process that begins with establishing student learning outcomes (2000, 2002). An analysis of standardized assessments, common district assessments, or other forms of classroom data can inform this process. A SMART goal setting framework (Doran, 1981) that incorporates specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-based objectives for students can also be helpful. These SMART goals are particularly useful for evaluating the impact of professional learning. This data analysis can also provide teaching staff with a vehicle for giving meaningful input on their professional learning design. It can give them a "voice" in the planning and develop greater awareness of their instructional strengths and weaknesses.

Educator performance standards, such as Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching (2011), are another important factor to consider when planning professional development. This research-based rubric of effective teaching practices provides specific behaviors in the areas of planning/preparation, classroom management, instruction, and professionalism that lead to high levels of student achievement. By using components within this framework, educators can see clear connections between their professional learning and their appraisal system. Individual teachers must see how they function within a larger system that is focused on continuous improvement and reflection. It also
satisfies the feedback component expressed within Miles et al.’s (2017) connected professional learning framework.

Similar to educator performance standards, the 2011 Professional Learning Standards from Learning Forward, as discussed in detail within my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018), are another set of guidelines to be considered in planning. The standards address learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning design, implementation, and outcomes. Collectively, these seven standards can increase the effectiveness of adult learning and communicate a relationship between changes in teacher practice and student results. The role of these standards is to guide practice. For example, they may cause the planning team to consider how various learning communities maintain accountability and alignment. What types of technology (i.e., data warehouse) are available? Which learning designs will lead to higher engagement of the adult learners? What are the systems for feedback during the implementation of learning and how will student outcomes be measured? By using these standards, planning teams may be able to examine the driving forces (levers) and restraining forces (barriers) involved in professional learning within the district (Killion, Hord, Roy, Kennedy, & Hirsh, 2012). My program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) included a recommendation to educate the staff development committee in this framework, beginning with a self-assessment or gap analysis.

Finally, the content of professional learning is determined by examining the intersection between student learning goals and educator learning goals. In other words, what do we want our students to learn or demonstrate in the classroom? What educator skills or understandings are needed to realize this student growth? Educational
researchers and policy advocates such as Wiener and Pimentel (2017) have highlighted effective systems or structures that integrate curriculum into professional learning. These school systems have developed job-embedded learning opportunities facilitated by teacher leaders or content-area specialists. Learning cycles reflect a lesson study approach, peer observation, and collaborative analysis of common assessments or student work. Teachers use release time to work with their colleagues on improving their instructional practice and the delivery of standards-aligned curriculum. The district administration may decide the content of professional learning and align it to district goals. It is likely dictated by the curriculum review cycle and the strategic planning found in Board of Education goals/priorities.

The analysis of common district assessments is one practice that can inform the planning for professional learning. Teams of teachers design common assessments for monitoring student attainment of essential learning targets (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012; Bailey et al., 2014; DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2010). These learning targets are typically aligned to learning standards and reflected in the shared curriculum of a particular teacher group (i.e., department, grade level band). They represent the essential outcomes teachers have committed themselves to help their students learn. In support of these learning targets, job-embedded forms of coaching and feedback are used to help transfer adult learning to classroom instruction. Student learning outcomes inform the cycle of continuous improvement (Hirsch, Psencik, & Brown, 2014) by offering further refinements to instructional practice and new professional learning goals. This cycle is represented in Figure 1.
Figure 1. The cycle of continuous improvement (Hirsh et al., 2014)

The Backmapping Model for Planning Results-Based Professional Learning (Killion, 1999; Killion & Roy, 2009) provides seven specific steps and guiding questions for the development of a connected professional learning plan (see Figure 2). It begins with the analysis of student learning needs. A staff development committee may start with asking the question, "What do we want our students to know or be able to do?" As described earlier, a collaborative analysis of student assessment data (Colton, Langer, & Goff, 2015) will lead to the identification of missing skills or metacognitive strategies. Another approach is the analysis of performance assessments (Center for Collaborative Education, 2012). Patterns may emerge, and specific student groups can be targeted. Of course, this same process can be accomplished within smaller professional learning communities that are focused on analyzing which instructional strategies or approaches are most effective at getting student results (DuFour & Reeves, 2016).
The second step of the backmapping model is to identify unique characteristics of the school community, the school district, and teaching staff. The school improvement teams can accomplish this work by analyzing school-wide surveys or standardized assessment data. There may be patterns or trends from teacher self-assessments or professional learning interest surveys that define the specific areas of deficiency or opportunities for growth. The district's staff development committee may have collected and analyzed feedback surveys from prior professional learning activities. Content area curriculum committees (e.g., English Language Arts) may have generated gaps in the district curriculum maps or specific instructional areas that need to be bolstered to meet state learning standards.

Some school districts have used an asset map exercise (E. Keene, personal communication, April 17, 2017) to reveal a school’s instructional strengths and help the
faculty to set goals related to literacy learning. Teams of teachers may rate their assets related to research-based literacy teaching and learning on a rubric. These asset maps are then compiled with other teacher team maps to produce a building-wide scatterplot – a frequency distribution with high, low, or wide clusters. This exercise is meant to engage teachers in a thoughtful discussion about the school’s current performance level in a content domain such as English Language Arts. It can be completed twice each year with the help of a liaison or consultant. The scatterplot is a tool to identify a few specific goals and responsibilities within job-embedded forms of professional learning (step 3). Regular reviews of the asset map help keep job-embedded professional learning focused and on track. An asset map exercise is meant to be used as a feedback loop for school improvement plans and can complement other forms of student data analysis (Hale, 2000; Killion, 2013; Killion & Roy, 2009; Learning Forward, 2016).

The identification of educator learning needs follows the identification of student learning outcomes. As expressed in the Learning Design Standard (Learning Forward, 2011), adult learning theory should be considered within the planning phase. Design considerations include active engagement, modeling, feedback, and ongoing support. Opportunities for differentiated learning experiences are also necessary to support a change in teacher knowledge, skills, attitudes, and practices. Some learning designs will be more appropriate for large groups vs. small groups, and all professional learning plans will likely include a combination of individual and collective experiences. Collaborative learning and opportunities for reflection can promote deep learning.

Formal or planned learning is intended to promote change. The KASAB model (Killion, 2008) discussed in greater detail at the end of this section, offers a framework
that encompasses five types of learning: Knowledge, attitude, skill, aspiration, and behavior. Unfortunately, much of the professional development provided to teachers rests at the surface level - delivery of knowledge and skills. This type of learning is mainly instrumental or operational. For example, if the district mandates a new set of curriculum materials or a specific instructional strategy, teachers may receive a brief explanation of the underlining theories or research. However, this learning design may lack opportunities for teachers to explore their beliefs, values, and motivations associated with this new information. In order to accomplish deeper or transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991, 1997, 2008), there must be consideration of a broader set of changes.

Professional learning developers, facilitators, and coaches are tasked with managing change in their participants. It can be helpful to understand the concerns or needs of the adult learners involved. The Stages of Concern Questionnaire (George, Hall, & Stiegelbauer, 2006), is another useful framework that may guide planning teams when working on specific educator learning goals. The seven stages span from "unconcerned" to "focusing." This 35 item questionnaire can reveal concerns of staff related to a particular innovation or change process. It can be used to provide an entry point to support adult learners or to strategically group participants.

The fifth step of the back-mapping model for planning professional learning involves study or research on specific professional learning programs, strategies, or interventions. Easton and Morganti-Fisher (2014) suggest learning design begins with understanding adult learning theory and adult learning preferences. Planners must consider how adult learning will be applied to their instructional setting and student population. Easton (2015) has also edited a comprehensive collection of powerful
learning designs and practical applications for educators. It includes strategies for particular needs and circumstances, including emerging technologies.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2014a; 2014b) authored two large-scale reports on effective professional learning design and emerging global trends. These studies produced a practical framework with ten critical elements that may be considered during the planning phase. The elements are grouped under the categories of environment, delivery, and action. Each element has a set of questions to guide the development of new professional learning, enhance existing professional learning, or evaluate ongoing professional learning.

The final two steps of the back-mapping model address the implementation and evaluation of the professional learning plan. The design team develops a strategy, including the responsible staff developers or support staff. It is helpful to have a timeline and a list of resources necessary for success. Planners may wish to set benchmarks or interim assessments/surveys to monitor progress. An essential component of this phase is establishing job-embedded forms of coaching and feedback to teachers as they work to transfer the content of their professional learning to their day-to-day instruction in the classroom. I address the evaluation of professional learning in greater detail at the end of this section.

**Job-Embedded Professional Learning**

Professional learning can occur in a wide variety of contexts and forms. Traditional forms of professional development tend to be sporadic and often removed from the schools and classrooms in which teachers live. Furthermore, these designs often leave teachers to learn in isolation. Educational researchers widely agree that teachers
must find time for regular collaborative adult learning experiences (Garmston, 2016; Hirsh & Killion, 2008). Jim Bryson’s philosophy of engaging adult learners (2013) is grounded in 4 core beliefs: Teaching is dialogue, learning is engagement, growth is discovery, and knowledge is application. Job-embedded professional development (JEPD) refers to learning formats that are closely connected to the day-to-day work of teachers and address these core beliefs. JEPD often includes working with students and classrooms within the teachers' building or even at their grade level band. The learning occurs primarily during the school day and addresses authentic problems of practice or more immediate needs of the teachers involved (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009; Croft, Coggshal, Dolan, & Powers, 2010; Darling-Hammond, Hyler, & Gardner, 2017; Parise & Spillane, 2010; Stewart, 2014).

A central goal of the district's professional learning program is to connect what teachers are learning with how they are providing instruction to their students. Another way of looking at this is by joining the district curriculum with teacher practice. Wiener and Pimentel (2017) have offered some things for educational leaders to consider. The first is an emphasis on high-quality curriculum. Just as I discussed earlier, the district curriculum and associated student assessments can serve as an entry point for planning professional learning. Teachers require a standards-aligned curriculum that supports all students in their care. They need time to become familiar with the content and resource materials. It is best for internal and external content experts to be involved. Internal experts may take the form of curriculum coordinators, teachers on special assignment, peer learning labs, or instructional coaches.
Another important takeaway from Wiener and Pimentel's (2017) research is that content-specific inquiry cycles improve practice. Below, I describe a few common forms of JEPD that include a cycle of study, application, and reflection. Teachers benefit from studying how their students are responding to the curriculum and instructional practices expected by the school district. The use of collaborative protocols and structures ensure that their collaboration time is focused and meaningful. Teachers must contribute and accept a culture of true collaboration in service of student learning. Just as researcher Carrie Leana has suggested (2011), "if students are to show measurable and sustained improvement, schools must also foster what sociologists label ‘social capital' – the patterns of interactions among teachers."

**Professional Learning Communities**

The term ‘professional learning communities’ (Easton, 2011; Fullan, 2001; Senge, 1990) has come to mean different things to different people. Many educators may automatically think of Richard and Rebecca DuFour and their school reform ideas (DuFour, 2004; DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Others take a broader lens of school leadership and capacity building. For example, Lambert (1998) defined professional learning communities as "places in which teachers participate in decision making, have a shared sense of purpose, engage in collaborative work, and accept joint responsibility for the outcomes of their work" (p. 11). This speaks to school culture and the nature of professional relationships within the organization. It also suggests that professional learning communities can vary in group size, membership, and how often they meet. Most experts agree on a definition that includes three essential components: A group of educators that (1) meet on a regular basis to engage in professional learning (2) for the
purpose of refining their craft, (3) in order to help all students succeed (Easton, 2009; 2011).

Participants of a professional learning community can employ a wide variety of learning designs. They may conduct action research, study topics of interest, analyze student work, discuss professional readings, etc. Regardless of the learning activities involved, it is important for the group to be structured and led by a trained facilitator (Easton, 2015; McDonald, Mohr, Dichter, & McDonald, 2013). Strong facilitation and adherence to routines allow teachers to remain focused on problems of practice. Most often, this facilitator is a member of the teaching team. DuFour and Reeves (2016) warn that professional learning communities can become congenial or unproductive without structures or protocols. Nelson, Deuel, Slavit, and Kennedy (2010) offer a set of questions that teams can use to shift their conversations from congenial to collegial (see Appendix H). Meeting norms, goal setting, adoption of roles, procedures for resolving disagreements, and data analysis are all collaborative skills necessary for effective and efficient professional learning communities (Garmston & Wellman, 2016; Hirsh & Crow, 2017; Killion & Roy, 2009). Trust is another issue that professional learning communities may need to address. It may be difficult for some to be in a vulnerable place with their student data or instructional risk-taking. Building and district leaders should also be mindful of staff turnover and provide regular training or orientation for new members that join the professional learning communities already in progress.

Professional learning communities may find four overarching questions helpful in guiding their collaboration (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, & Many, 2013). Teams of teachers can select one or more of these questions to focus their work or launch a new area of
investigation. The first question is ‘What do we want our students to learn?’ This may lead teams to consider essential questions (McTighe & Wiggins, 2013; Wiggins & McTighe, 2005) and learning standards found within the district curriculum. It will undoubtedly assist with both horizontal alignment, the pacing of instruction, and vertical alignment. On any given grade-level or department team, you will find teachers of varying years of experience. It is important they share information and agree on the fundamental concepts or skills necessary for student mastery. A look at the progression or sequence of learning from one grade level to another is also valuable.

The second question is ‘How will we know when they have learned?’ This question addresses common formative assessments (Bailey & Jakicic, 2012) or the analysis of student work (Langer, Colton, & Goff, 2003; Little, Gearhart, Curry, & Kafka, 2003). Educational assessment experts have long argued that end of quarter or end of year summative assessments (e.g., PARCC, NWEA Measures of Academic Progress) do not offer teachers timely feedback on how their students are responding to instruction (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Moss & Brookhart, 2010). These types of assessments may be useful for program evaluation or accountability, but they lack sensitivity to instruction. Rather than conducting an assessment of learning, teachers can collaborate on assessments for learning (Greenstein, 2010; Stiggins, 2005; Stiggins, Arter, Chappuis, Chappuis, 2007). By designing more frequent assessments within a unit of instruction, collaborative teams can see how individual students are responding to their instruction. Teachers can analyze the data and make adjustments or differentiate instruction to meet the needs of all students.
Bailey and Jakicic (2012) provide a structured protocol for conducting data team meetings (p. 115). Ahead of the meeting, each teacher organizes their classroom data. The data should be available by learning target and by student name. At the meeting, teachers begin by answering how many students are falling below proficiency, at proficiency, or above proficiency. If students are not showing proficiency on the given learning target(s), the reasons for their shortfall are explored. These teacher teams may also consider if any single classroom achieved better results than the others. If so, the instructional strategies or practices used by this teacher may inform pathways for those students not reaching proficiency in other classrooms. The team may brainstorm another strategy that could be used for reteaching that are different from their original approach. Of course, enrichment activities are planned for those students who are scoring above proficiency targets. Finally, the data team will prepare for how students will be reassessed after the instructional interventions are delivered.

The third question is ‘What will we do if they don't learn?’ As described in the above data meeting protocol, this question can focus collaborative teams on implementing interventions or strategic instructional groupings. Professional learning communities may find this to be the point at which team members share specific instructional success and challenges. It can lead to action research and collaboration with individuals outside of their immediate collaborative team. This may also be the point when multi-tiered systems of support are considered (Gamm et al., 2012).

The fourth question is ‘What will we do if they already know it?’ By answering this question, teams can develop extension opportunities for students. Teams may consider ways to explore students' depth of knowledge (Webb, 1997) by considering the
cognitive demands of their learning tasks. For example, teachers may look into the complexity of their classroom assignments. Can they move students into more cognitively demanding tasks that require abstract thought or work with non-routine problems? Further collaboration with enrichment and content experts may be needed. Grouping of students across classrooms may be necessary. The team may also extend learning progressions and hold vertical curriculum conversations with other teams.

Critical Friends Group

As noted in the discussion of professional learning communities above, an important shift in the content or substance of teacher conversations is needed to move instructional practices forward. This shift refers to moving collaborative teams from polite conversations about teaching to deeper conversations around the connection between instruction and student learning. Often this shift can only occur with the use of structured protocols and norms for collaboration. Leaders can support collaboration by setting a clear purpose, allocating time and resources, developing knowledgeable facilitators, and implementing a system of accountability (Hirsh, 2017).

The Critical Friends Group protocols developed by the National School Reform Faculty are one excellent source for collaborative learning teams to address problems of practice or to think deeply about teaching practices and student learning. The School Reform Initiative website (2018) includes an extensive database of protocols for a wide variety of purposes. These protocols provide specific roles for members (e.g., coach/facilitator, presenter, responder). While the protocols can be used for a single meeting, they are intended to provide a structure for more ongoing collaborative work. Often, a coach or teacher leader trained in the Critical Friends Group protocol is used to
establish and monitor the work of the collaborative team. What differentiates this structure from other professional learning communities is the role of a process observer. The process observer is someone tasked with observing and providing feedback to the group on their collaboration.

While there are a wide variety of protocols and meeting purposes, the general model of a Critical Friends Group meeting follows four steps (Quate, 2015). Ahead of the meeting, the coach/facilitator meets with the presenter. The presenter is often an individual teacher who has a problem of practice or sample of student work that he/she wishes to study with the collaborative team. The presenter prepares the student work for analysis, develops a question that will frame or guide the discussion, and selects a protocol. At the first meeting, the Critical Friends Group will establish norms. All sessions begin with a brief opening activity designed to engage all members present (step 1). Next, the group uses a protocol to discuss a piece of text, video, or student data set (step 2). This step is conducted to build a shared understanding of the issue relevant to the presenter. The bulk of the meeting is devoted to a structured conversation on the presenter's student work and previously selected protocol (step 3). These structured conversations often provide opportunities for clarifying questions, probing questions, and group discussion of the work. The session ends with a reflection on how the group worked together (step 4). This may also include the process observer's thoughts and suggestions for future meetings. The group drafts action steps and plans the next session.

The "tuning protocol" is a typical structure used by Critical Friends Groups to examine student work or analyze a specific lesson (Allen & McDonald, 1993; Breidenstein, Fahey, Glickman, & Hensley, 2012; Easton, 2002; 2009). However, this
protocol may also be used by a team of teachers to critique a unit of instruction, a classroom management plan, or even an evaluation system. The protocol is intended to assist teacher(s) with improving or refining their instruction and planning to accomplish their stated objective better. Table 2 describes the structure of an hour-long meeting to examine student work.

Table 2

*Tuning Protocol for Lesson Plan Reflection and Revision (Easton, 2009)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Time</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Opening</td>
<td>The facilitator reviews the steps of the protocol, member roles, and schedule.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presentation</td>
<td>The presenter shares selected student work sample(s), relevant background information, and a problem of practice. Participants listen and take notes.</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clarifying Questions</td>
<td>The facilitator asks participants if they have any questions. Clarifying questions should not be evaluative.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual Writing</td>
<td>The facilitator reviews the presenter’s key questions and provides participants with time to silently write down their reflections.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participant Discussion</td>
<td>The presenter physically steps away from the table and listens/observes from the outside. Participants discuss the student work and brainstorm ideas/solutions for the presenter.</td>
<td>15 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presenter Reflection</td>
<td>The presenter reflects aloud what he/she heard in the participant discussion. The presenter may review possible strategies, solutions, or next steps.</td>
<td>10 minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Debrief</td>
<td>All members reflect on their use of the protocol, participant take-aways, and plan the next meeting.</td>
<td>5 minutes</td>
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**Peer Learning Labs**

Peer learning labs or studio classrooms are another form of job-embedded professional learning that can serve as a vehicle for ongoing support and implementation.
of instructional practices (Carpenter & Sherretz, 2012; Houk, 2010; Margolis & Deuel, 2009; Reeves, 2009; Sweeney, 2010). Consistent with Margolis’s description of a hybrid teacher leader (2012), studio classroom teachers maintain a teaching schedule while simultaneously leading teachers in some capacity. They offer direct modeling of practices the district may be promoting or researching. Studio teachers invite colleagues into their classroom to observe how their instructional decision-making impact the learning of students within the same grade-level, building, or school district. Studio teachers are not necessarily expected to be the expert. Instead, they are expected to be vulnerable, open and honest about their practice. They invite peers into a safe and authentic setting for instructional planning, implementation, experimentation, and refinement of professional practice.

Peer learning labs include aspects of lesson study (Lewis & Hurd, 2011; Lewis, Perry, Friedkin, & Roth, 2012; Stepanek et al., 2007), shadowing (Croft et al., 2010), peer coaching (Showers & Joyce, 1996), and classroom walk-throughs (Downey & Frase, 2003; Downey, Steffy, Poston, & English, 2010). Teachers may be invited to attend a single lab classroom experience (i.e., topic study) or a series of related lab classroom experiences (i.e., immersion study). There is often a pre-observation discussion where teachers collaboratively plan or discuss the learning objectives. Direct observation of the studio classroom can include the collection of student observation data or gathering evidence of student learning. A post-observation discussion may involve reflective dialogue and the planning of subsequent lessons. Participating teachers are often asked to submit a statement of interest and may be asked to contribute directly to the planning or reflective dialogue phases.
While the role of studio classroom teacher may provide teacher leaders with a unique opportunity for growth and general satisfaction of contributing to the growth of other colleagues, this role can also come with job stress. Studies have highlighted some of the challenges inherent in hybrid teacher leadership. Some teacher leaders feel the additional responsibilities can interfere with their primary duties as a classroom teacher (Brooks, Scribner, & Eferakorho, 2004). It may also negatively impact their relationships with other teachers if they are perceived as having more power (Brosky, 2011; Margolis, 2012) or seen as having preferential treatment by the school administration.

**Instructional Coaching**

Studies of instructional coaching have found this professional development vehicle can accelerate teacher growth and result in strong student performance (Blazer & Kraft, 2015; Joyce & Showers, 1996; Marzano, Simms, Roy, Heflebower, & Warrick, 2013; Odden, 2012). There are a wide variety of coaching roles found in the school setting. Roles can include data coaches, curriculum or content specialists, teacher mentors, and learning facilitators (Killion & Harrison 2017). It is important for the building leader to define the role and expectations of coaches. Instructional coaches have been described as individuals who assist teachers with the implementation of research-based instructional practices. They also emphasize reflection on professional practice and goal-setting in their work with teachers. Instructional coaches often have deep knowledge of the curriculum or content. Their work is guided by an understanding of theory and instructional best practices.

Knight (2007; 2011, ch. 2) stresses a partner approach where coaches operate on equal ground with the teachers they serve. Their work is conducted outside of the formal
appraisal system. The partnership approach is rooted in conversation. Through active listening, these instructional coaches are able to help their partners identify areas of strength and areas of instructional improvement in the service of students. Coaches develop cycles, and a gradual release of responsibility is used to shift ownership from the coach to the partner teacher. It may begin with modeling or co-teaching and eventually shift to guidance and feedback. Student work samples or observations of student learning behaviors are almost always at the heart of this professional collaboration.

The broader role of an instructional coach is that of a learning facilitator (Killion & Harrison, 2017, ch. 8). Coaches identify use the goals found in district and school improvement plans. They often help to develop the professional learning plan and guide effective adult learning designs (see Figure 2) within the building. Learning facilitators may shift between coaching roles as needed, working with teams of teachers, pairs, or individuals. They often are aware of trends within the building, partnering teachers with similar interests or needs. With a deep understanding of the professional learning standards (Learning Forward, 2001) and a theory of adult learning (Drago-Severson, 2009), these individuals may assist teams with the collaborative analysis of student work, facilitation of Critical Friends Groups, learning walk-throughs, or lesson studies.

The Gradual Release of Responsibility model was first introduced as a form of reading comprehension instruction (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and has since been adopted for instructional coaching (Sweeney, 2010). Educational researchers (Moore, 2004; Collet, 2012) have shown that coaching can be individualized by placing teachers along a continuum of confidence and competence in a particular instructional strategy or approach. They can meet teachers at various entry points and move them thoughtfully
toward a place of independence. Facilitated dialogue and conversation can make teachers more aware of their practices and their influence on student learning. However, modeling and co-teaching may be critical next steps toward instructional competence. This approach places the coach-teacher relationship at the heart of the work. Coaches mediate their role and scaffold their work to move teachers from a place of understanding and reflection to one of implementation and practice.

**Evaluating the Impact of Professional Learning**

Joellen Killion (2017) provides three primary challenges to the evaluation of professional learning in schools: Need for clear outcomes, clarity of evaluation purpose, and appropriate methodology. Too often, staff development committees launch into designing learning activities before considering what teacher and student outcomes they want to achieve. Many staff development committees can relate to the experience of reading through teacher satisfaction surveys with comments about the food, temperature, comfort of seating, or the schedule of activities. Unfortunately, these measurements of the learning process distract from the true purpose or intended outcome of the professional learning. Killion (2008) warns,

> Beginning a change project without knowing where one is going creates confusion – uncertainty and doubt about what to do differently to see changes in educator practices and improvement in student results. When educators focus on activities first, they assume that changes and improvements will result. (p. 46)

This cautionary statement underscores the findings of my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018).
Clear Outcomes

Thomas Guskey (2017) suggests the evaluation of professional learning should begin by answering three simple questions: What do we want to accomplish? How will we know if we do? What else might happen, good or bad? The first two questions can include changes in educator knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, or behaviors.

Knowledge refers to the content, concepts, and information used as the basis for the professional learning agenda. Attitude refers to the beliefs teachers hold about the value of the information being presented or the instructional strategies suggested by the district administration/coach/professional developer. Skills refer to the educator’s capacity for change. Aspirations are what teachers report as their internal motivation for change. Finally, behaviors refer to the consistent application of the suggested practices or strategies within the teachers’ classroom setting.

Educator skills and behaviors may be identified from instructional rounds (City et al., 2009) or examining common trends in action research projects (e.g., professional growth plans, student growth plans). They can also come from a staff needs assessment that follows the KASAB theory of change (Killion, 2008). Figure 3 illustrates how this framework could be used to establish specific educator learning outcomes.
**Student outcome:** Students will apply critical thinking processes to solve problems in multiple authentic situations and explain their selection and use of appropriate thinking processes to solve the problems.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Educator outcomes</th>
<th>Sample educator outcomes for each KASAB</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Educators develop a shared understanding of attributes and types of critical thinking, appropriate uses of the types, and understanding of how students at various developmental levels apply critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Attitudes</strong></td>
<td>Educators demonstrate the value of explicit teaching of critical thinking skills by integrating it into lessons and units and by assessing students' use of critical thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Skills</strong></td>
<td>Educators articulate procedures and strategies for explicit teaching of developmentally appropriate critical thinking skills and integrate them into planned lessons and units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Aspirations</strong></td>
<td>Educators demonstrate the intention to implement explicit instruction in critical thinking by designing content-specific lessons, and units within which they will teach and students will apply critical thinking skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Behaviors</strong></td>
<td>Educators design student learning tasks that provide students opportunities to learn and apply critical thinking skills in content-specific authentic learning, implement the explicit teaching of critical thinking skills, assess students' use of critical thinking, and reflect on the effects of their own practice to refine future practice.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 3. Educator Outcomes Defined as KASABs (Killion 2008, 2017)*

Adult learning is non-linear. It does not follow a clear, sequential process. Just as Drago-Severson posits (2009), educators need a variety of supports and experiences to grow and change. Like the students they teach, adults find themselves at different developmental stages of understanding at different times. Their learning and transformation require self-examination and professional dialogue. Knowledge, attitudes, skills, aspirations, and behaviors are all interconnected. Therefore, Killion (2008) suggests that assessment of professional learning should include interim data on at least 2 of these aspects of change.
Ultimately, the goal of all effective professional learning efforts is the improvement in student outcomes. Student learning outcomes may come from the analysis of standardized assessments, common formative assessments, analysis of student work, classroom observations, and even student questionnaires (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006; Guskey & Jung, 2013). The evaluation of professional learning should include multiple sources of data, and it is important that teaching staff view these sources of data as credible and relevant to their classroom work (Guskey, 2007; Guskey, Roy, & Von Frank, 2014).

Many school districts already have benchmark assessments in place. These established data sources are preferred given the simple fact that they inform a cycle of continuous improvement (see Figure 1) and provide a starting point for the backward planning of future professional planning (see Figure 2), as presented earlier in the section. Regardless, it is best to identify these sources of data at the onset of all professional learning endeavors. The data sources may already be written directly into the school improvement plans.

**Clarity of Evaluation Purpose**

It is critical to establish a clear purpose for the evaluation of professional learning to be truly effective. This can prevent confusion or disappointment in the various stakeholder groups. Killion (2017) suggests that professional learning evaluations are conducted for one of three purposes: Merit, worth, or impact. A staff development committee may explore the merit of a particular professional development activity by surveying teacher perceptions of how their professional learning aligns to the Learning Forward Standards (2011). Worth refers to the participants’ perceived value of the time
they have spent in the targeted professional learning activity. Impact refers to how the professional learning contributed to the intended or stated outcomes.

**Appropriate Methodology**

Once the purpose or goal is clearly established, research questions can help to shape the evaluation design. Guskey (2000, 2002, 2005) has developed a helpful model that includes 5 levels of professional learning evaluation that build in complexity. Each level requires more time and resources to collect. The first level looks at participants’ reactions to the professional learning experience. This may take the form of feedback surveys. Data can be used for improving the program design and delivery. The second level asks whether participants acquired the intended knowledge and skills introduced. This data can be used for improving the content, format, or organization of the professional learning activity. The third level of evaluation considers organizational support. Guskey (2004) has noted that professional learning efforts often fall short due to a lack of participation or support from leadership. It might be helpful to ask here if sufficient resources were made available. Did the administration support the implementation of new knowledge and teaching skills? Was success recognized and shared? This data can be used by school/district leadership to inform future change efforts. The fourth level of evaluation considers specific evidence of participants' use of new knowledge and skills and measures the degree and quality of implementation. The fifth and final level of evaluation pertains to student learning outcomes. Did the professional learning affect student performance? Data from levels four and five can be used to demonstrate the overall impact of professional learning and guide the ongoing implementation of a particular change effort.
Although experimental or randomized designs provide the most reliable and valid results (Patton, 2008), most school districts are likely to adopt a descriptive or naturalistic evaluation design (Killion, 2008). The experimental design would require a comparison of the student learning outcomes between similar groups of students – groups exposed to teachers who received the professional learning and groups that did not. This approach would help to eliminate other causal factors attributing to changes in educator and student performance (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). If the community has made inquiries or the board of education is facing difficult budgetary decisions, these more rigorous designs can be considered. However, the feasibility or limitations within the school setting are apparent. Therefore, most school teams must rely on surveys, observations, and case studies. Again, the evaluation design is driven by the intended purpose and audience.

For school teams charged with evaluating the professional learning plan, Killion (2008) offers a helpful template (see Figure 4). It is a set of questions that can help to guide the evaluation plan by identifying the outcomes, clarifying the purpose, selecting data sources and methods. This one-page evaluation plan will communicate to the school, team, or grade level how they will know if their professional learning efforts achieved the desired results. This exercise can also lead to next steps – continue the professional learning effort, modify, or support with different follow-up activities.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions</th>
<th>Answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning goals (changes expected for educators and/or students)…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evaluation questions we want to answer (crafted from expected changes)…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To answer the questions, we need to measure…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By using the following evaluation design…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By collecting the following kinds of data…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data will be most useful if it comes from (data sources)…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data will be collected using (data collection methods)…</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Figure 4. Killion’s (2008) Professional Learning Evaluation Framework*
SECTION FIVE: DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The findings of the professional learning needs assessment are reported in this chapter. As described in Section Three, I surveyed the elementary teaching staff to inform a professional learning plan with specific educator and student learning goals in the area of English Language Arts. My four questions were embedded into a larger district survey. I begin by presenting the aggregate findings to these four survey questions with some comparisons between the responses from primary (Kindergarten through 2nd grade) and intermediate teachers (3rd through 5th grade). This is followed by an interpretation of the survey findings.

Anchor Reading Standards

The survey asked teachers how their students demonstrated the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading (2017) to prioritize or narrowing the focus of student learning objectives on our district professional learning plan. The first survey question required teachers to reflect upon the students in their classroom and rate to what extent they demonstrated each of the ten reading skills/behaviors using a 4-point scale of "not at all," "very little," "somewhat", or "to a great extent." These ten anchor standards are further organized into four groupings: Key Ideas and Details (standards 1-3), Craft and Structure (standards 4-6), Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (standards 7-9), Range and Level of Text Complexity (standard 10). This organizational structure can be found in Section Three, Table 1.

After viewing the data, I decided to collapse the lowest two rating categories of "not at all" and "very little." This was done to simplify the presentation of findings. With an adjusted Likert scale of 1 to 3, the rating averages for each standard was computed
(see Appendix G). In Figure 5, a bar graph displays four groupings of the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards ranked by the average rating of all teachers who participated in the survey.

**Figure 5.** The extent to which students demonstrate each of the reading skills/behaviors found in the four groupings of College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards

The results of this survey indicate that teachers view the Key Ideas and Details Anchor Standard grouping as an area of relative strength for our students. The three anchor standards within this grouping received a combined average rating of 2.23. These anchor standards refer to the close reading of text in order to draw logical inferences, the ability to cite specific text evidence when writing or speaking, and the ability to determine central ideas or themes within a text. This finding is not surprising given the emphasis that our schools have placed on interactive read aloud and guided reading. We
have explicitly taught the summarizing reading behavior of talking about the important information in text (e.g., characters, story problem, events of the plot, and resolution). We have also explicitly taught the practice of recognizing character traits and motivations or how characters change over the course of a story.

The Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity standard received the second highest rating average of 2.18. This finding suggests that our teaching staff feel confident in their knowledge of students as readers and their ability to differentiate reading instruction. Our teaching staff considers the complexity of the texts their students are reading and the supports necessary for them to make meaning. We have spent considerable time on the gradual release of responsibility model (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) and execute a balanced literacy instructional framework that engages students in reading, talking, and writing about texts (Fountas & Pinnell, 2017). Individual reading conferences and small strategy group instruction are a bedrock of our literacy studio.

The Integration of Knowledge and Ideas standards group represent the lowest standards grouping with a combined rating average of 1.86. This grouping refers to the ability to integrate and evaluate content presented in a variety of formats (e.g., textual, graphic, quantitative). These standards require the reader to evaluate an argument or claim made by the author and judge the "sufficiency of evidence." This may be a challenging set of reading skills/strategies for our students. This may represent an opportunity for growth or an area to target in the district's professional learning plan.

I also examined the similarities and differences between the ratings of teachers in the primary grades and teachers in the intermediate grades. In other words, did the teachers of older students provide a different pattern of student strengths and weaknesses
than the teachers of younger students? Overall, the intermediate teachers assigned higher ratings to each of the standards than the primary teachers. This finding is not surprising given older students should have accumulated greater reading skills and behaviors over time. While there was a difference in the top-rated standard for primary teachers (standard 9) and the top-rated standard for intermediate teachers (standard 1), both teacher groups placed standard 2 (Key Ideas & Details) near the top. Likewise, I found that both primary and intermediate teachers placed standard 8 (Integration of Knowledge & Ideas) near the bottom.

**Instructional Aspects**

Second, teachers were told their school district’s English Language Arts Committee had identified ten different aspects of literacy instruction that deserved the attention of teachers. Many of these instructional practices and strategies were areas that had been touched upon in the past few years at district professional development workshops, demonstration lessons with reading consultants, or in lab classroom topic studies. Teachers were asked to rate their level of interest in pursuing learning activities focused on each of these ten aspects of literacy instruction. The purpose of this survey question was to prioritize and narrow the focus of educator learning objectives in the district plan. The ten aspects of literacy instruction identified by the district curriculum committee are graphically displayed in a column charge below (see Figure 6). The aspects of literacy instruction are listed in order of lowest average rating score to the highest average rating score.
Figure 6. Rank order aspects of literacy instruction according to level of interest

According to the rating average rank order, the top three aspects of literacy instruction that received the highest interest from teachers were finding authentic purposes for student reading and writing (2.54), the integration of reading and writing workshop (2.51), and supporting student conversations to deepen comprehension (2.49). These same three aspects of literacy instruction were found to be of highest interest to both the primary and intermediate teachers. Interactive read aloud (2.29), word study (2.11), and the teaching of reading fluency (1.77) received the lowest rating averages from the teachers.
Lab Classroom

At the request of our lab classroom teachers, I added two final questions. These teacher leaders wished to obtain a sense of how valuable their peers found observing and discussing instruction within their lab classroom setting. Seventy-seven percent of respondents indicated their participation in the lab classrooms resulted in changes to their instructional practice. Fourteen percent reported that participation had not changed their instructional practice and another 9% replied: "not applicable." While no single learning design can meet the needs of all adult learners, nearly two-thirds of our staff reported value in the nascent lab classroom initiative. I believe this finding suggests that our district should continue to invest and refine this form of job-embedded professional learning.

The survey concluded with an optional open-ended question. Participants were invited to share why the lab classrooms had or had not impacted their instructional practice in the past school year. Fifteen of the 18 comments included a favorable opinion of this particular learning design. I found four general themes with a deductive process of applying categories to the comments (see Appendix F). In the first theme, teachers provided specific examples of how the lab classroom changed their instructional practice. They cited changes to how they formed small instructional groups and used questioning during student (1:1) conferences. The second comment category or theme emphasized the benefits of peer conversations. Participants of the lab classrooms appreciated the ability to hold professional discussions around a shared observation of teaching. The third category highlighted the perceived benefit of observing authentic teaching with district
students. One respondent offered, “I love having the opportunity to watch the instruction of a colleague. I learn by watching a real classroom…”

The final category included three comments from teachers who indicated the lab classrooms did not impact their instructional practice. Two comments provided suggestions for improvement, such as offering a greater variety of lab topics and more opportunities for collaboration. One respondent indicated that participation in the lab classroom simply confirmed that he/she was on the "right track." Another respondent complained about the lack of time or support available to implement what he/she observed. The last respondent shared a dislike for the "fishbowl approach to teaching and learning." He/she voiced a perception that the lab classroom topics offered too narrow a view of best instructional practice and felt it was "important not to get tied into a preferred delivery system."
SECTION SIX: A VISION OF SUCCESS (TO BE)

My vision of success includes a shift of ownership in professional learning from administration to teaching staff, resulting in higher rates of students meeting reading and writing growth targets. The findings of my evaluation of the Shermerville School District's professional learning program (Carlson, 2018) inform this vision. This does not mean our instructional leaders abdicate responsibility for setting the strategic priorities and direction for the organization. Nor does this vision of success include complete autonomy for teachers over their professional learning. Rather, I foresee a time when our teachers are educated on the Standards of Professional Learning, and our staff development committee applies adult learning theory to their decision-making. Our staff development committee consists of highly talented and passionate educators. They can be empowered to plan, implement, and evaluate the district's professional learning using high-quality design. Furthermore, there is room for multiple pathways of adult learning – some directed by the administration or instructional coordinators (e.g., school improvement half-days), some directed by instructional teams (e.g., professional learning communities), and some shared opportunities that come in the form of job-embedded learning (e.g., lab classrooms, instructional coaching).

I introduced Tony Wagner's ecology of change framework (2006) in Section One. Four different arenas of change related to the goal of improving the planning and evaluation of professional learning in my district were presented in Section Two as a baseline. This Section presents a vision of what assets and conditions might need to be in place for a professional learning plan process that leads to higher rates of student achievement, specifically in the area of reading. Below, I break down an idealized image
of the context, conditions, competencies, and culture of the Shermerville School District. The distance between my “As-Is” (see Appendix B) and “To-Be” (see Appendix B) can inform the strategies and actions needed for organizational change.

**Context**

As discussed in Section Two, the Shermerville School District serves as a community with high socio-economic status and strong parent support. We can expect participation rates at parent-teacher conferences, curriculum nights, and parent-teacher organization events will remain very strong. Our parent community is supportive of the educational and social mission of the schools. While we will likely continue to present with modest rates of English Learning students at the primary grades (8-10%), the majority of students exit EL services by the fourth grade. Despite a planned, controlled budget deficit reduction over the next three years, our district is expected to maintain strong staffing levels to support the 15% of students identified for special education services. We do not have student subgroup achievement gaps that need to be addressed at this time.

We can also expect high academic status as reported by state and in-district assessments of reading and math. However, aggregate reading growth rates (55-60% meet or exceed targets) may continue to lag behind math growth rates (60-65% meet or exceed targets) on the Northwest Evaluation Association's Measures of Academic Progress. District administration will likely continue to prioritize professional learning in the area of reading instruction for the foreseeable future. As other areas of the curriculum are addressed in the review cycle, reading will continue to have a prominent place in the professional development schedule and systems for job-embedded learning.
The process and structure for planning professional learning is an essential aspect of change in the "context" arena. As is the focus of this change project, the Shermerville School District would benefit from a more sophisticated conversation around professional learning and school improvement planning. A process that involves data-based planning and evaluation can bring needed clarity to the faculty, shared decision-making, and empower our talented teachers to take greater ownership over their professional growth. As an organization, we must be more specific on what instructional strategies we are targeting, why these aspects of instruction are important for our current student population, and how we are making continuous improvement – what changes can we observe in our teaching behavior and student learning behavior?

**Conditions**

The "conditions" arena for change begins with maintaining an adequate budget for professional learning. As mentioned above, our district is in a multi-year controlled budget reduction as we navigate the construction of a new middle school campus and the anticipation of a tax increment financing retirement. It is important that we protect the professional learning budget to maintain the growth of our teaching staff. Future teacher contracts should prioritize stipend assignments for teacher leadership roles such as lab classroom teachers and staff development committee members. However, these expenditures will require district administration to provide strong justification. As we target other areas of the budget for reduction, the administration must be able to demonstrate a strong return on investment in the area of professional development. I believe this underscores the need for a comprehensive professional learning plan with a method of linking changes in teacher practice to changes in student outcomes.
Our staff development committee is largely responsible for planning the content and structure of the four or five school improvement half-days on the district calendar. While I propose a wider scope of responsibility for this committee, the professional learning on these half-days should be closely aligned to the overall goals outlined in the annual professional learning plan and closely align to other forms of job-embedded learning and consultant work throughout the school year. As I touched upon in my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018) and Section Four of this change plan, teachers will benefit from more ongoing support and feedback in between these structured learning opportunities. While the school improvement half-days may introduce new instructional strategies and approaches, our teachers are asking for help as they practice/implement them in the classroom. This will likely involve close cooperation with our lab classroom teachers and the addition of instructional coaches in the future.

A time study or review of the elementary master schedule to find collaborative professional learning time is needed. For district administration to share more ownership of professional learning with teaching staff, they must have the conditions (i.e., time) available to gather on a regular basis. With increasing student enrollment and the stress that will place on our specials schedule, the school district may need to find creative ways to capture regular teacher collaboration time. For example, we may need to explore an early student release model. Once we find collaborative time, our teachers could organize within smaller professional learning communities that meet on a regular basis to examine their instructional practices. These professional learning communities will also need common formative assessments to review. The collaborative analysis of student work
will ultimately inform professional learning plans, school improvement goals, and curriculum review cycles.

Finally, I believe there needs to be a greater balance between building-based and district-based professional learning in the Shermerville School District. We are a small district consisting of two elementary schools and a middle school. However, there are individual differences between the cultures and competencies within buildings. For our teaching staff to remain energized and passionate, they should be allowed to pursue some topics of interest or need. These professional learning pursuits do not need to compete for the strategic work of the district. They can enhance or augment the learning directed by the district administration.

**Competencies**

The competency arena for change includes the "skills and knowledge that influence student learning" (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 99). This begins with experienced teachers and leaders. Our organization must continue to recruit and develop high-quality teachers and principals. A culture of continuous learning and support from building leadership will yield strong instruction. As previously touched upon, the staff development committee could develop more in-depth knowledge of adult learning theory and greater familiarity with the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward, 2011). There are tools available for both school and district-based teams to guide the planning, implementation, and evaluation of professional learning. Learning Forward has published Innovation Configuration maps for just this purpose (Learning Forward, 2012). The language and progressions within these maps could be a helpful resource aligning
our professional learning plans with our school improvement efforts, district's strategic plan and local school board goals.

Teacher’s pedagogical knowledge and skill delivering English Language Arts instruction will continue to be a top priority for our school district. We appreciate the complexity of learning to read and write. The same may be said for the complexity of providing differentiated instruction required to move students from emerging to competent readers and writers. Our organization may benefit from examining high impact teaching practices and instructional strategy checklists. Common instructional frameworks or specific teaching practices could be addressed through coaching cycles that include methods for monitoring and assessing the effectiveness of job-embedded professional learning. District leaders can ensure that every grade level has common curriculum units, ambitious learning tasks, common assessments, and powerful instructional plans. A specific coaching cycle and regular walk-throughs by principals and teaching teams may ensure a more consistent delivery of the Literacy Studio (i.e., reading and writing workshop).

Finally, the Shermerville School District would benefit from developing greater competency in analyzing common formative assessment data. We will move beyond the analysis of large-scale standardized assessments such as PARCC and NWEA’s Measures of Academic Progress. As mentioned above in the condition arena and expanded below in Section Seven, our teaching staff can develop skill in constructing common assessments that measure objective markers of student learning and growth. Using formative assessment to shift instructional practice is a sophisticated skill. Technical assistance is needed.
Culture

Wagner et al. (2006) identifies the arena of culture as the "shared values, beliefs, assumptions, expectations, and behaviors related to students and learning… and the quality of relationships within and beyond the school" (p. 102). The Shermerville School District already enjoys a strong relationship between teachers, administrators, and parents. There is a shared responsibility for student growth and a clear commitment for excellence. A more sophisticated process for planning and evaluating professional learning can only serve to deepen that relationship. The hard-earned trust and respect will support these changes and improvements in the professional learning plan.

Time is the most precious resource of all. We are fortunate to work in a district and community that values time spent on professional learning. A strong professional learning plan will serve to maintain that trust and maintain high levels of funding and time to engage in continuous improvement. The staff development committee will serve as an authentic vehicle for teacher voice in the learning design. Teaching staff will better understand the connection between their professional learning and their school improvement goals.
SECTION SEVEN: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS FOR CHANGE

Wagner et al.'s (2006) phase and levers of change were used to introduce the goals of this change plan in Section One. The phases include preparing, envisioning, and enacting. The change levers include data, accountability, and relationships. I place my data collection for this project under the preparing phase. The strategies and actions for change emphasized within this section can be put in Wagner's envisioning and enacting phases. I view this as the bridge between the As-Is and To-Be (see Appendix C).

Ultimately, the goal of this change plan is to create a greater balance between instrumental learning and transformative learning within the Shermerville School District. It includes a cycle of continuous improvement that is guided by a data-based professional learning plan that connects district improvement goals with the ongoing professional learning occurring in the buildings. The professional learning plan can also provide focus and a feedback loop for the staff development committee and district administration.

Preparing Phase

I place the primary goal of conducting a needs assessment to create a professional learning plan in the area of English Language Arts instruction within the preparing phase. The certified teaching staff completed an initial district needs assessment (data change lever). Our teachers identified the College and Career Readiness Reading Anchor Standard cluster of Integration of Knowledge and Ideas (Common Core Standards Initiative, 2010). On this needs assessment the faculty felt our district professional learning should target students' ability to: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats (CCRA.R.7); delineate and evaluate the argument and specific
claims in a text (CCRA.R.8); and analyze how two or more text address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take (CCRA.R.9). Also, the teaching staff identified the instructional aspects of finding authentic purposes for student reading and writing, the integration of reading and writing workshop, and supporting student conversations to deepen comprehension to be their top three priorities.

While the data collected in this needs assessment can be used as a starting point for identifying educator learning needs in the area of reading instruction, step 4 of the backmapping model of professional learning (Killion, 1999; Killion & Roy, 2009), a more sophisticated process of developing improvement goals and student outcomes is needed. The Shermerville School District would benefit from more specific indicators of success and, ultimately see them reflected in the school improvement plans. A district professional plan could include the identification of specific instructional practices to observe and coach, structures for professional collaboration, and systems of accountability. The plan could also include mechanisms to monitor and evaluate professional learning (steps 6 and 7). Section Four's review of the literature highlighted some examples of these mechanisms.

**Envisioning Phase**

I place a secondary goal of educating the staff development committee on adult learning and powerful designs for professional learning under Wagner's envisioning phase of change, as described in Section Six's vision of success. This goal would focus on the change levers of accountability and relationships. The staff development committee could establish a set of norms and expectations for their work. This may include a cycle
of rotating membership, basic training modules, and a district map illustrating the various learning communities within the district and their connection to administrative and teacher teams. Another critical relationship to address is the one between the staff development committee and the district office administrators. While the committee is given responsibility to plan, direct, and evaluate professional learning, the assistant superintendent maintains the responsibility for providing the curriculum priorities and a strong vision of effective instruction.

The staff development committee is also uniquely positioned to track key student and educator data points to generate an urgency for change in the rest of the organization (Wagner et al., 2006, p. 139. By monitoring and publicizing key data trends, the individual school improvement committees can create systems focused on continuous improvement of instruction. This empowers teachers to enact strategies and actions for instructional improvement at the building level and the individual grade levels through smaller professional learning communities.

**Enacting Phase**

A long-term future objective for this change plan is to establish a greater balance between instrumental learning and transformative learning in the Shermerville School District. I draw a line from this objective back to the results of my program evaluation (Carlson, 2018). This strategy, and the associated actions described below rest upon a robust process for planning and evaluating professional learning, guided by the district's staff development committee. To share the responsibility for professional learning between teachers and administrators, we will need data for the continuous improvement of teaching and learning, accountability for the improvement of instruction, and
collaborative relationships between teachers (i.e., professional learning communities). Some teaching staff and district administrators may resist these systems and label the strategies as unnecessary or excessive. Some may find data collection to be threatening or an attack on the collegial relationships enjoyed between staff.

Education researchers and thinkers, such as Richard Elmore (2000) and Eleanor Drago-Severson (2009), have suggested that schools need to be fundamentally redesigned to become places where both students and adults are continuously growing and learning. Too often, we hold our professional development on a teacher institute day without giving thought to how we will support this learning over the course of the semester or school year. Individual or small groups of teachers discover successful techniques that are not shared with others. We even struggle finding time for all staff members to participate in job-embedded forms of professional learning due to a lack of substitute teacher coverage or scheduling logistics. This struggle is not anyone's fault; it is a limitation of the larger system. Furthermore, we have teachers at different developmental levels. This is not to say that we don't have effective informal learning happening in the buildings. I believe that we do. However, we could be more systematic and thoughtful in how we schedule opportunities for adult learning, reflection, collaboration, and shared dialogue. Drago-Severson's (2004, 2009) pillar practices of teaming, teacher leadership, collegial inquiry, and mentoring may be a good place to begin.

Our district would benefit from creating expectations and schedules for collaborative professional learning during the school day. The middle school has ample plan time, and most of it shared between grade-level and department team members. It is a different story at the elementary level. Due to rising student enrollment and a tight
specials schedule, many of our grade level team members have only one or two half-hour planning breaks in common each week. It is unrealistic to think that these could be used for structured learning, collegial inquiry, or the collaborative analysis of student data. A comprehensive study of collaborative time and some radical changes to the weekly scheduled are needed. Once we capture this time, we must then develop the knowledge and skills to learn and work collaboratively. Some examples and resources are shared in Section Four.

A lab classroom or peer learning lab was successfully launched in the two elementary schools recently. We have four talented teachers of English Language Arts that have opened their classrooms and courageously led this job-embedded form of professional learning. We have heard from these teacher leaders that they do not have enough time to provide ongoing support to their colleagues between lesson study sessions. We should consider exploring instructional coaching. This may be a critical next step in building our learning community.

It is also important to engage teaching staff in conversations about the impact of individual and collective decisions on professional learning and student achievement. We have seen pockets of teachers self-organize and create informal "communities of thought" outside of school hours. These teachers have come together around particular areas of interest. They have done professional learning, conducted action research, and shared effective practices with one another. This has all occurred outside of the district's formal vehicles of professional development. It makes me wonder if we should explore the Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching (Jobs for the Future & the Council of Chief State School Officers, 2015) and the concept of micro-
credentialing. This competency framework includes domains and specific indicators that could be used to organize professional learning. The practice of micro-credentialing and digital badges (Acree, 2016; Gamrat, Zimmerman, Dudek, & Peck, 2014; Jones, Hope, & Adams, 2018) could be a supplementary practice leading to a greater balance between teacher-directed and district-directed learning.

I have one final take away from this change plan. I draw a connection to Milner’s (2015) work on closing the opportunity gap of “school dependent” students. He encourages teachers to differentiate their instructional approaches and outcomes for individual students, engage students in activities that inspire creativity and innovation, and develop relevant assessments that inform their instruction. While we consider the opportunity gap of our students when they enter the school building, it is equally important to recognize the gaps in our teachers’ opportunity to learn and grow together. Our teachers do not come to the profession with the same knowledge, skills, dispositions, and attitudes. Furthermore, the tools that our students will need to be successful in college and the workforce are changing. Tony Wagner (2008) argues that teachers must place greater emphasis on critical thinking, curiosity, and other "survival skills" to close the "global achievement gap." For our teachers to transform their practice to meet the evolving needs of students, we must look at more long-term, coherent professional learning models and collaborative learning structures. Just as Richard Elmore (2000) has suggested, our staff must learn the new behaviors and values associated with collective responsibility for teaching practice and student learning. People make these fundamental changes when they are frequently exposed to new ways of thinking and acting, have a chance to argue these new ways into their systems of belief, observe other people
practicing them, and, most important, become successful at practicing them in the presence of others. (p. 8)

This responsibility falls upon the school district and can be accomplished with a standards-based professional learning plan.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A: AS-IS CHART

Context
- High SES, strong parent support.
- High academic status, modest reading growth rates.
- Perceived disconnect b/w PL and school improvement plans.
- Lack of shared decision making.

Culture
- Shared responsibility for student growth.
- Desire for academic excellence
- Desire for more teacher voice & input on PL.
- Teachers feel overwhelmed w/ the volume of curriculum change and PL.
- Directive or top-down communication b/w districts and buildings.

Conditions
- Large budget for PL.
- Long-standing relationship w/ outside consultants.
- Nascent lab classroom initiative.
- Differentiation specialist.
- 5 total days dedicated for PL.
- Insufficient time for teacher collaboration and job-embedded PL.
- Lack of common grade-level plan time.
- Lack of building-based PL time.

Competencies
- Experienced teachers & leaders.
- Still refining the workshop model.
- Limited understanding of best-practices in PL.
- Under-utilized district staff development committee.
- Limited collaboration skills.
- Limited data analysis skills.

Administrative led professional learning is not maximizing reading growth for elementary students.
APPENDIX B: TO-BE CHART

**Context**
- High SES, strong parent support.
- High academic status AND high rates of reading growth.
- Revised district PL plan offering clarity around the connection of PL and school improvement goals.
- Shared decision making.

**Culture**
- Shared responsibility for student growth.
- Intrinsic motivation for ongoing PL and discovery.
- Desire for academic excellence.
- Staff development committee serves as an authentic vehicle for teacher voice in learning design.
- Teachers understand connection between their PL and the school improvement goals.

**Conditions**
- Adequate budget & structures for PL.
- Lab classrooms provide job-embedded learning opportunities.
- School improvement half days aligned to other PL activities/vehicles.
- Balance of building and district-based PL.
- Sufficient time for PLCs.
- Common reading & writing assessments.

**Shift ownership of professional learning from administration to teaching staff, resulting in higher rates of students meeting reading growth targets.**

**Competencies**
- Experienced teachers & leaders.
- Staff development committee possesses deep knowledge of best-practices in PL.
  - Consistent delivery of Literacy Studio (i.e., reading and writing workshop).
  - Strong structures and skills for teacher collaboration.
## APPENDIX C: STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS CHART

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Action</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Gather information/data on practices that support a cohesive framework for ELA instruction resulting in improved student achievement (Preparing Phase). | - Share program evaluation results with the staff development committee and administrative council.  
- Collect teacher input to enact a professional learning plan.  
  - Identify evidence-based best practices for comprehensive literacy instruction that deserve attention.  
  - Identify structures or designs for learning.  
  - Develop a system for monitoring and evaluating the professional learning plan with the teaching staff (e.g., walk-throughs, informal observations with administrative feedback, analysis of common formative assessments). |
| Develop a professional learning plan for elementary English Arts instruction (Preparing Phase). | - Develop student outcomes (indicators of success) in relationship to board goals and school improvement plans.  
- The plan will include the identification of specific instructional practices, structures for professional collaboration, and systems of accountability.  
- The plan will include mechanisms to monitor and evaluate professional learning (measures of success) using a 7-step cycle of continuous improvement. |
| Educate the staff development committee on best practices in professional learning (Envisioning Phase). | - Develop a series of modules on the Standards for Professional Learning (Learning Forward), Constructive Developmental Learning Theory (Kegan), Pillar Practices for Professional Growth (Drago-Severson), effective learning designs, etc.  
- Establish a cycle of rotating membership and committee training  
- Create a district map that illustrates the learning connections between teacher and administrative teams. |
| Establish a balance between instrumental learning and transformative learning (Enacting Phase). | - Create learning communities or teaming (Drago-Severson, 2009).  
- Create expectations and schedules for collaborative professional learning within the school day.  
- Develop the knowledge and skills to learn and work collaboratively.  
- Find synergy between lab classroom initiative, instructional coaching, and professional learning communities.  
- Engage teaching staff in conversations about the impact of individual and collective decisions about professional learning on student achievement.  
- Explore the Educator Competencies for Personalized, Learner-Centered Teaching (Council of Chief State School Officers) and the concept of micro-credentialing. |

**Big Assumption:** Some teaching staff and district administrators will push back and label these strategies as unnecessary or excessive. Some may find the data collection to be threatening.

**Actionable Test:** Present my strategies & actions chart to the administrative council and elementary school improvement teams for feedback.
APPENDIX D: CONSENT FORM

This is a message from Scott Carlson – Willowbrook School principal, staff development committee member, and doctoral student at National Louis University.

The elementary teaching staff is invited to take part in the annual district professional learning needs assessment. Just as we have done in previous years, the results from the annual survey will be used for planning next year’s professional learning activities. However, some portions will also be used for my doctoral research project, “A Change Plan for District Professional Learning and Teacher Collaboration in the Area of English Language Arts Instruction”. Therefore, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it will involve, including any risks or benefits. This form outlines the purpose of the data collection and provides a description of your involvement and rights as a participant in my research.

As a student in the Educational Leadership Program Department at National Louis University, North Shore, I am collecting teacher input for the purpose of enacting a professional learning plan for elementary reading instruction. I am interested in linking areas of teacher growth (knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions) to specific student learning outcomes. As we get better at measuring teachers’ application of learning, we may become more sensitive to changes in student learning outcomes.

The total amount of time for this survey should be between 5-10 minutes. You will be asked which grade you serve. You will be asked about your students’ performance relative to the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading and which aspects of literacy instruction deserve our attention. There is an open-ended question about the lab classrooms. The results will be shared with our Staff Development and English Language Arts Committees. The results could be used in a backward mapping approach to plan the professional learning content and outcomes aligned with the district’s strategic plan and school improvement plans.

If you choose to participate in this survey, your name or any other identifying information will not be collected. This survey is anonymous. The results from this survey will be kept on a password protected website and only I will have access to the data. Upon completion of my research project, all results will be deleted or destroyed. To the best of my knowledge, this survey will have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

Your participation is voluntary and can be discontinued at any time without penalty or bias. The results of this study may be published or otherwise reported at conferences, and used to inform professional learning practices at Northbrook/Glenview School District 30 but participants’ identities will in no way be revealed (data will be reported anonymously and bear no identifiers that could connect data to individual participants). All survey reports are generated in aggregate form by grade level and by district.
Upon request, you may receive summary results from this research project and copies of any publications that may occur. If you have any questions or require additional information, please email me at scarlson@district30.org or call me at 847-498-1090.

If you have any concerns or questions before or during participation that have not been addressed, you may contact:

- Dr. Harrington Gibson, Assistant Professor/NLU Director for Educational Leadership Doctoral Program, by email at harrington.gibson@nl.edu or by phone at 224-233-2290; or
- Shaunti Knauth, Co-Chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board, by email at shaunti.knauth@nl.edu; or by phone at 312-261-3526; or
- Wendy Gardiner, Co-Chair of NLU’s Institutional Research Review Board, by email at wendy.gardiner@nl.edu or by phone at 312-261-3112. The IRRB co-chairs are located at National Louis University, 122 South Michigan Avenue, Chicago, IL.

By clicking on the confirmation checkbox, you are agreeing to participate in my study as outlined by the terms stated above. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully,
Scott Carlson
APPENDIX E: PROFESSIONAL LEARNING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Thank you for participating in the annual professional development needs assessment. It should take approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. Your input will be used by the District's Staff Development Committee for the creation of professional learning goals, content, and designs.

Question 1 - The following are areas in which the District will be providing professional learning during the 2017-18 school year.
• English Language Arts Instruction
• Mathematics Instruction
• Assessment
• Next Generation Science Standards
• Social Studies Curriculum
• Standards-Based Report Cards

Please indicate any other areas of interest to you: (text box)

Question 2 - Please indicate your interest in the following professional learning designs by rating each on a scale from not interested to very interested.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Not interested</th>
<th>Very little interest</th>
<th>Somewhat interested</th>
<th>Very interested</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Learning from in-house experts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Learning from outside consultants</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collaborative analysis of student learning – design and review standards-linked performance assessment tasks</td>
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<td>Classroom walk-throughs for peers</td>
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<td>Critical Friends Groups – focus on problems of practice and challenge each other</td>
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<td>Dialogue or book study</td>
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<td>Instructional coaching</td>
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<td>Lesson study</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-planning &amp; co-teaching</td>
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<td>Peer observations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional learning communities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Professional conferences</td>
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</table>
Question 3 - Please select your grade level. Learning specialists and ELL teachers can select one grade level that best represents their work.

- Kindergarten
- 1st Grade
- 2nd Grade
- 3rd Grade
- 4th Grade
- 5th Grade
- Grades 6-8

Question 4 - How are your students demonstrating the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading? Please think about the students in your class and rate to what extent they are demonstrating each of these reading skills/behaviors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reading Skill</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very little</th>
<th>Somewhat</th>
<th>To a great extent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text. (1)</td>
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<td>Determine central ideas or themes of a text and analyze their development; summarize the key supporting details and ideas. (2)</td>
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<td>Analyze how and why individuals, events, or ideas develop and interact over the course of text. (3)</td>
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<td>Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning and tone. (4)</td>
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<td>Analyze the structure of texts, including how specific sentences, paragraphs, and larger portions of the text relate to each other and the whole. (5)</td>
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<td>Assess how point of view or purpose shapes the content and style of a text. (6)</td>
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<td>Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words. (7)</td>
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</table>
Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, including the validity of the reasoning as well as the relevance and sufficiency of the evidence. (8)

Analyze how two or more texts address similar themes or topics in order to build knowledge or to compare the approaches the authors take. (9)

Read and comprehend complex literary and informational texts independently and proficiently. (10)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 5 - The District ELA Committee has identified the following aspects of literacy instruction that deserve our attention. Please rate each of these according to your level of interest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teaching reading fluency</td>
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<tr>
<td>Literacy Studio: Integration of reading &amp; writing workshop</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching &amp; conferring with the surface and deep structure systems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interactive read aloud</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shared writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing about reading</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small group instruction (i.e., invitational groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supporting student conversations to deepen comprehension (e.g., Keene’s Open Forum, book clubs)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Word study</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question 6 - Has participating in the lab classrooms changed your instructional practice?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• No</td>
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<tr>
<td>• N/A</td>
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</table>
Question 7 – (Optional) Please share why the lab classrooms have changed your instructional practice OR why they have not changed your instructional practice: (Text box)
APPENDIX F: LAB CLASSROOM COMMENTS

Theme 1: Teacher provided specific examples of how their instructional practices changed.

I learned a great deal from participating in the lab classroom. I better understand how to structure invitational groups and how to confer with students. It was helpful to see how other people teach a similar concept in a different way.

The lab classroom experience has allowed me to see how the teacher structures literacy studio, as well as how the teacher manages 1:1 conferring, as well as invitational groups.

They have helped me to change the types of questions I ask students about their reading.

Theme 2: An emphasis on the peer conversations around the shared observation.

Every time I go into someone's classroom, I take something away from the experience. The conversations had before and after these experiences are also so valuable.

It has been so beneficial to have professional conversations with cohorts surrounding topics pertaining to literacy. It has also been great to observe teachers in their classrooms, as opposed to watching footage of teachers teaching. It has been so rewarding to join teachers in their classroom and seeing them in a natural setting!

The conversation prior and after the observation has given me lots of ideas for my own classroom.

The lab classrooms are a wonderful opportunity to see teachers in action and have valuable conversations with colleagues. I would like to have more of a variety of options or more regular opportunities to collaborate.

Theme 3: An appreciation to observe authentic teaching with district (“our”) students.

It was wonderful to watch/observe another teacher in the school. I learned so many new things to take back to my classroom. They have helped to show me what I'm doing is on the right track.

The discussion before and after helped me to understand that even the best educators sometimes struggle with decisions. Watching specific techniques were valuable too.

I love having the opportunity to watch instruction of a colleague. I learn by watching a "real classroom" and I am always looking for ways to improve my teaching practice.

I saw another style of presenting and discussing concepts.

Always get ideas from watching Keene and the lab teachers.

Yes! As the host, I had the opportunity to learn through planning, teaching, & reflecting with peers on specific literacy topics and instructional strategies.

Visiting other classroom have allowed me to try new things. I would like to see more variety in the LAB classrooms.
Theme 4: Did not impact instructional practices.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lab classrooms haven't changed it, but they have confirmed that I am on the right track.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Once you get back into your own classroom, there doesn't seem to be time, especially in the middle of the year, when we have the labs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I do not like the fishbowl approach to teaching or learning. I think it can get pretty random. I like to learn new ideas and not go over and over the same things with different kids in different situations. I appreciate teachers that offer novel information and new ideas but also realize one size does not fit all. There are a lot of ways to teach and learn and not one way is better than all others for every student. I think it's important not to get tied into a preferred delivery system. Also, it's important to have everyone aware of new ideas but recognize that while some people may really love and embrace those ideas, others would like to see what else is going on and give them the time to explore.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX G: ADDITIONAL SURVEY RESULTS**

*Figure 7.* The extent to which students demonstrate each of the reading skills/behaviors found in the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards for Reading.
APPENDIX H: QUESTION SETS FOR TEACHER INQUIRY GROUPS

Examining Instructional Practices
- Why are these meaningful learning goals?
- Which students were/were not engaged in the lesson? What might explain that?
- If we all teach this concept differently, what implications are there for student understanding?
- How do these lessons address students’ misconceptions?

Learning Expectations Represented in Student Work
- When students understand this, what will it sound or look like?
- What are our expectations for struggling students? For advanced students?
- What are misconceptions we might expect to see in students’ work?
- What other ways might students represent their understandings?

Identifying Patterns in Student Work
- What do you see or hear that suggests students understand, almost understand, or do not understand?
- Which students are understanding, almost understanding, or not understanding? What does that tell us?
- What do you see or hear that you did not expect to find?

Connecting Student Work to Practice
- How do students’ response relate to the lesson taught?
- Why did I/you teach it this way? Are there other options? Why consider another option?
- What patterns in students’ work suggest I/we should continue teaching this way, make some modifications, or try to use a different approach?

Examining Assessment Practices
- What does this form of assessment show us?
- What information about students’ understanding does this assessment not provide?
- What are alternative forms of assessments that might reveal more/other/all students’ understandings?

Reflections on Group Processes
- What does this conversation lead us to do next?
- Do I/we understand students’ thinking in a new way?
- Do we need outside help with anything?
- How did our conversation challenge me? Make me uncomfortable? What did I like? What don’t I want to repeat?
- Do we need a toll to guide the way we talk about (assessment, student learning, teaching) next time?