

AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN ALABAMA

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AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN ALABAMA

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A Dissertation

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AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN ALABAMA

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## VITA

Charles Lowell Ledbetter, Jr., son of Charles Lowell Ledbetter and Linda Jane Davis Ledbetter, was born March 16, 1963 in Talladega, Alabama. He graduated from Auburn High School in 1981, graduated from Auburn University in 1989 with a Bachelor of Arts degree and a major on history. He received the Master of Education degree in social studies from Auburn University–Montgomery in 1994. In 2001 he attained certification in administration through Auburn University. He taught secondary social studies for ten years and was an assistant coach and head coach of various sports. He served as an assistant principal for one year, as assistant superintendent of schools for four years, and became principal of Councill Middle School in Dadeville, Alabama in 2005. He co-authored two professional articles and has been a co-presenter at the Southern Regional Council on Education Administration annual conference (2002) and at the American Educational Research Association annual conference (2004). He married Kimberly Rhoades Ledbetter, daughter of Derwood Facundus and Phyllis Sandra, on January 24, 1985.

DISSERTATION ABSTRACT

AN ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT IN ALABAMA

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Improving schools and holding educators, schools, and school districts accountable for student performance are among the most important issues in education today. Proposals to reform and restructure schools have emphasized professional development as a key element. This increased emphasis on professional development has created a greater awareness of those components proven effective for professional development and facilitating systemic change in educational institutions (Guskey, 1994). A best hope for effective school improvement in many of these areas may be effective job-embedded professional development to create a leadership pool that will drive the school improvement process. Until recently, leadership professional development activities in Alabama may have been classified as one of three main types: state sponsored, relatively long-term development academies; short-term (one to three days) workshops; or on-going, local leadership initiatives. The local leadership academy

approach appears to offer a chance to not only engage participants in meaningful professional development but also opportunities to improve individuals and the level of institutional leadership by fostering communication among leaders in an institution and creating a culture that encourages growth, co-mentoring, and teamwork among the participants.

The purpose of this study was to look at administrators' perceptions of three commonly used professional development programs in Alabama aimed at building leadership capacity in order to bring about school improvement. This research aimed to determine if professional development participants perceived the three types of professional development activity as useful for enhancing leadership capacity. Another purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of a local leadership academy in meeting its stated goals.

The local-level leadership academy was perceived to be most effective in affecting school leaders' practices among those interviewed and among those surveyed. Although further research into various programs is needed to verify the findings from this study, the initial evaluation indicates that the local program is viewed as constructive by survey respondents. The survey results supported the interview results, although the survey results showed less difference between the types of professional development than the interviews. Yet, the theme that runs through the interviews about all three types of professional development studied is that adequate time, as in clock time spent on a subject and calendar time that the learning is spread across, is very important to learning new ideas and incorporating them into practice.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

As I reflect upon this process, I am reminded of the words of Solomon: “Let your heart hold fast my words; keep my commandments and live; acquire wisdom! Acquire understanding!” I am thankful that I serve a loving and graceful God who keeps His promises. My parents, Lowell and Linda Ledbetter, taught me to seek knowledge, wisdom, and understanding, and to love the ways of the Lord and to seek Him. I would not be at this point without their support. My three daughters, Kira, Page, and Kelli, have been a constant source of inspiration throughout this process. The members of my committee have given help, guidance, and inspiration. Dr. Cynthia Reed has taught me so much about leadership and opened many doors. Dr. Margaret Ross made statistics understandable to a non-math type like me. Dr. Judith Lechner worked with me, displayed great patience, and guided me safely through this process. Without the aid of these dedicated professionals, this study would not be complete. Most of all, I wish to acknowledge the finest teacher I have ever seen, my wife, Kim Ledbetter. She has been supportive through the tough times, provided prodding when I got bogged down, and been my inspiration throughout this process. Her smile has lifted me in many difficult times, and her counsel has kept me from many mistakes I might have made. Her love and inspiration are the reasons that I was able to complete this process. Thank you, Kim, for everything. This dissertation is a tribute to your patience, support, and love.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

Improving schools and holding educators, schools, and school districts accountable for student performance are among the most important issues in education today. Simultaneously, there is a nation-wide push to reduce government spending on education and to make tax money available for school vouchers, thus reducing the pool of money available for traditional public education (Curriculum Review, 2003). It is therefore critically important that money intended to improve education is spent where it will have the greatest impact on student learning. School improvement is strongly tied to the performance of the school leadership (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). Proposals to reform and restructure schools have emphasized professional development as a key element. This increased emphasis on professional development has created a greater awareness of those components proven effective for professional development and facilitating systemic change in educational institutions (Guskey, 1994; Alabama State Department of Education, 2002).

Many rural districts have scarce resources, fewer available teaching and administrative positions than larger systems, and are farther from population centers where it is easier to recruit new educators, yet standards continue to be raised (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). A best hope for effective school improvement in many of these areas may be effective job-embedded professional development to create a leadership pool that will

drive the school improvement process (Archer, 2006). This “grow your own” approach holds promise if local educators are cultivated properly. School leaders need activities that challenge their thinking, provide feedback, allow interaction with colleagues outside of the local district, allow time for reflection, provide access to resources, use hands-on learning experiences, create opportunities to teach others, and use an integrated approach to professional development (McKay, 2001). In order for a “grow your own” approach to truly be effective in bringing about school improvement and in providing well prepared candidates for future administrative positions, teachers need to be included in job-embedded professional development. Teacher leaders are *sleeping giants*, able to facilitate the reform of public education (Katzenmayer & Moller, 1996). Crowther, Kaagan, Ferguson, and Hann (2002) suggest that there are common characteristics of teacher leaders: teacher leaders convey conviction about a better world, strive for authenticity, facilitate communities of learning, confront barriers, translate ideas into action, and nurture a culture of success. Each of these characteristics aligns with the goals of learning-focused leaders (NAESP, 2001).

The Alabama State Department of Education has recognized the need for effective professional development for its school leaders. In 2002, they developed new standards for professional development activities designed to ensure their effectiveness (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002). All administrators in the state are required to undergo at least fifty hours of professional development every five years for certificate renewal (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006).

Until recently, leadership professional development activities in Alabama may have been classified as one of three main types: state sponsored, relatively long-term

development academies, such as the University of Alabama Superintendents' Academy, which consisted of six 3-day sessions spread over the course of a calendar year (University of Alabama Superintendents' Academy, 2006); short-term (one to three days) workshops, such as those sponsored by the Council for Leadership in Alabama Schools (CLAS; Council for Leadership in Alabama Schools, 2006), or the Alabama State Department of Education (Alabama State Department of Education, 2006); or ongoing, local leadership initiatives, such as the leadership academy established in Tallapoosa County Schools, Macon County Schools, Fayette County Schools, and Hale County Schools in collaboration with Auburn University's Truman Pierce Institute (Truman Pierce Institute, 2006). The quick, workshop approach to leadership development, while an efficient way to involve many educators, has been largely ineffective at developing leaders. One time workshops rarely implement adult learning theory into their instructional techniques, and since they take a one-shot approach, these workshops rarely are successful at effecting change (Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000). The state sponsored leadership academy appears to be more effective, yet its effect is limited to the individuals in it, and does not seem to have as much effect on the institutions of the individual participants. The Superintendents' Academy focuses on the development of individual leaders, rather than on systems. The local leadership academy approach appears to offer a chance to improve individuals while improving the level of institutional leadership by fostering communication among leaders in an institution and creating a culture that encourages growth, co-mentoring, and teamwork among the participants.

The workshops often did not align with the Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development, but the state-level leadership academies and the local level

leadership academies did align with the standards. However, research was needed to thoroughly compare the effectiveness of these three models of professional development and leadership capacity building.

### Statement of the Research Problem

New expectations and current definitions of professional development must be thoroughly understood by teachers, administrators, parents, and policymakers for systemic change to occur within schools and school systems (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 2001). School improvement is in large part dependent upon the leadership in the school (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). The school leaders must serve as strong advocates of school reform and articulate the vision for school reform to the school's stakeholders (American School Board Journal, 2006). In order for school administrators to be effective in the school improvement process, their professional development program must help them to improve and change their practices and their attitudes toward school improvement. There will be little or no school improvement without increased capacity for school leadership, including both the number of educators prepared to take on leadership roles and the leadership ability of those who serve in leadership roles.

As an administrator in a rural school system in Alabama, the researcher saw firsthand the lack of candidates for school leadership positions from outside the system as well as great disparities in the quality of leadership preparation, creating problems for many who moved into leadership positions from within the system. There was an obvious need for effective professional development for administrators in the system if the system

was going to be effective in bringing about the types of changes necessary for real school improvement. It also was clear that the system needed to be preparing future candidates for administrative positions from within the teacher ranks in the system. Based on these observations and after the researcher discussed these issues with the superintendent of the system and with the director of the Truman Pierce Institute (TPI) at Auburn University, a local leadership academy was established in Tallapoosa County schools as a result of a partnership between Tallapoosa County Schools and the Truman Pierce Institute. TPI later expanded this effort to include three more rural school systems in Alabama.

There were two primary purposes for this research. The first purpose was to determine the perceived effectiveness of professional development focused on leadership capacity building in the state of Alabama. The second purpose was to critically assess the perceived effectiveness of specific leadership capacity-building programs for the individuals and the organizations involved.

### Need for the Study

Professional development for teachers has been widely studied in this country since the 1970s, but only in recent years has attention been turned toward professional development for school leaders. As more emphasis has been placed on the role school leadership plays in bringing about school improvement, professional development to improve the professional practice of school administrators has been emphasized. While studies have been done on the effectiveness of specific professional development programs for school leaders (Evans & Mohr, 1999; Hoffman & Johnston, 2005), there are few studies of the perceived effectiveness of frequently utilized methods of professional

development for administrators in the state. This study assessed the perceived effectiveness of those professional development methods in terms of usefulness in a leader's development. It is important to know the perceived effectiveness of programs that are commonly used to attempt to improve educational administrators. This research also assessed the perceived effectiveness of the leadership academy model utilized in one school system in terms of usefulness for individual leaders' development and for the leadership capacity building of the school system. Because leadership development is such an important issue in the state and in the country, the findings of this study may be useful for developing policy recommendations about the best ways to facilitate the professional growth of school leaders, to professional development providers, and to district-level professional development committees as they make decisions about how to invest their professional development time and money.

### Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to look at administrators' perceptions of three commonly used professional development approaches in Alabama aimed at building leadership capacity in order to bring about school improvement. A mixed methods approach was used for this study. The researcher used qualitative data collection strategies for part of the study to see how effective professional development activities were perceived to be at improving educational leadership by administrators.

Administrators who participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much the professional development activity improved their practice. The researcher looked for

emergent themes in the administrators' answers to interview questions. In the quantitative aspect of the study, the researcher analyzed participant answers to see if patterns emerged which pointed to those aspects of the programs that were perceived to be effective or important, as well as to see whether any of the three models were perceived to be particularly effective.

### Research Questions

The research questions addressed were:

1. What are the perceptions about experiences that administrators throughout the state of Alabama have regarding professional development designed to enhance leadership capacity?
2. Were the professional development activities administrators identified as most effective for them actually perceived by them to improve their leadership practices?
3. How effective has a local leadership academy been in meeting its stated goals of a) preparing the district for accreditation, b) developing the leadership capacity of individuals, c) developing the leadership capacity of the organization, and d) identifying potential leaders from within the system?

### Limitations

This research was limited to participants in Alabama. Interviews were conducted with a sample of program participants, not all program participants due to time constraints. The data is self-reported and does not include objective measures of

effectiveness such as student achievement data. This is an exploratory, primarily qualitative study, so only limited generalizations can be made.

### Assumptions

It is assumed that the participants will be able to identify effective components of professional development programs and that they will answer the interview questions candidly and honestly.

### Terms and Definitions

*Job-embedded professional development* – local, on-going learning process that is a regular part of one’s job.

*Leadership Academy* – an on-going, local process that meets monthly to promote the development of leadership skills in administrators, teachers, and students and is job-embedded in nature.

*Superintendents’ Academy* – a professional development program that consists of six week-end sessions over the course of a year focused on preparing participants to serve as superintendents.

### Methods and Procedures

Interviews were conducted with educators who have participated in different types of leadership professional development. Six (6) interviews were conducted with participants in the local leadership academy conducted through the Truman Pierce Institute at Auburn University in the Tallapoosa County School System; six (6)

interviews (2 from each) were conducted with participants from the leadership development activities conducted through the Truman Pierce Institute at Auburn University in the Macon County School System, the Hale County School System, and the Fayette County School System; four (4) interviews were conducted with participants in the University of Alabama Superintendents' Academy; six (6) interviews were conducted with participants from the Alabama State Department of Education and/or CLAS workshops; and two (2) interviews were conducted with participants in the Alabama State Department of Education New Superintendent Training program. These interviews were designed to elicit responses regarding the effectiveness of the specific type of professional development in terms of developing the leadership capacity of individuals and of their organizations. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The data on these transcriptions were analyzed to identify categories and emergent themes. A survey assessing perceptions about professional development focused on leadership capacity building was administered via e-mail using surveymonkey.com to Alabama administrators who were listed in the Alabama State Department of Education Directory. The survey asked administrators to identify the most effective type of professional development activity they have participated in during the past year and to specify the level of usefulness for specific areas based on standards for educational leadership (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

### Significance of the Problem

Nationally, there has been increased focus on the role of educational leaders and their ability to stay current with techniques for leading the school improvement process.

One frequently cited means for doing this is to engage school leaders in professional development activities. There are many types of professional development models available; however, not all of them are effective. This research explored the perceived effectiveness of professional development for administrators across the state and assessed the effectiveness of a leadership academy model that utilizes ongoing, job-embedded professional development. An exploratory, qualitative study was needed to identify key components of programs that are commonly used in professional development programs for educational leadership development and to assess their effectiveness for participants. This information may be useful locally in terms of improving the leadership academy model or other types of professional development programs, at the state level in terms of offering cost-effective and useful professional development and developing policy about professional development, and it may contribute to the national research base on the professional development of school leaders.

### Organization of Study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter I includes an introduction, the statement of the research problem, the need for the study, the purpose of the study, the research questions, the limitations and assumptions of the study, the terms and definitions used in the study, the methods and procedures used in the study, the significance of the problem, and an overview of the organization of the study. Chapter II contains a review of the literature pertaining to professional development and leadership capacity building for educational leaders, including the history of traditional formats for professional development, factors that directly impact the quality of professional development, current

trends for professional development and building leadership capacity in education, and improving student learning through professional development of school leaders. Chapter III describes the research methods used to gather and analyze data for the study. Chapter IV presents the analysis of the data and the results of the research. Chapter V presents a summary of the findings, offers conclusions, suggests implications for professional development for educational leaders, and proposes recommendations for further research.

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the National Staff Development Council (2001), “staff development is the means by which educators acquire or enhance the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and beliefs necessary to create high levels of learning for all students” (p. 2). Educators have historically participated in professional development activities in the form of in-service training, workshops, conferences, summer institutes, and graduate courses. Surveys indicate a high rate of participation in professional development sessions, but the time that educators actually spent in these activities in 1999 were less than eight hours or the equivalent of less than one day of training per activity, according to the National Center for Education Statistics (Ganser, 2000). Success of these activities was typically judged by a “happiness quotient” obtained when participants expressed their satisfaction with the experience and its usefulness in their work (Sparks, 1994). The recent emphasis on school improvement models is directly related to the development of district, state, national, and professional standards. Professional development activities are linked to school objectives which are used to make comparisons among schools, districts, states, and countries (Marczely, 1996). The extent to which educators are involved in determining the objectives varies considerably. In some cases, teachers have the latitude to make curriculum and instructional decisions in light of local needs. More often, professional development is being used as an instrument to assure that students and

teachers realize state achievement benchmarks (Zimmerman & May, 2003). Local control of professional development priorities is often illusory because objectives are determined outside the community (Guskey & Sparks, 1991). In order to provide more meaningful professional development, educators need to understand the components of effective professional development and the relationship between professional development and student learning (Sullivan, 1999).

### Historical Perspective

In the 1970s educational research began to focus on staff development and on how teachers transformed their learning into classroom practice (Lieberman & Miller, 1978). Prior to this time, staff development focused on improving teachers' subject matter competence, but later teachers' continuing education became an important factor in school improvement (Lieberman & Miller, 1978). As part of their inquiry, Lieberman and Miller (1978) focused on the identification of the components necessary for effective staff development. Their research revealed the importance of teachers' daily work with students, collaboration, and developmentally appropriate staff training. A supportive work environment for this type of staff development included resources, time available for learning and practicing new concepts, district support, and collective problem solving.

Traditionally, professional development provided workshops and conferences outside of school, but opportunities for teachers to learn from and with colleagues within a school rarely existed (Lieberman, 1995). As a result, professional development experiences were disseminated only by staff developers (Udall & Rugen, 1997). Typical professional development approaches, especially the one-shot workshop, did not improve

teaching practices and were largely disconnected from teachers' everyday experiences (Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000). Sandholtz (1999) found that 70% of teachers described their worst professional experience as school or district in-service sessions.

Cohen and Ball (1999) discovered most traditional in-service programs to be disconnected from teachers' work with students and from issues affecting curriculum and instruction. They contend that staff development often included the appropriate program materials, but did not include the training and follow-up necessary for teachers to adequately implement the new programs or strategies with students. The staff development delivery method has been an obstacle to meaningful improvement. A "seat time" view of staff development has proven to be ineffective in producing results (Zimmerman & May, 2003).

#### National Commission on Teaching and America's Future

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future was formed in 1994 and focused on providing a framework for improving teacher quality, thus ensuring higher student achievement. This research indicated that teacher expertise was one of the most important factors influencing student achievement (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). A study of more than 1000 school districts demonstrated that every additional dollar spent on developing more highly qualified teachers yielded greater improvements in student achievement than any other use of school funds (Ferguson, 1991).

The commission's first report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, was published in 1996. This report placed the issue of teacher quality at the

center of the nation's education reform agenda. The commission's follow-up report, *Doing What Matters Most: Investing in Quality Teaching*, was published in 1997. This report documented the efforts of states and districts across the United States regarding teacher preparation, retainment, and recruitment. The report also presented research findings that demonstrated the importance of professional development funding as an effective vehicle for achieving educational reform. The impact of these two reports resulted in many initiatives designed to improve teacher quality. Progress has been facilitated by the development of partnerships with such organizations as the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education, and the Interstate New Teachers Assessment and Support Consortium (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future made the following recommendations to states, colleges, and schools as a blueprint for improving teacher quality.

1. Develop standards for students and teachers; organize teacher education and professional development to support standards-based reform.
2. Extend graduate level teacher preparation programs providing year-long internships in a professional development school.
3. Develop and adequately fund mentoring programs for novice teachers by providing ongoing support and assessment of teaching skills.
4. Create high quality resources for professional development allocating one percent of state and local funds to support efforts with additional matching funds to school districts.

5. Embed professional development in teachers' daily work through collaborative planning, study groups, peer coaching, and research (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997).

### Other Organizations Address Professional Development

The American Federation of Teachers (2001) offered similar recommendations for effective professional development. The recommendations were designed to deepen the content knowledge of teachers through professional development experiences and to ensure that teachers utilized appropriate instructional methods. They supported effective professional development based on research and linked to measurable improvements in student achievement. Opportunities to participate in the planning for professional development and the use of time and resources to promote continuous learning were also noted as essential components.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC), founded in 1969, is a professional organization committed to ensuring success for all students through quality staff development and school improvement (NSDC, 2001). In 1994, the NSDC assembled a task force to research the components of effective staff development (Hirsch, 2001). This work resulted in a comprehensive set of standards first adopted in 1995 and revised in 2000. The standards were research-based and demonstrated the type of professional development all teachers should experience in order to improve student learning. The National Staff Development Council recommended staff development be results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded. Their goals were derived from the answers to three key questions:

1. What are all students expected to know and be able to do?
2. What must teachers know and do in order to ensure student success?
3. Where must staff development focus to meet both goals? (Hirsch, 2001).

### Standards for Professional Development

According to Hirsch (2001), standards provided the framework for determining what students needed to know and do. Teaching and leadership standards provided valuable insights about the knowledge and skills teachers and administrators needed to support high levels of student learning. Staff development standards provide a roadmap for creating professional development experiences that ensured educators acquired the necessary information for successful implementation. Staff development should occur daily and include time for teachers to learn, plan lessons, critique student work, and establish goals for student success. Standards represent the direction toward more meaningful staff development and were directly related to the pursuit of non-traditional formats that held great promise for improving teachers' knowledge and skills (Hirsch, 2001).

The NSDC standards for staff development were organized to demonstrate the connection between staff development and student learning. Context standards addressed the organization, system, and culture in which learning was to occur. Process standards referred to the "how" of staff development and included the use of data, evaluation, and research. Content standards referred to the knowledge and skills that ensured all students were successful (Hirsch, 2001).

The Alabama State Department of Education has developed 12 professional development standards which are to be applied to all professional development to ensure that activities are effective in improving educators' practices (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002). These standards were designed to improve instruction in Alabama schools, and all professional development in Alabama is supposed to be aligned with them. The Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development all fit into the NSDC standards areas of context, process, and content, although they are not organized into those categories by their numerical order (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002).

### Theories Behind Effective Professional Development

The concept of learning organizations has grown popular in recent years. More writings have been produced by organizational theorists with an eye on industry (Senge, 1990; Wheatley, 1992) than by educational researchers (Astuto & Clark, 1995; Goodlad, 1996; Louis & Kruse, 1997). Learning organization theorists maintain that learning must be a habit of the institution if it is to be an unconscious habit of the participants (Louis & Kruse, 1997; Morgan, 1997; Senge, 1990).

Team learning takes place when individuals in an organization share their individual knowledge and experiences with others in the organization (Senge, 1990). Team learning is necessary for organizations to be effective. It allows the shared knowledge and experience of each individual to be used by all individuals in the team. Therefore, the individual becomes less important as the team grows through the shared knowledge available to all (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

Organizational learning takes place when individuals and teams, through the process of evaluative inquiry, share their learning. Organizational learning may be seen as the process by which an organization functions and succeeds (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

Organizational theorist Peter Senge defines learning organizations as “organizations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together” (1990, p. 3). In Senge’s model, linear chains of command, communication, and learning are replaced by processes that weave throughout the organization. Costa, Lipton and Wellman (1997) believe that learning organizations, or “holonomous” environments, have the potential to enhance personal action, foster collaborative relationships, develop intellects, and stimulate learning. Margaret Wheatley (1994) explains it this way:

Individuals and organizations engaged in continuous learning demonstrate a willingness to change by building critique and assessment into their processes. Feedback spirals allow for a data-based examination and clarification of vision, values, purposes, and outcomes. Out of this clarity comes the capacity for individuals to communicate and share progress and to align organizational goals with those of its individual members. Thus, individuals – and their organization – are continually self-learning, self-renewing, and self-modifying. (p.105)

These theorists have also contributed significantly to understanding the barriers to learning organizations. Their work focuses on the defensive routines that employees develop to deflect organizational criticism and bureaucratic accountability. Employees at

all levels often ignore deep-seated problems and “hold back or dilute other bad news” as they become “skilled in impression management” (Morgan, 1997, p. 89). The danger of this organizational “learning disability” is the potential for “shared norms and patterns of ‘group think’ that prevent people from addressing key aspects of the reality with which they are dealing” (Morgan, 1997, p. 89). Learning disabilities can be overcome if organizational members have ongoing opportunities to understand the assumptions, frameworks, and norms that guide their activities (Argyris, 1990). Also, participants must have the responsibility and authority to develop new structures and processes when appropriate (Morgan, 1997).

### Components of Effective Professional Development

Sparks and Hirsch (1997) noted the importance of results-driven education in their earlier research. As their research continued, the ideas of systems thinking and constructivism became important components for planning staff development. Systems thinking involves establishing learning frameworks necessary for seeing the relationship between various parts of the system (Senge, 1990). Systems thinking is an important practice for educators, or anyone who is part of an organization. While it is often necessary to examine small parts of an organization when one is trying to solve a particular problem, it is necessary to consider the effect any change will have on the entire organization. Senge (1990) put it this way:

A cloud masses, the sky darkens, leaves twist upward, and we know that it will rain. We also know that after the storm, the run-off will feed into ground water miles away, and the sky will grow clear by tomorrow. All these events are distant

in time and space, and yet they are all connected within the same pattern. Each has an influence on the rest, an influence that is usually hidden from view. You can only understand the system of a rainstorm by contemplating the whole, not any individual part of the pattern.

Business and other human endeavors are also systems. They, too, are bound by invisible fabrics of and to related actions, which often takes years to fully play out their effects on each other. Since we are part of that lace-work ourselves, it's doubly hard to see the whole pattern of change. Instead, we tend to focus on snapshots of isolated parts of the system, and wonder why our deepest problems never seem to get solved. Systems teaching is a conceptual framework, a body of knowledge and tools that has been developed over the past 50 years, to make the full patterns clearer, and to help us see how to change them effectively.

(p. 11)

It is easy to see that systems thinking is a necessary practice for educators. Everything educators do has an effect on the entire system, as well as an effect on the product (the students) which then has an effect on society at large. Understanding how decisions educators make will affect the larger system is necessary to be an effective education administrator.

According to constructivist theory, humans create their own knowledge structures rather than simply receiving them from teachers. Teachers construct and elaborate on their knowledge when spending time thinking and problem solving about teaching practices. Staff development from a constructivist perspective includes activities such as action research, collaboration with peers, and reflective practices (Sparks, 1994).

Measurable objectives expressed in terms of student outcomes further guide this approach to staff development and lead to strategic planning at the district and school level. As a result of this comprehensive approach, all aspects of the system work together to achieve the same set of outcomes (Sparks, 1994).

Learning theory is important to consider when looking at professional development, since educator professional development consists of causing educators to grow and change through their learning. There are several theories of individual learning. Behaviorism suggests that learning is a change in behavior (Preskill & Torres, 1999). To behaviorists, the teacher's role is to manipulate the environment and provide the opportunity for the student to give the desired response. This type of learning works best for learning discrete skills. Cognitive learning theory suggests that cognitive brain function controls learning and behavior. The focus of cognitive theory is on how learning occurs, not on why people learn (Preskill & Torres, 1999). This helps with creating materials, but does not address the most important factor in adult learning, situation-specific motivation (Trotter, 2006). Constructivist learning theory says that to learn one must take new information and make it meaningful.

Constructivism is concerned with how people process information in ways that affect their world view. It proposes that individuals continually create and recreate meaning as a result of their relationship with others in the social environment.

Constructivism is particularly well-suited for understanding interpersonal relationships and how behavior is mediated by organizational environments.

Constructivist learning theories are built on the belief that all knowledge is based

on experience and the meanings are arrived at by continually seeking order in these experiences. (Preskill & Torres, 1999, p. 19)

Humanist learning theories suggest that learning takes place when the learner identifies needs through past experiences. They say that learners learn the most when their focus is on problem-solving (Preskill & Torres, 1999).

Teacher beliefs are established, revisited, and changed over the course of a lifetime. Teacher development should be oriented toward fostering a culture of life-long learning, nurturing a person's belief system rather than focusing solely on subject knowledge or particular aspects of pedagogy (Birman, Desimone, Porter, & Garet, 2000).

### Factors Impacting Professional Development

Birman et al. (2000) identified three structural features that were critical to successful professional development. They include (1) form, meaning if the activity was structured as a reform type of activity or as a more traditional workshop or conference; (2) duration, meaning how many hours did the activity take and over what span of time was it done; and (3) participation, meaning whether groups of teachers from the same school, department, or grade level participated together, or if they participated individually (p. 29). Birman et al. also found that three core features characterize professional development processes. These include content focus, active learning, and coherence. They recommended that "schools and districts should pursue these goals by using activities that have greater duration and that involve collective participation (Birman et al., 2000, p. 32).

## Structure of Professional Development

A factor impacting professional development was the structure and design of conventional professional development sessions. According to King and Newman (2000), most formats for professional development ignored adult learning practices. They looked at previous studies of professional development and then did case studies on two schools with contrasting approaches to professional development. They discovered adult learning was most likely to occur concurrently with the following:

1. Teachers had sustained opportunities to study, experiment, and receive follow-up training.
2. Teachers concentrated on instruction and outcomes related to their own students.
3. Teachers had opportunities to collaborate with professional colleagues.
4. Teachers had influence over the policies and practices that affected their teaching.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) found that existing policy structures often restricted professional development experiences for teachers. New proposals to improve teacher learning were likely to depend on the specific needs of teachers and students within a local school setting. “The situation-specific nature of this kind of teaching and learning envisioned by reformers is the key challenge for teachers’ professional development, and is the chief obstacle to policymakers’ efforts to engender systemic reform” (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 603). Existing policy structures have often ignored how teachers learn best. New proposals recognize the key factors that impact teachers’ learning and are guided by these questions:

1. Does the policy reduce the isolation of teachers, or does it perpetuate the experience of working alone?
2. Does the policy establish an environment of professional trust and encourage problem solving, or does it exacerbate the risks involved in serious reflection and change and thus encourage problem hiding?
3. Does the policy make possible the restructuring of time, space, and scale within schools or does it expect new forms of teaching to emerge within conventional structures?
4. Does the policy focus on learner-centered outcomes that give priority to learning how and why, or does it emphasize the memorization of facts and the acquisition of rote skills? (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995, p. 604)

A challenge for policy makers and educators according to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) is to realign current structures with new ideas designed to support both teacher and student learning. They believe these changes are more likely to create professional development experiences that address the specific needs of both teachers and students.

In recent years private sector approaches to professional development have impacted the content and delivery of staff development and training. Motorola shifted its emphasis from skill training to team-based problem solving with the goal of improving customer satisfaction. Motorola executives believed the company's commitment to professional development increased productivity and resulted in strong financial gains

(Laine & Otto, 2000). Corporate changes such as these have provided important implications for professional development in education.

### Professional Development Studies

In a study conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (1997), 85% of teachers reported that professional development, regardless of the type, provided new and useful information that led to changes in instructional practice. The research identified several factors that impact professional development. One important factor was limited access to professional development. Relatively few teachers had access to sustained professional development related to their subject matter, teaching methods, or technology. The National Center for Education Statistics reported in 1994 that approximately 50% of all teachers had at least some exposure to professional development related to technology, student assessment, and cooperative learning. Most of these opportunities consisted of one-time workshops. Only 15% of teachers spent at least nine hours engaged in these activities. In addition, 64% of teachers had exposure to teaching methods, but only approximately 30% engaged in in-depth study in their subject matter area. These statistics were particularly important given the growing emphasis on new standards for students and the need for teachers to develop a broader repertoire of instructional strategies (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997).

The Northwest Regional Laboratory commissioned a study in 1998 to compare the process and outcomes for professional development between an exemplary private sector corporation and an exemplary school district. The study increased the understanding of how organizations supported or failed to support a work environment

that valued education and increased understanding of what factors contribute to effective staff development. An additional purpose of the study was to develop understanding of how professional development becomes embedded into the culture of an organization (Laine & Otto, 2000).

The findings of the Northwest Regional Laboratory Study illustrated the similarities and differences in professional development for each organization. Both the corporation and the school district had a centralized professional development office responsible for planning, developing, and implementing professional development for employees. In the school district, decisions about the content were negotiated between Staff Support Services, school leadership, and the individual teachers. By contrast, the corporation mandated the content and process of training (Laine & Otto, 2000).

The amount of time for professional development during the workday and throughout the year was vastly different for teachers in the school district and for workers in the corporation (Laine & Otto, 2000). The school district provided four institute days, two hours during each month, and up to three days of release time for subsidized professional development. All other professional development occurred outside of school and on teachers' personal time. At the corporation, the total amount of time available for personnel to participate in staff development training was 10% of their annual contract. New employees received structured support during the first five years to help them build skills and to learn the culture of the organization. Aside from a one or two day induction program at the school district, the content or amount of professional development for new employees was no different than for veteran employees (Laine & Otto, 2000).

Another issue impacting staff development was the limited amount of time for collaboration with colleagues. Both organizations had a web-based communication system. The corporation's site encouraged internal communication, while the school system primarily catalogued teacher work. The corporation culture encouraged collaboration through teamwork, whereas teachers in the school district often worked in isolation (Laine & Otto, 2000).

Funding for professional development at the corporation changed according to the corporation's gross revenue, but their commitment to support ongoing training and staff development remained consistent. In the school district, the same commitment to funding professional development existed, but to a lesser degree. Levels of funding in the school district varied because of external factors such as changes in the state's funding formula, property tax values, demographic growth, and local politics (Laine & Otto, 2000).

Several findings from the research on the corporation and school district offered important implications for designing professional development in education. The findings addressed ways to improve the process and the outcomes of professional development in education.

First, the findings suggest school districts would benefit from a continuous source of funding. It was recommended that professional development resources be combined at the state level and awarded to school districts based on their need and plans that showed a clear alignment between measurable goals and outcomes (Laine & Otto, 2000). Second, adults learn best by implementing and practicing on the job. Successful professional development for teachers should be sustained over time and integrated into teachers' work with their students. It was suggested that state and federal incentives be

offered to school districts that develop a three-year plan to allow for 10% of a teacher's time for weekly collaborative professional development (Laine & Otto, 2000). Third, it is important to build an organizational culture for professional development. More effective use of technology and the internet as a source of information for all teachers was one suggestion (Laine & Otto, 2000).

### Conditions Affecting Professional Development

Several conditions are necessary for the development of learning opportunities for teachers that allow them the freedom to develop new understandings of teaching and learning (Tatto, 1998). Learning while participating and reflecting on the experience has more influence on teacher education than learning by sitting and listening to a speaker. Teachers given the opportunity to reflect and engage in dialogue about philosophies and views with fellow educators will more likely be influenced to modify or change their beliefs about teaching (Tatto, 1998).

A factor negatively impacting professional development in school districts across the United States was sporadic funding. Most school districts allocated funds for professional development but not in coherent ways that supported sustained learning opportunities for teachers (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997). Recommendations from the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future suggested that 1% of state and local education funding be allocated to high quality professional development organized around standards for improving teachers' instructional capacities. Matching funds from states of up to 3% of local districts' total

budget expenditures were recommended to increase investments in professional development (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

### Current Trends in Professional Development

The most powerful intervention currently recognized for improving student learning is a knowledgeable and skillful teacher. Second only to the impact of the teacher on student learning is the influence of the school leadership (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). Reform efforts to redesign professional development opportunities for teachers acknowledged the importance of the adult learning processes involved in improving existing classroom practices (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997).

New practices in professional development create more autonomous schools where administrators and teachers make responsible decisions to facilitate genuine student learning (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997). This goal represents an ideal that can only develop over time as administrators orchestrate and support the consistent collaboration and growth of teachers and staff. Evidence suggests that teacher expertise is closely related to how deeply they understand student learning and how well they interpret and reflect on student performance. It is no longer desirable for teachers to work in isolation, but rather to collaborate and study together as in-school teams and professional learning communities (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Though different in scope, current programs for improving professional development share certain features. They are:

1. connected to educators' work with students involving the concrete tasks of teaching and implementing new knowledge,
2. organized around and driven by realistic problem solving,
3. informed by current, respected educational research,
4. sustained over time through ongoing conversation, coaching, and collaboration (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996).

Transforming schools into organizations where educators work together to solve problems requires redefining both the content and processes of professional development (Lieberman, 1995). Professional development that focuses on collaboration provides time for teachers to learn from one another, to make connections across subject areas, and to be involved in the decisions that affect their learning. Rather than receiving information from "expert" presenters, teachers and administrators collaborate with peers and their own students to reflect on the learning process (Sparks, 1994).

### Examples of Effective Professional Development

New relationships between schools and universities have changed the traditional internship experience to an extended, more field-based approach and are currently recognized as important professional development for pre-service teachers (Dilworth & Imig, 1995). Professional Development Schools have emerged to support collaboration among faculty, staff, and field-based practitioners. The Professional Development School

represents a university partnership with school-based personnel to prepare new teachers and to enhance the skills of experienced teachers (Neubert & Binko, 1998). The organization of the Professional Development School has facilitated a shift from teaching in isolation and one-to-one mentoring to school-wide collaboration and conversation. In addition, teacher candidates study components of lesson planning, classroom management, assessment, and learning styles in the context of an actual classroom setting (Middleton, 2000).

In 1995, the Maryland Higher Education Commission mandated that every teacher candidate complete an internship at a local Professional Development School (Neubert & Binko, 1998). The School of Education at Towson University developed an internship course as a part of a research study that focused on three performance outcomes: classroom discipline, use of technology, and reflection. The experimental group consisted of eleven teacher candidates who voluntarily participated in the internship course at the Professional Development School. The control group consisted of ten teacher candidates who were involved in methods classes, but chose not to enroll in the course at the Professional Development School. Rubrics were written and field-tested for accuracy of the performance outcomes. To ensure validity and reliability, an outside evaluator was trained in the use of rubrics and interview questions. Open-ended surveys and structured interviews with teacher candidates, supervising teachers, school personnel, and university faculty provided qualitative data (Neubert & Binko, 1998).

The results of the study suggest that the students involved in the internship at the Professional Development School were more successful. Rubric scores ranged from a low rating of 1 to a high rating of 4 on each of the performance outcomes. Professional

Development School interns performed at a competency level of 3, while the control group performed at a minimally satisfactory level 2. Analysis of the qualitative data indicated that the experiences for all participants in the Professional Development School increased the pre-service teachers' skills in classroom discipline, technology, and reflection. The results of this research suggested the need to expand the use of Professional Development Schools as an effective way of strengthening the knowledge and performance of pre-service teachers (Neubert & Binko, 1998).

A collaborative partnership between Colorado State University and Rocky Mountain High School demonstrated how an innovative approach to teacher training enhanced the teaching and learning experience of all participants. The success of this arrangement was attributed to the development of a learning community where teachers, teacher candidates, and university professors recognized their own expertise and then worked together to improve their skills (Mantle-Bromley, 1998).

One unique program designed by an urban Professional Development School in Camden, New Jersey, placed White middle class teachers in urban settings. By participating in an extended field experience prior to student teaching, these student teachers had the opportunity to work closely with the teacher education faculty. Together, they discussed, observed, and connected theory with practice. Exposure to cultures different from their own allowed teacher candidates to broaden their perspectives and to see firsthand the needs of a diverse student body (McBee, 1998).

These programs engage prospective teachers in studying research and conducting their own investigations through action research and reflections about practice (Mantle-Bromley, 1998; McBee, 1998; Neubert & Binko, 1998). Professional development

schools, like teaching hospitals, provide state-of-the-art organizational structures that are organized to support the development of new professionals and extend the professional development of veteran teachers (Darling-Hammond, 1994).

In Chicago formats for professional development have undergone dramatic changes as a result of the formation of the Chicago Academy for School Leadership (CASL). The primary purpose for this organization is to support practitioners as they work to improve student learning. Teachers in some high schools in Chicago, Illinois formed “critical friends groups” to examine student work. These groups worked to eliminate isolation for teachers by reworking instructional time and reorganizing classes for students (Anderson, 2001). Collegial relationships were equally important for the principals and central office administrators who received support from CASL’s Long-Term Learning seminars. The goal for administrators was to provide continuity among teachers, principals, and central office personnel. In a typical session, administrators worked together to examine research, exchange ideas, and address issues specific to the Chicago Public Schools. In the course of the two year program, principals experienced ongoing, results driven, and job-embedded professional development (Anderson, 2001).

Feiler, Heritage, and Gallimore (2000) assert that the involvement of teacher leaders as resources within a school improves professional learning and development that, in turn, increases the likelihood for improvement in teacher performance and student learning. Seeds University Elementary School, the University of Southern California’s laboratory school, supports the role of teacher-leaders within their school. These teacher-leaders provide ongoing, in-house expertise to colleagues by modeling lessons and coaching. The success of the teacher-leader role in enhancing teaching and learning is

evident in the improved standardized test scores in math and literacy and in the increased use of technology.

A similar arrangement in Boston schools utilized change and content coaches to offer in-house professional development for teachers (Guiney, 2001). This framework for standards-based reform sought to improve student performance by improving teaching. All students should benefit, but leaders were particularly interested in the estimated 30% of students who had advanced in school without mastering the material. This model showed signs of success in students' achievement scores at many of the schools where the coaches had worked for extended periods of time.

In California and Vermont, teacher networks involve participants in longer term, more intensive commitments for professional development. These state-supported networks have provided powerful learning environments by engaging teachers in authentic problem solving through collaboration with experts and peers. This arrangement provides economical, ongoing support for improvement, while creating a culture shift away from isolated teaching and decision making (Pennell & Firestone, 1998).

Professional development summits introduce teachers to new practices and subject matter, while engaging in active learning for particular interdisciplinary units. Teachers have the opportunity to work with a master teacher solving complex problems during weeklong sessions (Udall & Rugen, 1997). Udall and Rugen (1997) stated that, "Above all, the summit creates opportunities for teachers to reflect on themselves as learners, to deepen their inquiry about practice, and to think about ways to integrate what they are learning into their own classrooms" (p. 405).

New York City's International High School serves as a model of a very successful staff development program that is ongoing and totally immersed in the school day (Pardini, 2001). For students to qualify for admission to the high school, they must have lived in the United States for less than four years and score below the 20<sup>th</sup> percentile on the English Language Assessment Battery. In spite of such obstacles, more than 90% of these students attend college and perform better than other New York City Public School students. The students' success is attributed to the high school's philosophy that both students and teachers learn and perform better if they are actively participating and involved in their work at school. The school's organizational structure allows teachers to work with students in small groups. This particular approach is a working example of sound educational practices supported by current research such as the following:

1. Language deficient students are immersed in the use of English.
2. Students work closely with peers and teachers in small groups.
3. Teachers are growing and improving through consistent, ongoing, job-embedded staff development. (Pardini, 2001)

Barren County Middle School in Glasgow, Kentucky, also improved student performance through their standards-based professional development program that has high expectations and multi-disciplined instruction (Pardini, 2001). Professional development is ongoing, data-driven, and presented in multi-faceted ways. In weekly team meetings, teachers develop interdisciplinary units and review students' work to determine if students are performing at the "proficiency" level defined by state standards. In addition, teachers design personal plans for professional growth that link professional development needs to state, district, and school goals. As a result of this approach, this

school has moved from a ranking of 141 out of 336 Kentucky middle schools to 26<sup>th</sup> place, as measured by state standardized tests (Pardini, 2001).

Lawrence Public Schools in Lawrence, Kansas, rely on the resourcefulness of a Professional Development Council (Crowther, 1998). This council is comprised of teacher representatives from each school and administrators from various departments of the district. The primary purpose of the council is to ensure that professional development opportunities are more than just a “sit and get” workshop. Staff development needs are determined through a formal needs assessment provided by the National Staff Development Council’s *Standards for Staff Development*. The needs assessments are reviewed by school-based committees who decide how to best allocate funds for professional development to achieve instructional goals. Changes in professional development practice have resulted in teachers conducting action research projects in classrooms and participating in peer observations, sharing student work, and developing performance assessments (Crowther, 1998).

#### Administrator Accountability for Instructional Improvement

The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and state-based high stakes accountability models have increasingly held principals responsible for the achievement of all students. The increasing emphasis on accountability has created new demands on principals and consequently, on their preparation programs. Today’s principals are responsible for traditional managerial roles and responsibilities (e.g., budgeting, hiring, and facilities management), as well as for creating communities of learners and fostering a school environment focused on maximizing learning opportunities for all students. There is a

new emphasis on preparing learning focused leaders (NCAELP, 2002). Joseph Murphy (2002) describes school administration as a profession in need of rebuilding. He believes that the synthesizing paradigm for future development in the profession will fuse together the constructs of school improvement, social justice, and democratic community. These new roles and responsibilities, combined with changing expectations for schools in general, necessitate that educational leadership and administration preparation programs revisit their core purposes, operational approaches, curriculum, delivery methods, and internal structures.

Most agree that the principalship is the hot seat of education accountability, perhaps to a greater extent than is warranted by research (Keller, 1998). Educational theorists agree that the new school leader will have to be adaptable, skillful, and innovative (Fullan, 1998; Hart, 1991; Wagschal, 1994). As technology makes the world a smaller place (Friedman, 2007), the ensuing changes bring about the need for new ideas in education to tackle the problems that arise. New methods of leadership are required. How are tomorrow's school leaders prepared to lead in a new era? Today's methods for preparing school leaders must be examined and altered to produce tomorrow's successful leaders.

### Skills Necessary for School Leaders

To be successful today, principals need to be both chief executive officer and chief financial officer, as well as a facilitator in the process of developing a vision for the school (Odden, 1995). School administrators are those people who can “articulate a vision, provide direction, facilitate those who are working for change, coordinate

different groups, and balance the forces impacting schools today ...” (Crow & Matthews, 1998, p. 7). Kowalski, Reitzug, McDaniel, and Otto (1992) identified skills crucial to principal effectiveness. Their study found that teachers and principals ranked communicating effectively as the most important skill for principal effectiveness. Principals’ human skills including listening to and inspiring others were also considered important. Therefore, administrator preparation needs to include reflection to promote self-awareness and to make learning conscious (Bennis, 1994). Learning to engage in reflection is essential for today’s leaders to be effective now and innovative in the future (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). The average day for an education administrator is comprised of brief, fragmented encounters with others, desk work, and telephone conversations, with no time for reflection. School leaders, like business leaders, often practice a destructive behavior that prevents real organizational improvement and growth. Chris Argyris (1986) calls it “skilled incompetence,” and explains it this way:

The ability to get along with others is always an asset, right? Wrong. By adeptly avoiding conflict with coworkers, some executives eventually wreak organizational havoc.... The explanation for this lies in what I call skilled incompetence, whereby managers use practiced routine behavior (skill) to produce what they do not intend (incompetence).... Managers who are skilled communicators may also be good at covering up real problems. (pp. 74, 79)

Reflection is necessary as part of the daily routine to unlearn the skill-set that produces so many organizational problems (Argyris, 1986), as well as to allow the development of a long range vision for the school (Odden, 1995). It is a way of asking the right questions to promote self-awareness and to develop a perspective which can aid

in developing vision and leadership skills (Anderson, 1998; Bennis, 1994). After a day of split-second decision making, reflection allows the administrator to assess the events of the day and grow from the process.

Educators, especially at the central administrative level, often assume that local empowerment is synonymous with “laissez faire” management practices (Fullan, 1994). The over-emphasis on local control has led some districts to severely limit the role of the central office. Isolated schools, having recognized the limitations of their district’s wisdom and support, will occasionally have the internal resources (both experiential and financial) to reinvent themselves. However, most schools do not have the capacity or the incentives to engage in non-traditional reform efforts (Fullan, 1994). Therefore, subtle “top-down” pressure must work symbiotically with “bottom-up” thinking for lasting change to be realized (Fullan, 1991; Waugh & Punch, 1987). Bull and Buechler (1996) believe that school district central office level personnel are relevant to school-based professional development. Central office personnel “must be more deliberate than ever in formulating their policies and executing them, for their role is to activate and facilitate improvement” (p. 83).

Central district administrators are responsible for the processes and structures that support school renewal efforts. Wood (1997) asserts that administrators should be held accountable by the organization for the development of several conditions of reform. They include: (1) developing long-range plans that help schools focus on their goals; (2) identifying change research that will help individual schools begin the process of restructuring; (3) establishing district policies and structures that incorporate multi-level collaboration; (4) establishing a curricular and instructional framework; (5) developing

central office personnel as change agent resources; (6) marketing the school improvement approach to the board; (7) modeling desired behaviors in the central office; (8) establishing expectations for change; (9) becoming public advocates for school restructuring; (10) establishing communication networks with the community regarding the change process; (11) providing resources for the change; (12) monitoring the change process; and (13) serving as a facilitator for change (pp. 66-73; also see Costa, et al., 1997; Fullan, 1994).

Administrators often place image building above culture building. As a result, staff development is driven more by fads and procedures preferred by the administration rather than by strategies likely to improve the all-around quality of schools (Pink, 1989). In order for a school district to allow school level experimentation, it may require a change in the district's culture (Marczely, 1996). Hargreaves describes school climate in this manner:

Schools as learning organizations are basically non-intellectual in the sense that the way they are organized, structurally and normatively, is not amenable to experimentation, critical reflection, continuous learning, assessment, or rethinking....Schools, by and large, are not reflective, learning places when it comes to their own continuous development. (1989, p. 1)

Most education administrators continue to hold outdated visions of organizations, learning, and management (Andrews, 1994; see also Asayesh, 1994; Wood, 1997). Whether this outdated vision persists due to administrators' lack of desire to move beyond the technical or a lack of opportunities to do so is not clear (Dimmock & O'Donoghue, 1997). It is clear, however, that professional development for education

leaders is often considered “a highly individualistic process focused on the needs, aspirations, and careers of teachers who are potential managers, ignoring the need for organizational development” (Kydd, Crawford & Riches, 1997, p. 2).

### The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards

The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) was established in 1994 as a program of the Council of Chief State School Officers. This organization drafted a set of school leader standards. Personnel from twenty-four state educational agencies and representatives from various professional development associations were involved in the process of creating the standards from research on educational leadership. The standards presented a common core of knowledge, dispositions, and performances designed to forge a stronger link between leadership and productive schools. The consortium represented part of a concerted effort to enhance the skills of school leaders and to couple leadership with effective educational processes and valued outcomes (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996).

The ISLLC Standards for School Leaders established six school leader standards which define what school leaders should know and be able to do. They are:

Standard 1. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.

Standard 2. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a

school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.

Standard 3. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.

Standard 4. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.

Standard 5. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness and in an ethical manner.

Standard 6. A school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996, pp. 12-22)

School improvement is largely dependent on strong leadership. Schools must have quality teaching and excellent leadership in order to positively affect student learning (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). Archer (2004) states: “Leadership characteristics are the second-strongest predictor of a school’s effect on student results. Only classroom factors, such as teacher quality, are stronger” (p. S1). School leaders have a dramatic influence on student achievement even though they do not directly teach students. There

is a growing movement to redefine the work of administrators. The federal No Child Left Behind Act has created an environment where school leaders are judged (and often sanctioned) by their ability or inability to raise student test scores (Archer, 2004).

### Principals as Instructional Leaders

Over twenty years of research has shown that successful schools have “dynamic, knowledgeable, and focused leaders (Kaplan, 2005, p. 28). School leaders are becoming learning leaders rather than simply building managers (Young & Peterson, 2002). Successful leaders must take care of student learning and school business throughout the day. A school staff’s acceptance of a new principal is dependent upon the principal being a sound instructional leader (Alvy & Robbins, 2005). School leader preparation programs around the country are being re-tooled to prepare school leaders in instructional leadership (LaPointe & Davis, 2006). LaPointe and Davis (2006) state that: “Successful school leaders influence student achievement through two important pathways – the support and development of effective teachers and the implementation of effective organizational processes (p. 18).

All principals, not just new principals, are expected to be instructional leaders. A Virginia study found there to be plenty of existing school leadership candidates who held the proper certification, yet many existing principals headed schools that were not performing well. The issue was not quantity, but quality (Kaplan, 2005). Just over half of the superintendents surveyed by Kaplan (2005) said they were happy with their current principals’ job performance. The existing principals and assistant principals who will be moving into principal roles in the future must be involved in effective professional

development to prepare them for these roles, and new principals and assistant principals need professional development to continue to be successful in instructional leadership.

While principals rely on effective teachers to improve instruction and student achievement, ineffective principals are often not able to get or retain effective teachers because effective teachers want to work for effective leaders. There is a clear relationship between principals' mastery of ISLLC standards and high achieving schools (Kaplan, 2005). Principal effectiveness is related to teaching quality (Kaplan, 2005).

Meaningful professional development for school leaders is critical to school success. Administrator professional development is most successful when it is job-embedded and peer-to-peer (Hoffman & Johnston, 2005). Assessment of a program implemented by Union Pacific to provide quality professional development to school principals in Union Pacific communities found that in order for principals to implement innovations in their schools, they needed to go through a process that included reflecting on the innovation's pros and cons and how the innovation might affect their schools, doing research and consultation with other principals knowledgeable about the innovation, and planning carefully to implement the innovation. Most innovation came about through changing the way a principal viewed a problem or opportunity. The study concluded that "when principals are provided high quality professional development based on their requests, it results in rich, personal connections between principals and has a powerful impact on their schools" (Hoffman & Johnston, 2005, p.19).

## Professional Development and Student Performance

Schools with high leadership capacities have some important characteristics in common. Administrators, teachers, parents, and students participate together in study groups and other learning focused activities. There is a coherence in the program of the school due to the shared vision of the participants. The school focuses on generating shared knowledge. There is broad involvement and collective responsibility. Innovation is a result of reflection on how the vision can best be brought to fruition. Student achievement is high or steadily improving (Lambert, 2002).

Weglinsky (2000) illustrated the importance of professional development for improving student performance through his analysis of data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) administered in 1996. Data were examined for two national samples of students including 7,146 eighth grade students who took the NAEP mathematics assessment in 1996 and 7,776 eighth graders who took the NAEP science assessment in 1996. In addition to the standardized tests, questionnaires were sent to students, their teachers, and their principals. Three factors that affect teacher quality were measured: (a) teachers' years of experience and education levels; (b) classroom practices such as small group instruction or hands-on activities; (c) teachers' involvement in professional development which supported these classroom practices.

A multivariate statistical analysis was used to analyze the data. The findings indicated the greatest influence on student achievement was classroom practices, followed by professional development. Eighth grade students performed better on assessments in math and science when teachers utilized hands-on activities to illustrate concepts. When teachers focused on higher order thinking skills for problem solving,

eighth graders performed better on mathematics assessments, but not on science assessments. Professional development activities related to hands-on learning and higher order thinking skills contributed to improved student performance.

Overall, professional development was three times as important as teachers' years of experience and education level in mathematics and one and a half times as important in science. Classroom practices were five times as important as teacher experience and education level in mathematics and four times as important in science. Wenglinsky's findings demonstrate the importance of professional development as a tool for improving classroom practice and student learning. Wenglinsky also found that teachers who received sustained professional development were more likely to engage in effective teaching strategies.

Cohen and Hill (1997) surveyed 1,000 mathematics teachers in California who participated in sustained professional development. The organization of the professional development sessions involved teachers working directly with one another and with consultants on new curriculum materials related to specific concepts in California's mathematics framework. Moreover, teachers collaboratively studied these materials, developed lessons, and discussed the results with their colleagues. Results indicated that teachers who participated in content-specific professional development were more likely to report changes in their instructional practice than those who engaged in other forms of professional development. These changes in practice combined with professional development resulted in higher mathematics achievement scores for students on the state assessment.

Additional studies report similar results for curriculum-based professional development. Wiley and Yoon (1995) found that teachers who had extended opportunities to learn about mathematics curriculum and instruction yielded higher student performance scores at all grade levels on the California Learning Assessment. Comparable results were found in a study of mathematics reform in Pittsburgh's QUASAR schools (Brown, Smith, & Stein, 1995).

#### NFIE Study on High Quality Professional Development

The National Foundation for the Improvement of Education (NFIE) examined the relationship between high quality professional development for teachers and student learning in their report "Teachers Take Charge of Their Learning" (Renyi, 1998). In 1994, the National Foundation for Improvement in Education commissioned a study to determine the components of high-quality professional development. For two years, the researchers studied high functioning schools and their professional development opportunities. Interviews were conducted with nearly 1,000 teachers and teacher leaders. Focus groups were conducted with members of the community, and leading educational researchers were consulted for their expertise. In 1996, the National Foundation for Improvement in Education published the results of their findings. Recommendations based on these findings for professional development included the following:

1. Allocating daily time for professional development during the school day through flexible scheduling and extended blocks of time.

2. Assisting teachers with assuming responsibility for their own professional development based on students' needs, standards, parent input, and peer review.
3. Establishing community and business partnerships to support professional development efforts.
4. Determining financial support for high quality professional development that included ways of measuring the effectiveness of professional development training (Renyi, 1998).

Two premises emerged from the research of the NFIE. First, high quality professional development was not a program or an activity but a way of learning that was integrated in the daily context of the school day, and subsequently, throughout a teacher's career. Second, effective professional development focused on schools as a unit of work directed toward teachers' intellectual development and leadership (Renyi, 1998).

Additional findings from this report suggested that high quality professional development facilitates a deeper understanding of subject matter knowledge and assists teachers in meeting the academic needs of students from diverse cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds. Furthermore, high quality professional development must provide adequate time for inquiry, reflection, and mentoring during the workday. Sustained opportunities for professional growth, shared decision making, and teacher-directed learning opportunities were equally important. The inclusion of technology and an articulated plan for balancing individual priorities with school and district needs further supported the recommendations of these findings (Renyi, 1998).

## Study of the Eisenhower Professional Development Program

Birman, Desimone, Porter, and Garet (2000) surveyed more than 1,000 teachers nationally who participated in professional development activities sponsored by the Eisenhower Professional Development Program. This federally funded program focused on activities for developing the knowledge and skills of classroom teachers primarily in the areas of mathematics and science. As part of the national evaluation, the researchers conducted six exploratory case studies and ten in-depth case studies in five states (Garet, Birman, Porter, Desimone, & Herman, 1999). This research supports previous work in identifying factors related to effective professional development (Birman, et al., 2000; Garet, et al., 1999).

First, the research indicated that professional development should focus on deepening teachers' content knowledge and understanding of how students learn. Second, opportunities for active learning and continued professional communication among teachers were important features for establishing objectives relative to teachers' professional goals, state standards, and assessments. By extending activities over time and involving teachers in collective problem solving, schools were more likely to accomplish these objectives (Birman, et al., 2000).

From the analysis of the survey data, the researchers identified three structural features that provided the framework for effective professional development: format; extended duration; and collective participation. Three core features including content focus, active learning, and coherence were identified as processes that occurred during a professional development experience. The researchers hypothesized that content focused on specific mathematics and science skills, active learning, and a coherent set of learning

experiences were likely to enhance the knowledge and skills of participating teachers and improve their teaching performance (Birman, et al., 2000).

An overview of the professional development projects conducted in Birman et al.'s (2000) study revealed the relationship between the structural and core features. In Rainforest, Washington, the characteristics of the activity, not the form, illustrated the importance of appropriate length, content, active learning, and coherence.

Project Science, implemented in Middle City, Wisconsin, reflects how extended duration facilitates high quality learning. This project continued for one year and included a summer institute with monthly follow up meetings with the primary focus on curriculum and assessment. An additional case study in Maple City, Ohio, revealed the importance of subject-specific professional development activities through shared, active learning. Teachers had opportunities to work collaboratively with other teachers in their grade level and were provided time to discuss accomplishments after returning to school (Birman, et al., 2000).

Content rich professional development activities in Riverside, Washington, impacted teachers' knowledge and skills through a ten-year effort to redesign the elementary science curriculum. Based on standards, this activity also demonstrates the importance of coherence. As a result, teachers had a more sophisticated understanding of the content of the science curriculum and were better prepared to teach the objectives (Birman, et al., 2000).

Although these examples illustrated the commitment of some districts to provide high quality professional development, the results tended to be a combination of high and low quality structural or core features. The discrepancies were attributed to the amount of

time needed to design high quality professional development experiences and also to levels of funding (Birman, et al., 2000)

#### National Study of School Evaluation Plan for School Improvement

The National Study of School Evaluation (NSSE) has helped educators by laying out a plan that may be followed in bringing about school improvement. School leadership, including not only top administrators, but all of the school community who share in the vision of school improvement, may greatly benefit from employing the framework laid out by the NSSE.

The first step is to develop the profile of the school. This includes gathering student performance data along with demographic information about the students in the school and the community served by the school. It is also important to collect data concerning the perspectives and opinions of the stakeholders in the school, including the students, the teachers, the parents and the community (Fitzpatrick, 1997).

The next step is to define the school's beliefs and mission. The school must have beliefs and a mission that the shareholders truly agree to and that takes into account the findings of current educational research. In this process, shared leadership is critical so that all of the stakeholders have a sense of ownership of the school's mission statement (Fitzpatrick, 1997).

The third step is to define the desired results for students' learning. The desired results should reflect the beliefs and the mission of the school. Here again it is important to take into account current research on education and its implications. The desired

results should be worthwhile and meaningful, and clearly stated in terms of measurable goals (Fitzpatrick, 1997).

Measurement of such goals is where assessment comes into focus in the school improvement plan. Although the NSSE has developed self assessment rubrics for each step in the process, it is most important in determining the effectiveness of the organization as it implements the plan for change and improvement.

Step four of the framework created by the NSSE requires analysis of instructional and organizational effectiveness. This analysis must be done using research-based indicators. By analyzing its current practices and comparing them to those of high performing systems, an organization can work to more effectively align its practices to its desired goals and mission. When the organization has assessed its own effectiveness, then it may move forward to step five: developing an action plan.

In the development of an action plan, the organization will determine its target area goals, design improvement initiatives, estimate a timeline for completion, define necessary resources, and delegate leadership responsibilities. This action plan must be data-driven to insure that the appropriate areas for improvement have been targeted and that all necessary needs for its success have been identified and provided. Again, continual assessment of the process is required.

Assessment is the key ingredient in the final step for school improvement (Fitzpatrick, 1997). In step six, the organization's plan for improvement is implemented and the results are documented. This assists schools in putting the action plan into practice, collecting evidence as to its effectiveness in improving the targeted areas, and maintaining a commitment to the school's improvement. Although this is the final step in

the NSSE model for school improvement, the process has not ended. The use of assessment is not a final answer to whether or not goals were met; instead, it is a guide that must be followed as it allows one to determine in which direction the organization must go. Assessment must be ongoing, and it is necessary in achieving the goals set forth by the organization.

Continual assessment is at the heart of all data-driven school improvement models. The effective use of assessment can transform a school. Darling-Hammond, Aneess, and Falk (as cited in English & Steffy, 2001) state the following:

By working collectively to create and evaluate assessments, by rethinking school wide practice so that they enable students to work on and succeed at complex, extended performances, and by communicating in new ways about students' work, schools are engaged in constant organizational learning about the effectiveness of their practices. (p.134)

### Summary

Current efforts to reform the nation's schools not only seek to develop alternate methods of teaching and learning, but also to develop a wide variety of practices that support teacher and student learning. The success of this agenda depends on teachers learning the skills and perspectives required by new visions of practice regarding professional development (Lieberman, 1995). No longer can professional development be viewed as a program separate from the goals of improving student learning or as a package that can be delivered by one person or group to another (Renyi, 1998). As Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) state:

Because teaching for understanding relies on teachers' abilities to see complex subject matter from the perspectives of diverse students, the know-how necessary to make this vision of practice a reality cannot be prepackaged or conveyed by means of traditional top-down "teacher training" strategies. (p. 597)

Instead, current professional development means providing occasions for teachers to work collaboratively with colleagues to improve their understanding of academic disciplines and pedagogical principles (Ganser, 2000). Effective professional development recognizes teachers as learners and provides meaningful experiences related to teaching assessment, observation, and reflection (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). The content of professional development concentrates on the central issues experienced by teachers on a daily basis and is sustained over time. Experiences are participant driven and focus on communities of practice rather than individual teachers (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; King & Newman, 2000).

Successful decisions regarding reform efforts are guided by research that links professional development with student learning (Sullivan, 1999). According to King and Newman (2000), "Since teachers have the most direct, sustained contact with students and considerable control over what is taught and the climate for learning, improving teachers' knowledge, skills, and dispositions through professional development is a critical step for improving student achievement" (p. 576).

The work of the National Staff Development Council (2001) has focused on standards for staff development which represent the prerequisites for improving teaching and learning (Mizell, 2001). The Council recommends that staff development be results-driven, standards-based, and job-embedded (Hirsch, 2001).

The emergence of teacher leaders and content coaches to provide “in-house” expertise is strengthening professional opportunities within the local school (Feiler, Heritage, & Gallimore, 2000; Guiney, 2001). In some school districts, professional development councils are creating long range plans for improvement and identifying strategies for sustaining their efforts (Crowther, 1998; Norton, 2001). Professional learning opportunities that are content specific, engage teachers in active learning, and extend over time show promising results for improving the knowledge and skills of teachers (Birman, et al., 2001).

Principals have a significant impact on school improvement and student achievement. Principals must make leadership for learning their top priority. There is a clear relationship between principals’ mastery of the content and processes outlined in the ISLLC standards and high student achievement (Kaplan, 2005). Principals often set the professional development agenda for their schools, so it is imperative to quality teacher professional development that principals understand how to lead instruction (Reeves, 2006).

The primary goal of this research was to examine the perceived effectiveness of professional development practices for educators. An additional goal was to learn from the work of schools and districts experiencing success utilizing current reform efforts. This review has explored the definitions of professional development, factors affecting professional development, current trends, and professional development and student learning. As professional development opportunities move from the one-shot approach to long-term, continuous learning, significant and lasting changes in educator preparation, instructional practice, and student learning are more likely to occur.

### III. METHODS AND PROCEDURES

One purpose of this study was to determine the perceptions of administrators in the state of Alabama regarding the effectiveness of different types of professional development activities. This research also attempted to determine if participants perceived various professional development activities as useful for enhancing leadership capacity by improving their practices in areas specified by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Commission standards: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and political. These indicators are important because they have been shown to relate to quality instructional leadership (NCREL, 2001). Another purpose of the study was to gauge participant perceptions of the effectiveness of a local leadership academy in meeting its stated goals of (a) preparing the district for accreditation, (b) developing the perceived leadership capacity of individuals in the system, (c) developing the leadership capacity of the organization, and (d) identifying potential leaders from within the system. This chapter presents the research methods of the study, including the data sources, a description of the instrumentation and materials, data collection procedures, and data analysis procedures.

As a practicing educational administrator, the researcher had participated in all three types of professional development and had experienced varying degrees of success in improving instructional achievement through professional development activities. As

an administrator in a rural school system in Alabama, the researcher saw first-hand the lack of candidates for school leadership positions from outside the system as well as great disparities in the quality of leadership preparation, creating problems for many who moved into leadership positions from within the system. There was an obvious need for effective professional development for administrators in the system if the system was going to be effective in bringing about the types of changes necessary for real school improvement. It also was clear that the system needed to be preparing future candidates for administrative positions from within the teacher ranks in the system. Based on these observations and after the researcher discussed these issues with the superintendent of the system and with the director of the Truman Pierce Institute (TPI) at Auburn University, a local leadership academy was established in Tallapoosa County schools as a result of a partnership between Tallapoosa County Schools and the Truman Pierce Institute. TPI later expanded this effort to include 3 more rural school systems in Alabama.

The researcher understood the probability that his research could be biased because he was a co-founder of a local leadership academy. A rubric was designed based on the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards so that scores would be assigned to interview responses based on evidence of knowledge of the standard, commitment to the standard, or performance of the standard. This was done to help make the analysis of the interviews more objective. The researcher designed the study to use quantitative methods, a statewide survey of administrators, to see if those findings were congruous with the qualitative research. Triangulation of data types and sources was used to add rigor to the study and help eliminate potential researcher bias.

## Sources of Data

The population for this study included all Alabama public school administrators with e-mail addresses listed in the Alabama State Department of Education Directory. These included assistant principals, principals, central office administrators, superintendents, and state department of education employees who are in educational administration roles. Educational requirements to obtain certification in administration in Alabama require that administrators possess at least a master's degree and take certain required courses in educational administration. A request to participate was sent to 1,162 e-mail addresses inviting participants to take the survey. Of those, 848 e-mails successfully reached the intended audience. The other 314 e-mails were returned as incorrect addresses, addresses no longer in use, or they were not permitted to pass through to the administrator by the computer network's firewall or spam blocking software. Eight-hundred forty-eight (848) went through to proper addresses and 203 administrators responded by participating in the survey, for a return rate of 23.9 %. Twenty-six (26) survey respondents did not complete the entire survey, resulting in 187 completed surveys. A total of 22.1% of the group that received requests to participate in the survey actually participated.

For the qualitative portion of the study, individual administrators were selected and interviewed by the researcher to ensure a purposeful sample group that was proportionally representative of the demographics of the entire pool of administrators in the state. The twenty-four interview participants included four (4) superintendents, ten (10) principals, four (4) assistant principals, and six (6) central office administrators.

Eight (8) participants were African-American, while sixteen (16) were White. Ten (10) participants were women, and fourteen (14) were men.

### Instrumentation and Materials

Two instruments provided the data for this study (see Appendix A and Appendix B for copies of these instruments). These instruments included an interview protocol and a school administrator professional development survey.

Twenty-four administrators who had participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much the professional development activity improved their practice in the school. The interview protocol was designed to take about thirty minutes to complete. It consisted of eighteen open-ended questions designed to allow the interviewees to tell about the activities they participated in, to discuss the effectiveness of the activities they participated in, to discuss how the activities have changed their practices, and any other things they wished to say about the professional development activities. These interviews were designed to elicit responses regarding the effectiveness of the specific type of professional development in terms of developing the leadership capacity of individuals and of the organization. Interviews were audio-taped and transcribed. The data on these transcriptions were studied to identify categories and emergent themes (see Appendix A). Interview data were read and re-read numerous times to chunk data into units and identify themes in the data (Creswell, 1998). The interviews were also analyzed using a rubric based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (CCSSO, 1996). Data representing each of the six standards was scored for

evidence in the administrators' interviews of their perceptions of the level of change that resulted from participating in the professional development activity. The rubric was used to analyze each interview and to assign scores in each standard area from one to four, with one being the lowest and four the highest. This was done by analyzing the interviews for evidence of knowledge, dispositions, and/or performances as they related to the ISSLC standards (see Appendix C).

The survey, designed to reflect administrator perceptions of how much the professional development activity actually assisted them in improving performance on ISSLC standards was administered in January and February of 2007. The survey, consisting of one question to determine the type of professional development activity the administrator perceived to have been most effective in improving job performance in the past year, 15 questions to be rated on a 5 point Likert-type scale and one open-ended question, used administrator perception of performance directly related to each of the ISSLC standards, containing three items each for standards one, two and three, and two items each for standards four, five, and six. The survey was reviewed by an expert panel of four educational administration professionals. The panel consisted of a university professor of educational leadership, a school principal, a leader of a statewide professional organization for administrators, and a facilitator of administrator professional development. All evaluators possessed a doctoral degree in an educational field and had experience in planning staff development for educators. The survey was administered to twenty-two educators to further establish content validity. The researcher communicated with the evaluators and the twenty-two educators who took the survey to reach consensus on the validity of the content. A reliability analysis was done on the

survey instrument items which produced a Cronbach's alpha of .959, which revealed that the items are internally consistent.

An e-mail message inviting administrators to participate in the on-line survey hosted by surveymonkey.com was sent to Alabama K-12 public school administrators with a listed e-mail address. The survey first asked administrators to identify the type of professional development activity in which they participated in the past year that they perceived to have been most effective in improving their job performance. They then completed fifteen items corresponding directly to the six ISLLC standards and used a Likert-type scale to identify how useful the professional development activity was to them in each of the fifteen items. The scale included 1-Not Useful, 2-Little Use, 3-Somewhat Useful, 4-Useful, and 5-Very Useful. An open ended question was attached to the end of the survey allowing the respondents to say anything they wished to add about the professional development activity (see Appendix B).

#### Data Collection Procedures

The instruments used for data collection included a survey administered in January and February of 2007 and an interview protocol administered to participants in March of 2007 by the researcher. After approval for this study was obtained from the Office of Human Subjects Research at Auburn University (see Appendix D), an e-mail explaining the purpose of the study and a link to the survey hosted on the surveymonkey.com web site was sent to Alabama public school administrators with a listed e-mail address (see Appendix E). The e-mail explained the intent of the study, that the participants responding to the survey would remain anonymous, and the telephone

numbers and e-mail addresses of the researcher, his committee chair, and the Office of Human Subjects at Auburn University should anyone have wished to request more information or report a problem.

Prior to the interviews participants were first given a letter explaining the purpose of the study, assurance of confidentiality, and that all responses would be used only for research purposes. The letter also informed the participants of how data would be handled, along with telephone numbers and e-mail addresses of the researcher, his committee chair, and the Office of Human Subjects at Auburn University. Participants were then asked to sign indicating their permission for the interview to occur (see Appendix F).

#### Data Analysis Procedures

Qualitative findings were analyzed to reveal trends. Data from the twenty-four interviews were studied using an emergent theme analysis process (Patton, 2002). The interview transcripts were studied to see if core meanings, or themes, existed in the answers given by the interviewees within the type of professional development activity that they were interviewed about and across the entire group of interviewees of all three types. Data were chunked into manageable units according to themes. A rubric was used to further analyze the interview data. The rubric was based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. Themes related to each of the six standards were scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard (scored a two on the rubric), was committed to the standard

(scored a three on the rubric), performed activities aligned with the standard (scored a four on the rubric), or had no evidence at all related to the standard (scored a one on the rubric).

The survey data analysis was considered an auxiliary analysis (Howe, 2004) to see if the findings converged with the qualitative findings produced from the interviews. Survey data were compiled and a series of one-way analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine the effects of various professional development programs on perceived benefits within the six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards areas: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and politics. Each area was represented in the questionnaire with numerous items; therefore, an average of the items was used as an individual's area score in each of the six areas. The various professional development programs studied included a workshop, a state-level leadership program, and a local-level leadership program. The null hypothesis was that the error variance of the dependent variable was equal across groups. The null hypothesis was tested using Levene's Statistic. After conducting the ANOVAs, the Fisher Least Significant Difference post hoc test was performed on the data that the ANOVAs found to have statistical significance to determine which types of professional development programs were responsible for the differences.

#### IV. PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

A guiding question for this dissertation research was: How effective are different professional development methods in terms of usefulness in an educational leader's development? While all three professional development methods studied (workshops; state-level professional development activity ongoing over several months; and local-level, job-embedded professional development activities ongoing over months and/or years) were perceived overall as useful by educational leaders in their development, the local-level, job-embedded leadership academy was perceived to have had the greatest effect on leadership capacity for individuals and their organizations.

The purpose of this study was to look at administrators' perceptions of three commonly used professional development programs in Alabama aimed at building leadership capacity in order to bring about school improvement. A mixed methods approach was used for this study, combining qualitative data obtained from interviews and from an open-ended question administered through a survey instrument along with quantitative data obtained through a sixteen question survey. The qualitative approach was used as part of the study to see how effective professional development activities were perceived to be at improving educational leadership by administrators. Administrators who had participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much

the professional development activity improved their practice in the school. The frame for analyzing the data was based on the six areas of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and political. The interviews were analyzed using a rubric based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. Each of the six standards were scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard, was committed to the standard, performed activities aligned with the standard, or had no evidence at all related to the standard. Emergent themes were then identified in the administrators' answers to the interview questions. In the quantitative portion of the study, participant answers on the survey were analyzed using descriptive statistics to see if patterns emerged which pointed to those aspects of programs that were effective or important, as well as to see whether any of the three models were perceived as particularly effective.

This chapter describes the population sample and return rates for the survey, and then provides findings from the qualitative data, followed by an examination of the quantitative data, and concludes with a summary of the chapter.

### Population and Sample Selection

The population for this study included all Alabama public school administrators with e-mail addresses listed in the Alabama State Department of Education Directory, and included assistant principals, principals, central office administrators, superintendents, and state department of education employees who are in educational

administration roles. Educational requirements to obtain certification in administration in Alabama are that administrators possess at least a master's degree and take certain required courses in educational administration. A request soliciting participation in the survey was sent to 1,162 e-mail addresses. Of those, 848 (73%) e-mails were successful. The other 314 e-mails were returned to sender due to incorrect or unused addresses, or were not permitted to pass through to the administrator by their computer network's firewall or spam blocking software. Of the 848 that went through to proper addresses, 203 (23.9%) responded by participating in the survey. Twenty-six (26) survey respondents did not complete the entire survey, so that altogether 187 completed the surveys, or 22.1% of the group that received requests to participate. Of the 187 administrators who completed the survey, 117 attended workshops, 34 attended state-level leadership academies, and 36 attended local level leadership academies.

For the qualitative portion of the study, individual administrators were selected and interviewed by the researcher to ensure a purposeful sample group that was proportionally representative of the demographics of the entire pool of administrators in the state. The twenty-four interview participants consisted of four superintendents, ten principals, four assistant principals, and six central office administrators. Eight participants were African-American, while sixteen were white. Ten participants were women, and fourteen were men.

### Qualitative Analysis

A qualitative design was used for part of the study using an emergent theme analysis process (Patton, 2002). The interview transcripts were studied to see if core

meanings, or themes, existed in the answers given by the interviewees within the type of professional development activity that they were interviewed about and across the entire group of interviewees of all three types. Data were chunked into manageable units according to themes. Data were analyzed to explore the level of perceived effectiveness for professional development activities intended to improve educational leadership by administrators. A sample of administrators who participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much the professional development activity improved their practice in the school. The interviews were analyzed using a rubric designed using the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders (see Appendix C). Each of the six standards were scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard (scored a two on the rubric), was committed to the standard (scored a three on the rubric), performed activities aligned with the standard (scored a four on the rubric), or had no evidence at all related to the standard (scored a one on the rubric).

The next section of this chapter presents the major findings from the study. Specifically, it describes the professional development activity interviewees participated in and their perceptions of the following; consideration of the effectiveness of the professional development activities, including perceived strengths or benefits; areas for improvement; outcomes from the professional development activity including ways that individual roles and behaviors have changed since participation in the activity; analysis of the changes in roles and responsibilities that may have occurred; and consideration of the

extent and ways that the professional development activity has changed the learning organization in which the interviewee works. There were specific questions on the interview protocol designed to elicit responses that address these areas, yet questions were open-ended to encourage the interviewees to provide as much data as possible and to answer freely (see Appendix A). Therefore, all responses were considered as potential evidence for each of these areas.

### Descriptions of the Professional Development Activities

The workshops that interviewees attended lasted from one to three days and either addressed a specific topic or a specific professional role. One of the topics that was mentioned repeatedly for workshops was school law. These workshops were designed to get information out to educational leaders, and employed a lecture-type format. When asked to describe the workshops, interviewees' responses included:

*It was a 2, 2-1/2 day professional development activity. We were paired there at the professional development with a veteran principal. During that time we spent some small group and whole group time looking at various concerns that a principal may have. Hiring, firing. We talked about financial aspects of school. We talked about special education. We had presenters who were recognized leaders in the state. Superintendents, special ed lawyers. Overall, a very beneficial 2-1/2 days. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*There were experts in various fields of school law all the way from special ed to search and seizure and all kind of things in between. Attorneys that this was their particular area of expertise. One thing that I thought was particularly good about*

*it was that these were lawyers and attorneys that kind of represented school systems rather than the other side as we kind of tend to hear more of. —*

Interview with a workshop participant

*We started off sitting at tables. We had numbers on our badges that told us which table to sit at. We were surrounded by people that were in our field, like I was sitting in a group of only middle school assistant principals. Elementary was there, and high school was there. We started off with ice breakers, getting to know the person to your left as well as the person to our right. We had to introduce a person at our table, and various things went on in that meeting. It was very interesting though, I liked it. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*It was put on by CLAS in Birmingham at the Wynfrey and it had several different break-out sessions dealing with different leadership issues involving the law, whether it was case law, special ed law, that kind of thing. — Interview with a workshop participant.*

The quotes above show that these workshops, while taking some different formats, were held away from the participants' work sites, and addressed a specific issue or a specific administrative role.

The following quotes were about state-level leadership academies that took place over several months, as the participants descriptions of the activities indicate. This was intended for educational leaders new to their roles, as well as to prepare a pool of potential leaders for upcoming leadership roles. The state-level academies employed various teaching methods, including time for reflection and participant input and discussion, as may be seen here:

*It was broken into sessions. It took place throughout the course of a year. It began with an introduction to the superintendency. They were past and present superintendents as well as presenters who were involved in education.*

*Curriculum specialists, public relation, media. You received the opportunity to take the required law, school law and school finance courses, and it also gave opportunities to meet administrators throughout the state who were selected to participate in the professional development sessions. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

*It was a great experience. The one thing that I got out of it was contacts as far as people from all over the state with varied backgrounds and getting an opportunity to develop a relationship with these people so that now when I have a problem that I think is unique, maybe someone has experienced a similar problem, I've got all of these resources, people that I can call upon to ask about things. The other thing was at the time I was a high school principal when I went through the superintendent's academy so it really helped me in terms of curriculum, finance, and school law. So I learned a lot and I think it made me a better administrator.*

— Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

*The best thing about the superintendents' academy was a combination of the networking opportunities and the chance to learn over an extended time period which allowed for the new information to be processed before the next topic was begun. Going back to work between sessions and applying what I learned really made it become a part of me professionally. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

The local-level leadership academies were on-going, job-embedded professional development activities designed to improve individual educators' leadership capacity and to improve organizational learning. Local administrators, teacher leaders, and student leaders were included in the local-level leadership academies. The following quotes were from participants in the local leadership academies:

*This academy was for principals, teachers, as well as students. It brought to the table some issues and concerns the principals, teachers, and students had concerning our professional job responsibilities, legal issues, and just a broad variety of issues we were concerned with.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant.

*The leadership academy gave me an opportunity to grow as a leader. It showed me how to be able to get in front of a group of people and actually be able to conduct a workshop myself with adults. I was able to do that with LAN and Learn [leadership capacity building programs] this time. I was able to cooperate and work with young people.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

*I didn't miss any of the meetings because I found that they were of benefit. I had gone on record as being one of those who advocated some type of leadership development for principals, for future principals, and someone had the good idea to include students in it and I think that was one of the major benefits of the total leadership program we had and still have going on.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant.

## Effectiveness of the Professional Development Activities

In order to critically assess the effectiveness of each type of professional development activity the researcher focused on a number of key areas. The first consideration was the perceived strengths or benefits of the activities. It was also important to explore areas for improvement as voiced by participants. Specific questions on the interview protocol were designed to elicit responses to address effectiveness, but the entire interview was considered when analyzing the data for responses that related to effectiveness. First, evidence of perceived strengths and benefits, then areas seen as needing improvement are discussed in the following section.

### *Workshops*

*All of it was excellent. It was useful. Everything was something I can use everyday or when things arise in this position.* – Interview with a workshop participant.

*By far it is one of the best ones I've attended. I've attended some that were 1 day, ½ day, that were just information type activities which generally you don't get as much from.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*I would say for the first time in a long time, I have gone to a workshop that I actually learned something. There was lots of hands-on, and there were a lot of people at my table that I could relate to as well as steal ideas from.* — Interview with a workshop participant

While the quotes above laud the specific workshop, they also contain negative remarks about workshops in general. Here are more comments of workshop participants when asked about how the workshop changed the way the participant performs as a school leader:

*I believe it could lead teachers to become more involved, buy into your program more readily and more heartily. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*I guess more than anything else it makes me **more aware** of what the possible consequences are as the situations come along. Makes you **aware** of certain things you need to do in a certain way or things you don't need to do to keep things from coming up. And, of course, that concerns a lot of documentation. —*

Interview with a workshop participant

*It served as a **reference** point for me. I got hand-outs and materials from it, so when I do have questions I can always refer back, use it as a **reference**. —*

Interview with a workshop participant

While all interviewees perceived the workshops they attended to be useful, they talked about them in terms of information they got and a level of increased awareness. They did not talk about actions they had taken as a result of the workshops or processes they had changed at their schools or school systems.

#### *State-Level Leadership Academies*

Interviews with those who attended state level leadership academies showed evidence of a stronger emphasis on networking than those who had attended workshops.

*The most effective aspect was allowing us the opportunity to prepare for the school law and school finance test because while you were learning the material, it gave a **relevance** to it, because now in the event that you have chosen to be a superintendent you have, one it gives you a hand up on the individual that hasn't participated in the academy, I've already experienced that portion of the training that the state offers and also it gave me areas of finance that I wasn't aware of*

*coming from the high school and not being exposed to the facets in finance within the school system. It gave me the ability to ask questions of current and former superintendents and for them to give some of the best practices and some of the effective strategies in running a school system was invaluable because you just don't get to talk to these individuals on a daily basis and for you to have their ear and be able to question them was an invaluable experience. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

*Actually one of the things I thought was the most effective, it was my first opportunity to really have time over several days to interact with other superintendents, you know, even the new ones. It gave me an opportunity to interact with other new superintendents, to get to know them and facilitated me being able to work with them if there was an issue that came up or a question about something I didn't understand. I knew they were in my finance and law class and there were some that had several years experience that I was able to interact with and discuss things with that may or may not have been the content but that were issues of concern for me as a new superintendent. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

*For me, it has been the points of contacts at the state department level when presenters would come in or building a relationship with the professors at the school. I stay in close contact with the professors at the University of Alabama, also with the state department, for example, \_\_\_\_\_. I feel confident enough, and I'm sure she'd do this for anybody because it's her job, but I feel confident enough that I can call her at any time and ask her questions. The personal*

*relationship that I developed with \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_ has been valuable in that my experience in the superintendent's academy gave me an opportunity to get to know these key people on a different level.* — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

A common theme of the state-level leadership academy was the opportunity to network with others from across the state who could be a professional help when needed. This networking was with both participants and presenters. The discussions with others at the state-level leadership academies made participants feel more comfortable in their professional roles.

#### *Local-Level Leadership Academies*

The interviews with the local-level leadership academy participants also offered evidence of effectiveness, and, like the state-level leadership academy participants, an appreciation for the results of the activities:

*I think it has made our school system and our district stronger as a whole in communication due to the fact that we feel more comfortable talking to people at central office level and we have a better understanding and can understand the decisions that are made there because there are always two sides to every decision that's being made and when you feel like you've been a part of that process then you have ownership in whatever decision was made.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

*County-wide, we're more focused on what needs to be done to make our system a better system. Bringing the principals and central office staff together for one common goal. We have this provided means for this way to communicate with*

*one another. Other aspects included making sure that our teachers had input, also the students, and just like I say, it's just being aware of what's there for us and what we bring to the table, as well as other people. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

*I think the most important thing is it allows you to meet other people [from other districts]. Those people may be in leadership roles, they may be sharing ideas about leadership and by talking to them and communicating with them, they are able to say, “we can do that in our system”. They're able to **share ideas, what we would call networking, some of the things that they can do in their system, you find out that we can do that too in our system.** It will take you outside your regular school setting and put you in a setting where, for example, our students were able to meet other students in probably a nine area district. And they were able to communicate with them, make friends, **they were able to discuss and act out and they worked together as a team,** so it was a lot of teamwork with the leadership academy that we have with the students, and with the teachers too, and also, they are able to bring people to us that we normally wouldn't have a chance to meet. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant.*

*I think it has **increased the leadership capacity of the school district.** I think if you go back and ask each participant, I think they would all agree that they grew, and we grew as a group. It brought us closer together as principals. We shared much better. I caught myself calling people saying, “**hey, what are you doing about this? And have you run into this?**”? And so I think it did develop, broaden, and **bring a group of leaders closer together and broaden their understanding***

*of the issues and challenges we face in public school and education today. And that we shared things and became a sharing, interacting group of people...For me personally, it made me a better instructional leader and it caused me to reflect on what are the differences in leading a school and leading a combat unit. And there are. Principles are the same. The leadership traits, the leadership qualities, they're the same. I've become a better instructional leader, and I think that it would have taken me much longer had we not had this leadership academy.... The leadership academy gave us skills to be where we are today. Now, are we where we want to be, no. But we've made progress. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

All of the professional development activities were perceived to be effective by the participants, yet there was more evidence of depth of understanding and appreciation of the professional development activities by participants in both the state-level leadership academies and the local-level leadership academies.

Across all three types of professional development activities, a common theme cited by interviewees when discussing effectiveness was the importance of meeting other educational leaders and developing those networks which act as a support and provides resources to enhance job performance.

#### Areas for Improvement

All participants were asked to identify areas for improvement. Their answers point out weaknesses in each of the professional development activity types.

*I would say **offer it more frequently**. It is offered twice a year. I think although you build a relationship with people, you don't get a chance to get to know them personally. They should **have it more often and early, and more opportunities for the same groups to get back together**.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*I'm not sure about this conference. This conference was just a one day conference, but of course, that are offering the same special ed conference as a whole day just on special ed I guess a little more involvement in each area. **Make it sink in more and provide more information than the time allotted in that day**.*

— Interview with a workshop participant

*I think with **lengthening the break-outs or the conference being a two day instead of one day** to be able to go into more detail about case law and those things.* — Interview with a workshop participant

A common theme among workshop attendees was a lack of time; lack of time to process the material presented, to follow up on the session, and to make connections with others. The lack of time cited indicated a need for an ongoing activity to better learn new ideas in professional development and to build and strengthen the network of relationships begun during the workshops.

The state-level leadership academy participants also expressed an interest in spreading out the process even more, or making it more of a regular, ongoing activity. While the activities were ongoing over several months, participants saw value in a longer process.

*I actually think that if we met over the first full year. I think we probably had to have the first two or three days intensive for someone who's completely new that*

say, wasn't already working in the superintendents office and worked with one of those areas; that it was important to be intensive and give me a lot of background knowledge right to start with, but **probably if we met quarterly or once a month through the rest of the year and followed up with that, then my questions now would probably be very different than the questions that I asked during that couple or three days.** I was getting a lot of information but I didn't have a lot of experience to put with that and so even if it was quarterly, you reviewed some of that and had a follow up I think it would have been more effective because we live in an information age to where I feel bombarded by information that comes across my desk everyday. I'm constantly trying to work and sort that in my mind where I can remember and put it in the context it needs to go and file it in the right place where I can call it back up. **The things that are touched on periodically are the things that I find myself being most able to use and being most capable of getting the most out of it.** — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

This theme of more meetings, over a longer time, with reflection and discussion, was commonly mentioned by the state-level leadership academy participants as a way to improve the activity.

Local-level leadership academy participants' comments focused on content and who should participate, rather than on length of sessions or a need for more on-going professional development, as the other two professional development type participants brought up.

*I'd kind of like to see us get back to some sessions like we had in the beginning with maybe Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ or someone of that quality, or Dr. \_\_\_\_\_ at the time, who really has some skills to bring out **good discussion**. I found those early sessions were the most successful. When we had the sessions going where we had the two of them involved, they had the skills to create an atmosphere of learning. And I think that would be beneficial for those new and aspiring principals coming on. And those of us who are still the old ones because **you get something every time that someone else is doing and has had that problem and this is what they did**. So I would kind of like to see us get back to something similar to what we were doing those first two years. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

*I would like to see it **provide a framework to go by in your position**. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

*I wish there was a way that maybe throughout the year **instead of having the same teachers involved, maybe there would be a way to bring in a couple of others** and then at some point in time have a **joint session to sort of share**. Ok, maybe one month you have a topic that relates to this particular group. Alright, then the next month, maybe it's a topic that relates to a different group and then maybe halfway through the year, you bring those together and do a sharing of maybe five topics. And then for the second half of the year you do the same thing and that way you aren't pulling the same teachers out all the time, and yet they **mesh their ideas together once they've been to these different learning activities**. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

In appraising the professional development activities, a theme shared by participants of all three types of professional development was the need for ongoing professional development that included time to reflect upon what was learned, time to network and build relationships, and time to interact and discuss what was learned and its application to educational leadership.

### Outcomes

Participants in each of the three types of professional development activity studied were asked about outcomes from the professional development activity for themselves, their schools and their school systems. A common theme cited by the workshop participants when asked about outcome of the workshop was awareness or knowledge. Answers were narrow and focused on the participants' knowledge base. No workshop participants mentioned a specific action that had been taken as a result of the workshop attended, or a specific change in process at the school that came from the workshop.

*Make us aware of things we need to know about to make sure we're doing those things right, giving those students that are due process and so forth where we don't have to go to court anyway.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*I think it just provided me with a **greater sense of realities** about school leadership.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*Just raising my awareness on legal matters.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*I pretty much thought that I could do it by myself and I would get stressed and irritated a lot, but **knowing that you can assign other people to help** delegate what you're doing, it makes it easier.* — Interview with a workshop participant

Outcomes cited by the state-level leadership academy participants were more focused on how the participants' actions had changed as a result of the professional development activity.

*I was not as focused on data. You know right now, **data controls the instruction.** Before it was what I thought or assumed what kids needed to know or let's cover the course of study, this is the curriculum. But **now I look at kids and see where they are.** You know kids come from varied backgrounds and if **a child is strong in one area then we don't need to focus on that particular area.** If the child has already mastered those skills, you know, I guess **it's like an individual education plan for every child,** regardless of whether he or she is a special needs student.* —

Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

*I have engaged teacher leaders by **encouraging them to enter school administration** and assess the type of professional development that is needed in their schools as well as supporting an atmosphere where they can conduct professional development exercises again for the school and for the district. I feel that one of the things I've **brought back from the academy that I'm using daily is my willingness to provide other areas for individuals in the system to get first hand exposure to school leadership** and also encouraging them to further their studies and encourage some of my colleagues to participate in the academy.* —

Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

A common theme among the state-level leadership academy participants when asked about outcomes of the professional development activity was that it had changed the way they did their job, that it brought about change in the individual participants and influenced what they did in their system.

Local-level leadership academy participants cited outcomes that involved school and system improvement much more than the other participants. In one school system participating in a local-level leadership academy, ten leadership positions have been filled by leadership academy participants over the past five years.

*Well I think a couple of our people that were involved have gone on to get certified in administration and they're actually using some of the skills that they have learned. I think that some of our students are going into education and I think we'll benefit from that. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

*Any decision that I make concerning instruction or curriculum, I never make it now without asking the question what will my good teachers think? And then I go find those good teachers because we know who they are. They are the leaders in the school. They can bring people along with them. And so I think that's what I've learned. Will they support it? If your good teachers support it, then it's probably a good decision because they are going to make their decisions based on the students and what's best for the school. They don't blame the student or the parent when a student does not achieve. They look at themselves and so we all have them in our school. So that is what I got out of that process. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

*I think it has increased the leadership capacity of the school district because in those sessions, you can't not benefit from the various benefits that each have had in the schools and have brought out in these sessions, and so I think if you go back and ask each participant, I think they would all agree **that they grew, and we grew as a group. It brought us closer together as principals.*** — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

When asked about outcomes of the professional development activity, local-level leadership academy participants tended to cite school and system growth, as well as personal growth. They spoke of things that had changed, such as improved communication, as well as ways they themselves had changed in how they performed their jobs.

Outcomes tended to be broader and deeper for the participants, their schools, and their school systems the more time they spent in the professional development activity. Long-term, on-going professional development produced more results, particularly in actions taken by the participants. In one school system with a long term local leadership academy, participants cited the work of the leadership academy as being instrumental in helping four of the five schools in the system attain accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The schools were not accredited prior to beginning the leadership academy.

### Scoring the Interviews

The interviews were analyzed using a researcher-designed rubric based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. Each of

the six standards was scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard (scored a two on the rubric), was committed to the standard (scored a three on the rubric), performed activities aligned with the standard (scored a four on the rubric), or had no evidence at all related to the standard (scored a one on the rubric).

### *Workshops*

The six administrators who were interviewed about one- to three-day workshops had the lowest scores overall on the rubric. Interviewees comments indicate there was a narrow focus in the workshops, with most indicating that the workshop benefited them in only one ISSLC standard area. One administrator gave described a workshop affecting his practice in four standards areas, but all others reported evidence in only one or two standards areas.

The areas that were most reported to be influenced by workshops were ISSLC Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all his students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth) and ISSLC Standard 3 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective environment).

Most of the administrators who were interviewed about workshops gave evidence that the workshops provided knowledge for them.

*It served as a **reference** point for me. I got hand-outs and materials from it, so when I do have questions I can always refer back, use it as a reference. —*

Interview with a workshop participant

*I guess more than anything else it makes me **more aware** of what the possible consequences are as the situations come along. Makes you aware of certain things you need to do in a certain way or things you don't need to do to keep things from coming up. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*It just **made a difference in the way I look at things**, and most good ones that I've been to have done that. And I appreciate that. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*It **updated me** on what has happened in school law recently, so that I can make more informed decisions. — Interview with a workshop participant*

Workshop participants gave very little evidence that the workshops affected them beyond the knowledge level. Of the six workshop participants interviewed, two offered evidence describing a workshop affecting their dispositions, and only one provided evidence suggesting that a workshop changed her performance.

The biggest criticisms of the workshops were that they were not long enough, there was no follow up, and they often used “stand and deliver” instructional methods, which participants tired of quickly.

*I would say **offer it more frequently**... I think although you build a relationship with people, you don't get a chance to get to know them personally. They should have it more often and early, and more opportunities for the same groups to get back together. — Interview with a workshop participant*

*They **didn't spend enough time**. The break-out sessions were an hour and fifteen minutes or so versus a half a day or two hours. I felt like I could've spent more time on parts of it.* — Interview with a workshop participant

*Since it was really **just a long lecture punctuated by a couple of breaks**, it was not the most effective presentation method possible. It got quite dull after a while.*  
— Interview with a workshop participant

The rubric scores showed the workshops to have a narrow focus, with almost all of the interviewees reporting results in Standards 2 and 3, and almost no results falling in the other four standards areas. Also, scores tended to be at the knowledge level, with little evidence of any application to practice or synthesis of ideas.

#### *State-Level Leadership Academies*

The six state-level leadership academy participants' interviews scored higher than the workshop participants' interviews according to the rubric. Also, the state-level leadership academy participants' interviews indicated evidence of learning in more of the six ISSLC standards than the workshop participants, with every interviewee attaining scores in five of the standards areas. Participants' interviews provided the least amount of evidence in ISSLC Standard 5 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner). Many of the answers provided by state-level leadership academy participants reveal dispositions that have been taken on by the administrator as a result of the professional development activity:

*It has definitely allowed me to see my role in the school system as a current central office director. It gave me some areas that I know I need to emphasize and*

*build up in my future aspirations of becoming a superintendent. I saw where communication is critical, not just within your school system, but **what you want communicated to your community and to stake holders**. That is an example of something I learned that I felt was very critical and beneficial to up and coming superintendents and what I can use right now. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

***I was not as focused on data (before the academy)**. You know right now, data controls the instruction. Before it was what I thought or assumed what kids needed to know or let's cover the course of study, this is the curriculum, but now I look at kids and see where they are. You know kids come from varied backgrounds and if a child is strong in one area then we don't need to focus on that particular area. If the child has already mastered those skills and, you know, I guess it's like an individual education plan for every child, regardless of whether he or she is a special needs student. — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant*

*It has definitely helped (system name removed) in a situation that I'm in like here in (system name removed), very poverty-stricken, low, no expectations, and the skills that I've learned at the superintendent's academy has enabled me to come here in a community that needs it most, to make a difference. So to have these **high expectations regardless of the economic level**, it doesn't matter who's paying for the school lunch, as long as the child eats, if the government pays for it, or the parents pay for it, just so a child eats everyday. That has nothing to do*

*with it in terms of learning.* — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

There were also those who participated in the state-level leadership academies that gave evidence in their interviews that the professional development experience affected their performance:

*... you're always on the hot seat and in the public eye and the component of dealing with the media I think was very valuable experience of what to say, what not to say. Just from a personal experience, as recently as last week, I was out to lunch and (television news) came here to interview me about a controversial issue and I remembered in the back of my mind that as a superintendent you need to control the situation. You control the interview, and they wanted to interview me out front where they had three picketers. I invited them inside my office to get away from that and I remember that in the back of my mind. Be cooperative and control the environment of where you want them to interview you.* — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

*I'm able to use the professional development experience that I got at the Superintendents' Academy in my daily role and responsibilities. There have been situations where the media has become involved and my preparation through the activities at the superintendents' academy gave me the insight to know what to say and what not to say. How to handle critical situations or issues in your school system as well as giving me an idea of what the superintendent deals with on a daily basis and how I can better help him in achieving the mission of the school system.* — Interview with a state-level leadership academy participant

The state-level leadership academy participants had their highest scores on the rubric for Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all his students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth) and Standard 6 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context). These two areas had average scores of three from all the state-level leadership academy participants, indicating that the participants' values and commitments were changed in these areas.

#### *Local-level Leadership Academies*

The local level leadership academy participants had the highest average scores of the three groups on the rubric. In three standards areas participants' interviews were mostly scored threes: Standard 1 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community), Standard 4 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources) and Standard 5 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner). All three standards were most often addressed by participants in the interviews in such a way as to exhibit commitment and belief:

*Leadership Academy was one of them with **the people there in the Truman Pierce Institute. Knowing I could contact them**, also knowing the contacts I had with the school, whether it be grants, **people that might be able to help our school, political officials and things like that.** It just opened up a whole new gamut of people. – Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant.*

*I think it probably helped me, you know **I joined this (area government leadership training) group this year and I wanted to be a part of that**, and had I not done some of those other things, **I might not have would have thought about doing that.** ... I've truly enjoyed it **and I've learned a lot there too and I've made a lot of new contacts there. I just wish I had done this probably fifteen years ago**, but I was one of those late bloomers, but better late than never. — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant*

The local-level leadership academy participants' interviews produced the only average score of four for a standard area of any of the professional development activities. The four was scored in Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth.

Participants in the local leadership academy offered evidence of performances in this area:

*Excellent opportunity to **meet SACS accreditations with your administration and students working together to solve issues** and it also gives you **another outlet as a sounding board when you have issues in the school that may not be***

*necessarily right or wrong but you need a different opinion, it gives you a group of kids to go to.* – Interview with a local-leadership academy participant.

*I like the idea of involving **the students**, and I like the idea of involving teachers. I observed some of their behaviors and sat in on some of their meetings and heard them discuss. I think it was really good.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

*I think one of the plusses, and I probably didn't mention this early on, is as an administrator, there were people that I met that turned out to be beneficial, that I **called on later to ask for information or advice** and I think if I had had that information earlier in my career, I would have been better at my job. I would have been better at what I wanted to do. I think it's important to have that network of people... See I didn't have those contacts even as a new principal. I had my little group that I had graduated Auburn with as far as being together in our own cohort and all but that was only about five people, so a lot of those other people I didn't know, and now that I do, **I've become fairly friendly with them and I feel comfortable asking them for help.** And I think that's good for aspiring leaders.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

*A lot of times, **before, they were just -the principal or the asst. principal was just- in charge of everything and now we rely more on other teachers in the building.*** — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

*When I became involved in the program I was a little different because of my background than others in the program. I was in the military for 28 years and it was one of the best leadership laboratories. I had also taught leadership at*

Auburn University when I was head of the professor of military science and head of the army ROTC department and I had taught leadership at the Air Force War College in Montgomery, so I had an understanding and I had led soldiers both in peace time and in combat so I had a pretty extensive background in leadership. However, where I was lacking was in background of instructional leadership. And for me personally I think this was the greatest benefit, that I became a better instructional leader because of this program. What I got from this program was **the opportunity to listen to those that had more experience in educational leadership than I did.** I learned a lot from listening to \_\_\_\_\_ in those sessions. I learned a lot from listening to \_\_\_\_\_, in picking up those things that would help me in improving instruction and student achievement at this school, so the major benefit from that program for me was the interaction, and the sessions we had and the role playing that we did. **The major outcome for me was it made me a better instructional leader in a shorter time. I think I would have eventually become a good instructional leader but this compacted the process and in turn it helped our school because I knew more about what good instruction was, and how to look for good instruction and how to lead in a more collaborative process rather than in a more dictatorial or results-oriented process. In the end, I became a more balanced leader.** Yea, results are important, but I also probably developed a better understanding for hey it's people that get you there and so that's the major outcome for me. I think there were two other benefits for our school. One, **I became a better instructional leader, and we saw our test grades go up because I think I knew more about what I was doing. But the student**

*piece of this, I think was an important piece because we have seen here that it is sustained and I still have a very active student leadership team with 8-10 good students on it and it has made them better participants in the leadership process of this school and they still interact with the kids from other schools that they were involved with in this leadership process.* — Interview with a local-level leadership academy participant

The local-level leadership academy participants' interviews mainly revealed evidence in five standards areas, revealing very little evidence of Standard 6 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context). Scores were higher overall than the participants' scores from the other two types of professional development studied, and the depth of skill integration appears to have been better among local-level participants.

### Quantitative Analysis

A series of one-way analysis of variances (ANOVAs) were conducted to determine the effects of various professional development programs on perceived benefits within the six Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards areas: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and politics. Each area was represented in the questionnaire with numerous items; therefore, an average of the items was used as an individual's area score in each of the six areas. The various professional development programs types include a workshop, a state training program, and a local leadership capacity building program.

## Results

The results of the omnibus analysis were reviewed and differences were found to be statistically significant among the professional development programs for five factors and statistically non-significant for one factor. A Levene's Test of Equality of Error Variances and a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) were completed for each ISSLLC standard area that was surveyed. After conducting the ANOVAs, the Fisher Least Significant Difference post hoc test was performed to determine which professional development programs differed to the point of statistical significance.

### *Vision (ISSLC Standard 1)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area, vision (Standard 1), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = 1.997, p = .139$ . The ANOVA was statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 4.05, p = .019$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 1 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. The effect size was small,  $\eta^2 = .042$ . The post hoc test, Least Significant Difference, resulted in a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) and the workshop participants (group 1). There

was no statistically significant difference between the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and either of the other two groups (see Table 1). The ANOVA results lend support to the researcher’s hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. However, the small effect size and the lack of a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants and the state-level leadership academy participants in the vision area (Standard 1) make the evidence supporting the hypothesis less compelling.

Table 1

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Vision*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.46	1.09	.207 / 2 ; .006 / 3*
2. State Leadership Academy	3.72	1.07	.207 / 1 ; .241 / 3
3. Local Leadership Academy	4.01	.81	.006 / 1* ; .241 / 2

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Culture (ISSLC Standard 2)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as

the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area culture (Standard 2), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = 1.817$ ,  $p = .165$ . The ANOVA was statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 4.27$ ,  $p = .015$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 2 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. The effect size was small, eta squared = .044. The post hoc test, Least Significant Difference, resulted in a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) and the workshop participants (group 1). There was no statistically significant difference between the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and either of the other two groups (see Table 2). The ANOVA results lend support to the researcher's hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. However, the small effect size and the lack of a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants and the state-level leadership academy participants in the culture area (Standard 2) make the evidence supporting the hypothesis less compelling.

Table 2

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Culture*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.40	1.05	.254 / 2 ; .004 / 3*
2. State Leadership Academy	3.64	1.16	.254 / 1 ; .175 / 3
3. Local Leadership Academy	3.98	.87	.004 / 1* ; .175 / 2

The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Management (ISSLC Standard 3)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area management (Standard 3), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = 1.404, p = .248$ . The ANOVA was statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 5.60, p = .004$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 3 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. The effect size was small,  $\eta^2 = .057$ . The post hoc test, Least Significant Difference, resulted in a statistically significant difference between the local-leadership academy participants (group 3) and the workshop participants (group 1).

There was no statistically significant difference between the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and either of the other two groups (see Table 3). The ANOVA results lend support to the researcher’s hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. However, the small effect size and the lack of a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants and the state-level leadership academy participants in the management area (Standard 3) make the evidence supporting the hypothesis less compelling.

Table 3

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Management*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.17	1.02	.293 / 2 ; .001 / 3*
2. State Leadership Academy	3.37	1.08	.293 / 1 ; .074 / 3
3. Local Leadership Academy	3.81	.89	.001 / 1* ; .074 / 2

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Community (ISSLC Standard 4)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop

approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area, community (Standard 4), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = .725, p = .486$ . The ANOVA was statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 3.03, p = .051$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 4 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. The effect size was small, eta squared = .032. The post hoc test, Least Significant Difference, resulted in a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) and the workshop participants (group 1). There was no statistically significant difference between the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and either of the other two groups (see Table 4). The ANOVA results lend support to the researcher's hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. However, the small effect size and the lack of a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants and the state-level leadership academy participants in the community area (Standard 4) make the evidence supporting the hypothesis less compelling.

Table 4

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Community*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.32	1.09	.471 / 2 ; .015 / 3*
2. State Leadership Academy	3.47	1.09	.471 / 1 ; .173 / 3
3. Local Leadership Academy	4.01	.81	.015 / 1* ; .173 / 2

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Integrity (ISSLC Standard 5)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area, integrity (Standard 5), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = .573$ ,  $p = .565$ . The ANOVA was not statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 2.89$ ,  $p = .058$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 5 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. Since the ANOVA was not statistically significant, no post hoc tests were reported.

Table 5

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Integrity*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.46	1.09	.446 / 2 ; .042 / 3
2. State Leadership Academy	3.72	1.07	.446 / 1 ; .026 / 3
3. Local Leadership Academy	4.01	.81	.042 / 1 ; .026 / 2

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

*Politics (ISSLC Standard 6)*

A one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was completed to address the research hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy. Type of professional development acted as the independent variable in the analysis and the ISSLC standard area, politics (Standard 6), acted as the dependent variable. Using an alpha level of .05, Levene's test indicated that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was not violated,  $F(2, 184) = 1.31$ ,  $p = .273$ . The ANOVA was statistically significant,  $F(2, 184) = 5.49$ ,  $p = .005$ , with the mean for the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) being higher than the mean for the state-level leadership academy participants (group 2) and the workshop participants (group 1). See Table 6 for group means and standard deviations on the dependent variable. The effect size was small, eta squared = .056. The post hoc test, Least Significant Difference, resulted in a statistically significant difference between the local-

leadership academy participants (group 3) and the workshop participants (group 1). There was also a statistically significant difference between the local-level leadership academy participants (group 3) and the state level leadership academy (group 2) (see Table 6). The ANOVA results lend support to the researcher’s hypothesis that a job-embedded, local-level leadership academy is a more effective method of professional development for school leaders than a workshop approach or a state-level leadership academy.

Table 6

*Group Means, Standard Deviations, and LSD Sig - Politics*

Group	Mean	St Dev	LSD sig/group
1. Workshop	3.02	1.13	.198 / 2 ; .008 / 3*
2. State Leadership Academy	2.75	1.00	.198 / 1 ; .002 / 3*
3. Local Leadership Academy	3.57	.96	.008 / 1* ; .002 / 2*

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

## Discussion

Results were based on respondents’ perceptions of the effectiveness of the professional development activity in the six areas included in the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and politics. Analysis indicates that that the type of course (local, state, or workshop) has a statistically significant and practical effect on respondents’ assessment of program effectiveness on all areas except integrity. Overall,

respondents rated the effectiveness of the local program as more effective than the workshop in all areas except integrity. Although the mean of perceived effectiveness was lowest for standard 6, politics, it was the only area of statistically significant difference between state and local programs. The workshop was not perceived differently than the state program in any of the areas of concern.

Based on the overall ratings of effectiveness, the local program is perceived as the most beneficial in providing professional development in the areas of vision, culture, management, community, and politics. All programs were perceived as addressing standard 5, integrity, to about the same degree. Although further research into various programs is needed to verify the findings from this study, the initial evaluation indicates that the local program is viewed as most constructive by respondents. Following up with respondents to identify possible improvements to the program would be worthwhile considering that the ratings overall were closer to the Useful than the Very Useful rating on the various areas of the program.

### Summary

All three professional development methods studied (workshops; state-level professional development activity ongoing over several months; and local-level, job-embedded professional development activities ongoing over months and/or years) were perceived overall as useful by educational leaders in their development. The local-level, job-embedded leadership academy was perceived to have had the greatest effect on leadership development, particularly in self-described changes to the leadership practices of the participants.

This study looked at administrators' perceptions of three commonly used professional development programs in Alabama aimed at building leadership capacity in order to bring about school improvement. A mixed methods approach was used for this study. A qualitative design was used as part of the study to explore how effective professional development activities were perceived to be at improving educational leadership by administrators. Administrators who had participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much the professional development activity improved their practice in the school. The interviews were analyzed using a rubric based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. Each of the six standards were scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard, was committed to the standard, performed activities aligned with the standard, or had no evidence at all related to the standard. Emergent themes were then identified in the administrators' answers to the interview questions. In the quantitative aspect of the study, participant answers were analyzed to see if patterns emerged which pointed to those aspects of programs that were effective or important, as well as to see whether any of the three models were perceived as particularly effective.

Both the qualitative and quantitative portions of the study found the local-level leadership academy was perceived by participants to have been most effective at changing leadership practices in the six areas that make up the ISSLC standards. The state-level leadership academy was perceived to be nearly as effective as the local-level

capacity building programs. The workshop approach was perceived to be least effective at changing participants' leadership practices.

## V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The purpose of this study was to look at administrators' perceptions of three commonly used professional development approaches in Alabama aimed at building leadership capacity in order to bring about school improvement. This research sought to determine if professional development participants perceived these activities as useful for enhancing leadership capacity through improving their practices in areas specified by the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium standards: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and politics. Another purpose of the study was to assess the effectiveness of a local leadership academy in meeting its stated goals of (a) preparing the district for accreditation, (b) developing the perceived leadership capacity of individuals in the system, (c) developing the leadership capacity of the organization, and (d) identifying potential leaders from within the system.

A mixed methods approach was used for this study. A qualitative design was used as the major part of the study to assess the perceived effectiveness of professional development activities at improving educational leadership by administrators. Administrators who had participated in one of the three types of professional development being studied were interviewed to determine their perceptions of how much the professional development activity improved their practices in their school. The interviews were analyzed using a researcher-designed rubric based upon the Interstate

School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders, which some researchers claim provides an outline for the important competencies school leaders must have to improve student learning (Murphy, 2002). Each of the six standards were scored based on the administrators' interview comments that suggested the administrator had knowledge of the standard, was committed to the standard, performed activities aligned with the standard, or had no evidence at all related to the standard due to participation in the professional development activity. Data were chunked into manageable units and emergent themes were identified based on the administrators' answers to the interview questions. In the quantitative aspect of the study, survey responses were analyzed to see whether any of the three professional development models were perceived as particularly effective by the participants in a larger, state-wide sample of educational leaders.

### Review of Findings

The interviews were analyzed using a researcher-designed rubric based upon the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Standards for School Leaders. According to the Council of Chief State School Officers (1996), the ISLLC standards are research based, designed to provide consistency and quality in the preparation and professional development of educational leaders. Within the standards there is a strong focus on improving instructional leadership, which is consistent with the stated purpose for Alabama's professional development standards. Each of the six ISLLC standards was scored depending upon whether the administrators' interviews showed evidence that due to the professional development activity the administrator had knowledge of the standard (scored a two on the rubric), was committed to the standard (scored a three on the rubric),

performed activities aligned with the standard (scored a four on the rubric), or had no evidence at all related to the standard (scored a one on the rubric). The ISSLC standards were created to ensure that school administrators are effective leaders, with an emphasis on improving instructional leadership in schools (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996). The Alabama State Department of Education has developed 12 professional development standards which are to be applied to all professional development offerings to ensure that activities are effective in improving educators' practices. These standards were designed to improve instruction in Alabama schools, and all professional development in Alabama is supposed to be aligned with them (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002).

### *Workshops*

The administrators who were interviewed about their participation in one to three day workshops had the lowest scores overall on the rubric. Interviewees offered evidence suggesting there was a narrow focus in the workshops, with most indicating that the workshop benefited them in only one ISSLC standard area. One administrator gave evidence of a workshop affecting his practice in four standards areas, but all other participants reported evidence in only one or two standards areas. The areas that were most reported to be influenced by workshops were ISSLC Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all his students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth) and ISSLC Standard 3 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by

ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective environment).

Most of the administrators who were interviewed about workshops offered evidence that the workshops provided knowledge for them, but offered very little evidence that the workshops affected them beyond the knowledge level. Only two interviewees offered evidence of a workshop affecting their dispositions, and only one offered evidence of a workshop changing her performance. The rubric scores suggested the workshops had narrow foci, with almost all of the interviewees reporting results in Standard 2, culture; and Standard 3, management; but almost no results emerged in the other four standards areas. Also, scores tended to be at the knowledge level, with only rare evidence of any direct application of knowledge.

The biggest criticisms of the workshops were that they were not long enough, there was no follow up, and they often used “stand and deliver” instructional methods, which participants tired of quickly. Those criticisms suggest that the workshops were not aligned with the Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development.

The workshops did not organize the participants into learning communities as Alabama standard one requires. The workshops did not take into account adult learning theory as standard three and seven require, as evidenced by the delivery methods employed. The workshops also did little to improve collaboration, as called for in standards nine and twelve.

#### *State-Level Leadership Academy*

The state-level leadership academies studied included two types of programs. One program was designed to help prepare new administrators, such as principals or

superintendents, for the role they had recently filled. The other type was designed to prepare a pool of educators who would be ready to assume superintendencies when they open, and to improve the numbers of prepared applicants from traditionally under-represented groups.

The state-level leadership academy participants' interviews scored higher than the workshop participants' interviews on the rubric. Also, the state-level leadership academy participants' interviews scored in more of the six ISSLC standards than the workshop participants, with every interviewee attaining scores in five of the standards areas. Participants' interviews provided the least amount of evidence in ISSLC Standard 5 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner). Many of the answers provided by state-level leadership academy participants reveal dispositions that have been adopted by the administrator as a result of their participation in the professional development activity. There were also some who participated in the state-level leadership academies who offered evidence in their interviews that the professional development experience affected their performance in positive ways.

The state-level leadership academy participants' highest scores on the rubric were for Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all his students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth) and Standard 6 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context). These two areas had average scores of three from

all the state-level leadership academy participants, indicating that the participants believed their values and commitments were changed in these areas.

The state –level leadership academy participants’ interviews offered evidence that the state-level leadership academy activities were aligned with Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development. There was organization into learning communities with goals aligned at particularly at the state level, as called for in standard one. There was evidence of knowledgeable leaders guiding continuous improvement, as in standard two. Methods appropriate for adult learners were used as called for in standards three, seven, and eight. The state-level leadership academy activities facilitated collaboration, as required in standards nine and twelve.

#### *Local-Level Leadership Academies*

The local-level leadership academies studied here were designed to improve existing administrators’ practices, to build a pool of future leaders for schools, and to improve student learning in the school systems. Participants included central office administrators, principals, assistant principals, teacher leaders, and students.

The local-level leadership academy participants’ interviews produced the highest average scores on the scoring rubric of the three professional development type groups. The local-level leadership academy participants’ interviews produced the only average score of four for a standard area of any of the professional development activities. The four was scored in Standard 2 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and professional growth. Participants in the local leadership academy revealed evidence of performances in this

area. In three standards areas participants' interviews were mostly scored as threes: Standard 1 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community), Standard 4 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources) and Standard 5 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner). All were most often addressed by participants in the interviews in such a way as to exhibit commitment and belief.

The local-level leadership academy participants' interviews revealed evidence primarily in five standards areas, revealing little evidence of Standard 6 (a school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context).

Quantitative results were based on respondents' perceptions of the effectiveness of the six areas included in the professional development programs: vision, culture, management, community, integrity, and politics. Analysis indicates that the delivery type of the professional development (local, state, or workshop) has a statistically significant and practical effect on respondents' assessment of program effectiveness on all areas except integrity. Overall, respondents rated the effectiveness of the local program as significantly more effective than the workshop in all areas except integrity. The local

program was perceived as more effective in dealing with politics than the state program; however this is the only area of statistically significant difference between state and local programs. The workshop was not perceived as significantly different in effectiveness than the state program in any of the areas of concern.

Based on the overall ratings of effectiveness, the local program was perceived as the most beneficial in providing professional development in the areas of vision, culture, management, community, and politics. However, all programs were perceived as addressing integrity to about the same degree. Although further research into various programs is needed to verify the findings from this study, the initial evaluation indicates that the local program is viewed as constructive and worthwhile by respondents.

The quantitative results and the qualitative results were only strikingly different in the area of ISSLC standard 6, politics. The local-level leadership academy participants' interviews produced very little evidence in this area, and the state-level leadership academy participants interviews produced strong evidence of changes in disposition and performance. Conversely, the quantitative data revealed a statistically significant difference in the local-level leadership academy and the state-level leadership academy for standard 6, with the local-level leadership academy scoring higher. This may be because of differences in the local-level leadership academies' curricula. The mean scores from the survey for all three types of professional development were lowest for standard 6, politics, so it may mean that none of the professional development approaches are addressing this standard.

### *Evaluation of Local Program*

The specific local-level leadership program that was begun in Tallapoosa County was mostly successful in accomplishing its stated goals. Its first goal was to prepare the district for accreditation. At the inception of the leadership academy, the system had no schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. By May, 2007, four of the original five schools were accredited, while the fifth school and a new school in the system were in the process of attaining accreditation. A second goal was to develop the leadership capacity of individuals in the system. Evidence of success in this area was found in the participant interviews, where participants offered evidence that the local-level leadership academy had changed their understandings and beliefs, and it had also changed their practices. A third goal of the local-level leadership academy was to develop the leadership capacity of the organization. There was evidence offered by participants that this took place, particularly through the improved communication that was fostered by the leadership academy. A fourth goal of the local-level leadership academy was to identify potential leaders from within the system. Ten of fourteen administrative openings in the time since the leadership academy began have been filled by leadership academy participants. The evidence above indicates the Tallapoosa County Leadership Academy has been successful in bringing about change and in improving leadership in the system. It has been effective in bringing about learning and change in the organization as well as in the individuals who participated.

## Implications for Professional Development

The local-level leadership academy was perceived to be most effective in affecting school leaders' practices among those interviewed and among those surveyed. Although further research into various professional development programs is needed to verify the findings from this study, the initial evaluation indicates that the local program is viewed as useful personally and professionally by survey respondents and is useful to the educational organization. The survey results supported the interview results, although the survey results showed less difference between the types of professional development than the rubric scores from the interviews. This may be due to variations in the quality of the local-level leadership academies. Surveys were sent to administrators across the state, while local-level leadership academy participant interviews were conducted with leaders who had taken part in one of four local-level leadership academies conducted by the Truman Pierce Institute in the College of Education at Auburn University. There may be other local-level leadership academies that are perceived as more or less beneficial by participants who completed the surveys. Yet, the theme that runs through the interviews of all three types of professional development studied is that time, including the clock time spent on a subject and the calendar time that the learning is spread across, is very important when facilitating the learning of new ideas and incorporating them into one's practice.

Reflection upon the ideas learned and discussion with other practitioners was also important to the professional development process. Participants repeatedly said that discussions with others about how they were implementing ideas or solving problems in

the areas addressed were very important factors in changing their own performance as leaders.

The participants in the local-level leadership academies studied perceived them to be effective and offered evidence during their interviews about how the academies were producing change in their school systems. The workshop participants' interviews offered evidence of increased knowledge and the state-level leadership academy participants' interviews produced evidence of personal change and growth, but neither group offered evidence of organizational change or growth. The nature of the local-level leadership academy, by bringing members of the local organization together for growth activities, seems to be the reason for organizational benefits cited: improved communication, preparation of individuals for promotion in leadership, and leadership in school improvement. The student portion of the local-level leadership academy was particularly effective in improving communication between students and educators, changing educators' perceptions of students, and helping to create an organizational culture that has everyone focused on learning.

#### Limitations of the Study

It is important to consider that the investigator of this study was a co-developer of a local leadership academy that was part of the study, which may have influenced the perceived values found in the qualitative research. Interviews were conducted with a sample of program participants, but not all program participants due to time constraints. This research was limited to participants in Alabama. The data in both the qualitative and quantitative portions of this study were self-reported and elicited participants' perceptions

of effectiveness. This was an exploratory, primarily qualitative study, so caution should be used if making generalizations.

### Recommendations for Further Research

Improving schools and holding educators, schools, and school districts accountable for student performance are arguably among the most important issues in education today. Simultaneously, there is a nation-wide push to reduce government spending on education and to make tax money available for school vouchers, thus reducing the pool of money available for traditional public education. It is therefore critically important that money intended to improve education is spent where it will have the greatest impact on student learning. School improvement is strongly tied to the performance of a school's leadership (Cistone & Stevenson, 2000). Proposals to reform and restructure schools have emphasized professional development as a key element (Goodlad, 1996). This increased emphasis on professional development has created a greater awareness of those components proven effective for professional development and facilitating systemic change in educational institutions (Guskey, 1994).

Many rural districts have scarce resources, fewer available teaching and administrative positions than larger systems, and are farther from population centers where it is easier to recruit new educators; yet standards continue to be raised (Peterson & Kelley, 2001). The best hope for effective school improvement in many of these areas may be effective job-embedded professional development to create a leadership pool that will drive the school improvement process (Archer, 2006). This "grow your own" approach holds promise if local educators are cultivated properly. School leaders need

activities that challenge their thinking, provide feedback, allow interaction with colleagues outside of the local district, allow time for reflection, provide access to resources, use hands-on learning experiences, create opportunities to teach others, and use an integrated approach to professional development (McKay, 2001). In order for a “grow your own” approach to truly be effective in bringing about school improvement and to provide well prepared candidates for future administrative positions, teachers need to be included in job-embedded professional development. In light of the conclusions drawn from this research, it is important that further research be done in these areas:

- What is the relationship between time for a professional development activity, particularly the time a learning activity is spread across (calendar time), and changing the performance of school leaders? Is there an optimum length? Is there a minimum time requirement that should be met? What role, if any, does content have on the answer to these questions?
- Would a guided program of workshops, approved by a supervisor or the state certification section, for example, have the same effect on changing performances in school leaders as an on-going, job-embedded leadership academy for those school districts without the resources or leadership to implement their own leadership academy? Would the Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development suggest changes in content and delivery? If so, how?
- Would a hybrid professional development plan that included workshops for individuals and local school system time to meet together to discuss what had been learned in workshops and their applications be as effective as a local

leadership academy and provide another effective route to school improvement?

- Would the differences in quality of local leadership academies be lessened by a curriculum mandated by the state department of education? Would it still be effective and contextually relevant if there was a state-mandated curriculum?
- Are there other effective ways to provide the networking and expert mentors that were listed as major benefits of the state-level leadership academy?

### Conclusions

Improving the quality of education in a rapidly changing world is a challenge that must be met for today's students to be able to compete in an ever-evolving economy. Today's school leaders must change to meet the challenge, and that change is often facilitated through quality professional development. As more money is spent on professional development aimed at school improvement, it is increasingly important that the professional development activities school leaders take part in are effective in bringing about the changes necessary for school improvement in the individual participants and in the learning organization.

The need for effective professional development has caused education organizations to define effective professional development (Mizell, 2001). The Alabama Standards for Effective Professional Development (Alabama State Department of Education, 2002) were devised to make certain professional development activities were designed according to the research on effective professional development, so that instructional leadership would be enhanced. All certified educators in the state must

undergo professional development for recertification in order to stay current with best practices in education.

This research produced evidence that the professional development activity type that was most effective at changing educational leaders' practice was the local-level, job-embedded, on-going initiative. This model should be considered by local professional development leaders when planning professional development for their systems. This model also should be supported by the Alabama State Department of Education, both in helping local systems to set up and operate a continuing local professional development initiative and in including funding for such professional development initiatives in their budget request to the Alabama legislature. Many school systems, particularly small, rural districts, will likely need the support of an intermediary organization such as the Truman Pierce Institute to coordinate and facilitate effective professional development academies focused on instructional leadership capacity building.

Another finding of this research was that of the three types of professional development studied the local-level leadership academy produced the only evidence of going beyond individual learning and producing organizational learning. This is very important as organizational learning and organizational improvement are the intended results of professional development in education. The inclusion of student leaders in the professional development activities was unique to the local-level type, and was cited by many participants as being particularly effective at improving communication, changing culture, and truly helping to change practices in schools. There was a constant focus on student-centered needs in the local academies which provided encouragement for teachers and administrators to change their practice to better meet those needs.

The local-level leadership academy has proven to be an effective and cost-efficient way to improve schools while improving leadership. It has achieved this goal by improving existing school leaders and by preparing quality leaders for positions within the system. It also has improved the organization by improving communication among leaders and keeping the organization focused on improving student learning.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

## **Interview Protocol**

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. The purpose of the interview is to get your perceptions about the effectiveness of leadership professional development and your perceptions about your leadership growth as a result of participating in the activity. Since the purpose of this research is to gain a better understanding of the effectiveness of leadership professional development, please be honest in your responses. The interview will take approximately 30 minutes. Your interview will be audio-taped and I will be taking some notes in case the tape recorder does not work. I have your signed letter of consent, so unless you have any questions, we will begin. [Turn tape recorder on.]

- 1) What was the professional development activity in which you participated?
- 2) Tell me about the professional development activity.
- 3) If you were to describe the professional development activity to a friend in a comparable position, what would you say?
- 4) In what ways, if any, has participation in the professional development activity assisted your personal leadership development?
- 5) In what ways, if any, has the professional development activity assisted in the leadership capacity building of the school/school district?
- 6) What have been the most effective aspects of the professional development activity? Why?
- 7) What were other aspects of the professional development activity that were important? Why?
- 8) What have been the least effective aspects of the professional development activity? Why?
- 9) What advice would you offer regarding ways to improve the professional development activity?
- 10) What have been the most important outcomes from the professional development activity?
- 11) In what ways have you engaged teacher leaders since you began participation in the professional development activity?
- 12) In what ways, if any, is this different from how you worked with teacher leaders previously?
- 13) What kind of supports or networks existed for you professionally when you began your leadership position?
- 14) Did the professional development activity provide opportunities for reflection/dialogue?
- 15) How (if at all) has the professional development activity changed your beliefs about education behaviors/practice?
- 16) How does this professional development activity compare with other types of professional development that you have had?

- 17) What else do you feel is important to say about effective professional development and/or the professional development activity in terms of your own or the district's growth?
- 18) Is there anything else you would like to say about the professional development activity?

APPENDIX B

SURVEY

School Administrators' Perceptions of PD Effectiveness

**1. Introduction**

This survey is intended to measure whether you believe the professional development activity you participated in assisted you in the areas addresses by the items, NOT how well you perform in the area.

\* **1. What type of professional development activity that you participated in during the past year do you perceive to have been the most effective for you in improving your job performance?**

- One to three day conference
- State level leadership academy on-going over several months
- Local level leadership academy on-going over several months

**Next >>**

School Administrators' Perceptions of PD Effectiveness Exit this survey

**2. Professional Development Survey**

The following items are related to standards for education leadership. Respond each item using the five point rating scale shown below.

- 1- Professional development activity was not useful in my development
- 2- Professional development activity was of little use to my development
- 3- Professional development activity was somewhat useful in my development
- 4- Professional development activity was useful in my development
- 5- Professional development activity was very useful in my development

**2. It helped me communicate the vision and mission of the school to staff, parents, students, and the community.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**3. It helped me examine my own assumptions, beliefs, and practices.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**4. It helped ensure that assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**5. It helped me treat all individuals with fairness, dignity, and respect.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**6. It helped me ensure that professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**7. It helped me ensure that life-long learning is encouraged and modeled.**

Not	Somewhat	Very
<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Useful	Little Use	Useful	Useful	Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**8. It helped me ensure that knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development is used to inform management decisions.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**9. It helped me with effective group-process and consensus-building skills.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**10. It helped me ensure that a safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing school environment is created and maintained.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**11. It helped me with problem-solving skills.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**12. It helped me share responsibility to maximize ownership.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**13. It helped me reach out to different businesses, service agencies and organizations.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**14. It helped me develop and maintain good media relations.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
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Perception of Activity

**15. It helped me actively participate in the political and policy-making context in the service of education.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**16. It helped me see education as a key to opportunity and social mobility.**

	Not Useful	Little Use	Somewhat Useful	Useful	Very Useful
Perception of Activity	<input type="radio"/>				

**17. Is there anything you would like to say about the professional activity?**

[<< Prev](#)      [Done >>](#)

APPENDIX C  
INTERVIEW ANALYSIS RUBRIC

Category	4	3	2
Standard 1/ Vision	<p>the vision and mission of the school are effectively communicated to staff, parents, students, and community members</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the vision and mission are communicated through the use of symbols, ceremonies, stories, and similar activities</li> <li>• the core beliefs of the school vision are modeled for all stakeholders</li> <li>• the vision is developed with and among stakeholders</li> <li>• the contributions of school community members to the realization of the vision are recognized and celebrated</li> <li>• progress toward the vision and mission is communicated to all stakeholders</li> <li>• the school community is involved in school improvement efforts</li> <li>• the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and activities</li> <li>• the vision shapes the educational programs, plans, and actions</li> <li>• an implementation plan is developed in which objectives and strategies to achieve</li> </ul>	<p>the educability of all</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a school vision of high standards of learning</li> <li>• continuous school improvement</li> <li>• the inclusion of all members of the school community</li> <li>• ensuring that students have the knowledge, skills, and values needed to become successful adults</li> <li>• a willingness to continuously examine one's own assumptions, beliefs, and practices</li> <li>• doing the work required for high levels of personal and organization performance</li> </ul>	<p>learning goals in a pluralistic society</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the principles of developing and implementing strategic plans</li> <li>• systems theory</li> <li>• information sources, data collection, and data analysis strategies</li> <li>• effective communication</li> <li>• effective consensus-building and negotiation skills</li> </ul>

	<p>the vision and goals are clearly articulated</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• assessment data related to student learning are used to develop the school vision and goals</li> <li>• relevant demographic data pertaining to students and their families are used in developing the school mission and goals</li> <li>• barriers to achieving the vision are identified, clarified, and addressed</li> <li>• needed resources are sought and obtained to support the implementation of the school mission and goals</li> <li>• existing resources are used in support of the school vision and goals</li> <li>• the vision, mission, and implementation plans are regularly monitored, evaluated, and revised</li> </ul>		
<p>Standard 2/ Sustaining School Culture</p>	<p>all individuals are treated with fairness, dignity, and respect</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional development promotes a focus on student learning consistent with the school vision and goals</li> <li>• students and staff feel valued and important</li> <li>• the responsibilities</li> </ul>	<p>student learning as the fundamental purpose of schooling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the proposition that all students can learn</li> <li>• the variety of ways in which students can learn</li> <li>• life long learning for self and others</li> <li>• professional development as an integral part of school improvement</li> </ul>	<p>student growth and development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• applied learning theories</li> <li>• applied motivational theories</li> <li>• curriculum design, implementation, evaluation, and refinement</li> <li>• principles of effective instruction</li> <li>• measurement, evaluation, and</li> </ul>

	<p>and contributions of each individual are acknowledged</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• barriers to student learning are identified, clarified, and addressed</li> <li>• diversity is considered in developing learning experiences</li> <li>• life long learning is encouraged and modeled</li> <li>• there is a culture of high expectations for self, student, and staff performance</li> <li>• technologies are used in teaching and learning</li> <li>• student and staff accomplishments are recognized and celebrated</li> <li>• multiple opportunities to learn are available to all students</li> <li>• the school is organized and aligned for success</li> <li>• curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular programs are designed, implemented, evaluated, and refined</li> <li>• curriculum decisions are based on research, expertise of teachers, and the recommendations of learned societies</li> <li>• the school culture and climate are assessed on a regular basis</li> <li>• a variety of sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the benefits that diversity brings to the school community</li> <li>• a safe and supportive learning environment</li> <li>• preparing students to be contributing members of society</li> </ul>	<p>assessment strategies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• diversity and its meaning for educational programs</li> <li>• adult learning and professional development models</li> <li>• the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals</li> <li>• the role of technology in promoting student learning and professional growth</li> <li>• school cultures</li> </ul>
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	<p>of information is used to make decisions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• student learning is assessed using a variety of techniques</li> <li>• multiple sources of information regarding performance are used by staff and students</li> <li>• a variety of supervisory and evaluation models is employed</li> <li>• pupil personnel programs are developed to meet the needs of students and their families</li> </ul>		
Standard 3/ Management for Learning Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• knowledge of learning, teaching, and student development is used to inform management decisions</li> <li>• operational procedures are designed and managed to maximize opportunities for successful learning</li> <li>• emerging trends are recognized, studied, and applied as appropriate</li> <li>• operational plans and procedures to achieve the vision and goals of the school are in place</li> <li>• collective bargaining and other contractual agreements related</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• making management decisions to enhance learning and teaching</li> <li>• taking risks to improve schools</li> <li>• trusting people and their judgments</li> <li>• accepting responsibility</li> <li>• high-quality standards, expectations, and performances</li> <li>• involving stakeholders in management processes</li> <li>• a safe environment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• theories and models of organizations and the principles of organizational development</li> <li>• operational procedures at the school and district level</li> <li>• principles and issues relating to school safety and security</li> <li>• human resources management and development</li> <li>• principles and issues relating to fiscal operations of school management</li> <li>• principles and issues relating to school facilities and use of space</li> <li>• legal issues impacting school operations</li> <li>• current technologies</li> </ul>

	<p>to the school are effectively managed</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the school plant, equipment, and support systems operate safely, efficiently, and effectively</li> <li>• time is managed to maximize attainment of organizational goals</li> <li>• potential problems and opportunities are identified</li> <li>• problems are confronted and resolved in a timely manner</li> <li>• financial, human, and material resources are aligned to the goals of schools</li> <li>• the school acts entrepreneurally to support continuous improvement</li> <li>• organizational systems are regularly monitored and modified as needed</li> <li>• stakeholders are involved in decisions affecting schools</li> <li>• responsibility is shared to maximize ownership and accountability</li> <li>• effective problem-framing and problem-solving skills are used</li> <li>• effective conflict resolution skills are used</li> <li>• effective group-process and</li> </ul>		<p>that support management functions</p>
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	<p>consensusbuilding skills are used</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• effective communication skills are used</li> <li>• there is effective use of technology to manage school operations</li> <li>• fiscal resources of the school are managed responsibly, efficiently, and effectively</li> <li>• a safe, clean, and aesthetically pleasing school environment is created and maintained</li> <li>• human resource functions support the attainment of school goals</li> <li>• confidentiality and privacy of school records are maintained</li> </ul>		
Standard 4/ Collaboration	<p>high visibility, active involvement, and communication with the larger community is a priority</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• relationships with community leaders are identified and nurtured</li> <li>• information about family and community concerns, expectations, and needs is used regularly</li> <li>• there is outreach to different business, religious, political, and service agencies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• schools operating as an integral part of the larger community</li> <li>• collaboration and communication with families</li> <li>• involvement of families and other stakeholders in school decision-making processes</li> <li>• the proposition that diversity enriches the school</li> <li>• families as partners in the education of their children</li> <li>• the proposition that families have the best interests of their</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• emerging issues and trends that potentially impact the school community</li> <li>• the conditions and dynamics of the diverse school community</li> <li>• community resources</li> <li>• community relations and marketing strategies and processes</li> <li>• successful models of school, family, business, community, government and higher education</li> </ul>

	<p>and organizations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• credence is given to individuals and groups whose values and opinions may conflict</li> <li>• the school and community serve one another as resources</li> <li>• available community resources are secured to help the school solve problems and achieve goals</li> <li>• partnerships are established with area businesses, institutions of higher education, and community groups to strengthen programs and support school goals</li> <li>• community youth family services are integrated with school programs</li> <li>• community stakeholders are treated equitably</li> <li>• diversity is recognized and valued</li> <li>• effective media relations are developed and maintained</li> <li>• a comprehensive program of community relations is established</li> <li>• public resources and funds are used appropriately and wisely</li> <li>• community collaboration is</li> </ul>	<p>children in mind</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• resources of the family and community needing to be brought to bear on the education of students</li> <li>• an informed public</li> </ul>	<p>partnerships</p>
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	<p>modeled for staff</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunities for staff to develop collaborative skills are provided</li> </ul>		
Standard 5/ Ethics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• examines personal and professional values</li> <li>• demonstrates a personal and professional code of ethics</li> <li>• demonstrates values, beliefs, and attitudes that inspire others to higher levels of performance</li> <li>• serves as a role model</li> <li>• accepts responsibility for school operations</li> <li>• considers the impact of one's administrative practices on others</li> <li>• uses the influence of the office to enhance the educational program rather than for personal gain</li> <li>• treats people fairly, equitably, and with dignity and respect</li> <li>• protects the rights and confidentiality of students and staff</li> <li>• demonstrates appreciation for and sensitivity to the diversity in the school community</li> <li>• recognizes and respects the legitimate authority of others</li> <li>• examines and considers the prevailing values of the diverse school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the ideal of the common good</li> <li>• the principles in the Bill of Rights</li> <li>• the right of every student to a free, quality education</li> <li>• bringing ethical principles to the decisionmaking process</li> <li>• subordinating one's own interest to the good of the school community</li> <li>• accepting the consequences for upholding one's principles and actions</li> <li>• using the influence of one's office constructively and productively in the service of all students and their families</li> <li>• development of a caring school community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the purpose of education and the role of leadership in modern society</li> <li>• various ethical frameworks and perspectives on ethics</li> <li>• the values of the diverse school community</li> <li>• professional codes of ethics</li> <li>• the philosophy and history of education</li> </ul>

	<p>community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• expects that others in the school community will demonstrate integrity and exercise ethical behavior</li> <li>• opens the school to public scrutiny</li> <li>• fulfills legal and contractual obligations</li> <li>• applies laws and procedures fairly, wisely, and considerately</li> </ul>		
Standard 6/ Political, Social, Economic, Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the environment in which schools operate is influenced on behalf of students and their families</li> <li>• communication occurs among the school community concerning trends, issues, and potential changes in the environment in which schools operate</li> <li>• there is ongoing dialogue with representatives of diverse community groups</li> <li>• the school community works within the framework of policies, laws, and regulations enacted by local, state, and federal authorities</li> <li>• public policy is shaped to provide quality education for students</li> <li>• lines of communication are</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• education as a key to opportunity and social mobility</li> <li>• recognizing a variety of ideas, values, and cultures</li> <li>• importance of a continuing dialogue with other decision makers affecting education</li> <li>• actively participating in the political and policy-making context in the service of education</li> <li>• using legal systems to protect student rights and improve student opportunities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• principles of representative governance that undergird the system of American schools</li> <li>• the role of public education in developing and renewing a democratic society and an economically productive nation</li> <li>• the law as related to education and schooling</li> <li>• the political, social, cultural and economic systems and processes that impact schools</li> <li>• models and strategies of change and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural and economic contexts of schooling</li> <li>• global issues and forces affecting teaching and learning</li> </ul>

	developed with decision makers outside the school community		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• the dynamics of policy development and advocacy under our democratic political system</li><li>• the importance of diversity and equity in a democratic society</li></ul>
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APPENDIX D  
PERMISSION FOR STUDY

# Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849



Office of Human Subjects Research  
307 Sanford Hall

Telephone: 334-844-5966  
Fax: 334-844-4391  
hsubjec@auburn.edu

October 4, 2006

MEMORANDUM TO: Charles L. Ledbetter  
Educational Foundations Leadership and Technology

PROTOCOL TITLE: "An Analysis of Leadership Capacity Development in Alabama"

IRB FILE NO.: 06-118 EP 0610

APPROVAL DATE: October 4, 2006  
EXPIRATION DATE: October 3, 2007

The above referenced protocol was approved by IRB Expedited procedure under Expedited Category #7 on October 4, 2006. You should report to the IRB any proposed changes in the protocol or procedures and any unanticipated problems involving risk to subjects or others. Please reference the above authorization number in any future correspondence regarding this project.

If you will be unable to file a Final Report on your project before October 3, 2007, you must submit a request for an extension of approval to the IRB no later than September 15, 2007. If your IRB authorization expires and/or you have not received written notice that a request for an extension has been approved prior to October 3, 2007, you must suspend the project immediately and contact the Office of Human Subjects Research for assistance.

A Final Report will be required to close your IRB project file. You are reminded that consent forms must be retained at least three years after completion of your study.

If you have any questions concerning this Board action, please contact the Office of Human Subjects Research at 844-5966.

Sincerely,

Peter W. Grandjean, Chair  
Institutional Review Board for the Use of Human  
Subjects in Research

cc: Dr. Jose Llanos  
Dr. Judith Lechner

APPENDIX E  
E-MAIL TO ADMINISTRATORS

**Chuck Ledbetter**

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**From:** "Chuck Ledbetter" <cledbetter@tallapoosak12.org>  
**To:** <cledbetter@tallapoosak12.org>  
**Sent:** Monday, September 18, 2006 5:47 PM  
**Subject:** Request for Survey Response

**INFORMED CONSENT FOR  
Enhancing Leadership Capacity in a Rural School System  
Alabama K-12 Administrators**

You are invited to participate in a research study of the Tallapoosa County Leadership Academy. This study is being conducted by Charles L. Ledbetter, Jr., under the supervision of Dr. Judith Lechner. We hope to learn about effective school improvement through leadership development. You were selected as a possible participant because you are an administrator in an Alabama school.

If you decide to participate, we will ask you to complete a survey on your perception of the effectiveness of your past professional development experience. There is a risk of a breach of confidentiality. To minimize this risk, all survey responses will be anonymous.

Participants may be contributing to the improvement of professional development activities and leadership capacity building. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting. If so, none of your identifiable information will be included. All data will be shredded after the project is complete. All computer files will be erased. Participants may withdraw from participation at any time, without penalty, and may withdraw any data which has been collected about themselves, as long as that data is identifiable.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or Tallapoosa County Schools.

If you have any questions, Charles Ledbetter (256) 825-2846, (cledbetter@tallapoosak12.org) or Dr. Judith Lechner (lechnjv@auburn.edu) will be happy to answer them.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at [hsubjec@auburn.edu](mailto:hsubjec@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR COMPLETION OF THE SURVEY INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

**TO COMPLETE THE SURVEY, CLICK ON THE LINK BELOW**

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=474652114127>

HUMAN SUBJECTS  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
PROJECT #06-118 EP 0610  
APPROVED 10-4-06 TO 10-3-07

9/18/2006

APPENDIX F  
INTERVIEW PERMISSION LETTER

# Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5221

Educational Foundations,  
Leadership, and Technology  
4036 Haley Center

Telephone: (334) 844-4460  
FAX: (334) 844-3072

## INFORMED CONSENT FOR An Analysis of K-12 Leadership Capacity Development in Alabama

You are invited to participate in a research study. This study is being conducted by Charles L. Ledbetter, Jr., under the supervision of Dr. Judith Lechner. I hope to learn about effective leadership development through professional development. You were selected as a possible participant because you have leadership ability and chose to be part of the Leadership Academy.

If you decide to participate, I will interview you about your perceptions of your most effective professional development experiences.

There is a risk of a breach of confidentiality. To minimize this risk, all interviews will be audio-taped for accuracy, but once the data has been collected and analyzed the tapes will be destroyed. We will not ask you for your name or any identifying information during the interview and ask that you not voluntarily provide identifying information to help protect the confidentiality of this information. All of the data will be converted to an anonymous format, so that only the primary investigator will be privy to any confidential information. Any identifying information will be deleted from the transcripts.

Participants may be contributing to the improvement of professional development activities and leadership capacity building. I cannot promise you that you will receive any or all of the benefits described.

Any information obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential (or anonymous, depending upon the specific conditions of data collection). The data will be stored in a locked cabinet in the office of the principal investigator. This office is in the Council Middle School, Room 102, Dadeville, Alabama. When I am not in the office, the office door will be locked, as well.

Information collected through your participation may be used to fulfill an educational requirement, published in a professional journal, and/or presented at a professional meeting. If so, none of your identifiable information will be included.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Initials  
(required for all non-signature pages)

HUMAN SUBJECTS  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
PROJECT # 06-118 EP 0610  
APPROVED 10-4-06 TO 10-3-07

Page 1 of 2

# Auburn University

Auburn University, Alabama 36849-5221

Educational Foundations,  
Leadership, and Technology  
4036 Haley Center

Telephone: (334) 844-4460  
FAX: (334) 844-3072

Only the principal investigator (Charles Ledbetter) will have access to the raw data. All data will be shredded after the project is complete. All audiotapes will be destroyed. All computer files will be erased. Participants may withdraw from participation at any time, without penalty, and may withdraw any data which has been collected about themselves, as long as that data is identifiable.

Your decision whether or not to participate will not jeopardize your future relations with Auburn University or Tallapoosa County Schools.

If you have any questions I invite you to ask them now. If you have questions later, Charles Ledbetter (256) 825-2846, ([clbetter@tallapoosak12.org](mailto:clbetter@tallapoosak12.org)) or Dr. Judith Lechner ([lechnjv@auburn.edu](mailto:lechnjv@auburn.edu)) will be happy to answer them. You will be provided a copy of this form to keep.

For more information regarding your rights as a research participant you may contact the Auburn University Office of Human Subjects Research or the Institutional Review Board by phone (334)-844-5966 or e-mail at [hsubjec@auburn.edu](mailto:hsubjec@auburn.edu) or [IRBChair@auburn.edu](mailto:IRBChair@auburn.edu).

**HAVING READ THE INFORMATION PROVIDED, YOU MUST DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH STUDY. YOUR SIGNATURE INDICATES YOUR WILLINGNESS TO PARTICIPATE.**

_____	_____	_____	_____
Participant's signature	Date	Investigator's signature	Date
_____		_____	
Print Name		Print Name	

HUMAN SUBJECTS  
OFFICE OF RESEARCH  
PROJECT # 06-118 EP 0610  
APPROVED 10-4-06 TO 10-3-07

Page 2 of 2

A LAND-GRANT UNIVERSITY