

ABSTRACT

Abbey L. Askew. FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: A PERSONALIZED APPROACH FOR TEACHERS (Under the direction of Dr. Travis Lewis). Department of Educational Leadership, May 2021.

Improvement of teacher quality has been identified as a strong factor for improving student learning and increasing student achievement. Developing teacher knowledge and pedagogy is traditionally cultivated in schools through professional development

Though professional learning is common in all schools as a core practice, the design, quality, and results of the learning are unequal and inconsistent. Common practices such as lectured presentations, “sit and get” sessions, and brief “one-size-fits-all” workshops continue to be the most prevalent professional development methods used in schools. Use of these methods facilitates neither a change in teacher behavior nor an improvement in student performance.

As a best practice, teachers require ongoing, personalized professional development that is designed and aligned with the tenets of effective andragogy to develop higher-order skills that are more likely to be transferred to classroom instruction. However, there exists a disconnect between professional development practices and the effective transfer of assumed learning. This transfer is essential in order to improve teaching practices. Only subsequent to this transference will changes in teaching and learning occur.

In this study, a qualitative research design was used to determine whether personalizing professional development has an impact on instructional practices and change in teacher perception of professional learning. Using a model for personalized learning, this study found that, when school leaders implement such a model, positive changes in teacher instructional practices and attitudes towards professional learning resulted.

FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING:
A PERSONALIZED APPROACH FOR TEACHERS

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by

Abbey L. Askew

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Abbey L. Askew

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A PERSONALIZED APPROACH FOR TEACHERS

by
Abbey L. Askew

APPROVED BY:

DIRECTOR OF DISSERTATION: _____
Travis Lewis, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Marjorie Ringler, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Heidi Puckett, EdD

COMMITTEE MEMBER: _____
Valerie Bridges, EdD

CHAIR OF THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP:

Marjorie Ringler, EdD

DEAN OF THE GRADUATE SCHOOL:

Paul Gemperline, EdD

DEDICATION

First and foremost, I thank God for giving me the resilience to complete this degree with fidelity. Every single day, your grace and mercy carried me through. I dedicate this work to the memory of the two people who made me who I am today, George Howard Askew and Brenda Faye Chamblee. You both have always wanted the best for all of us. I so wish you could be here to share this accomplishment with me. Mom and Dad, I hope I've made you proud.

With a full heart and many thanks, I share this accomplishment with the following special people in my life:

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To my Uncle Daddy Brown - I love you.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Improvement of teacher quality has been identified as a strong factor for improving student learning and increasing student achievement (Delisle, 2017; Hanushek, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004; Rivkin et al., 2005). Some researchers support the observation that an improvement in student achievement will not occur without changes in teacher knowledge or classroom practice (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Kennedy, 2016; Scher & O'Reilly, 2009). Developing teacher knowledge and pedagogy is traditionally cultivated in schools through professional development. Though professional development is common in all schools as a core practice, the design, quality, and results of the learning are unequal and inconsistent (Killion & Hirsh, 2011).

As numerous components play a role in increasing overall student achievement, high-quality professional development is oftentimes considered a major catalyst in producing change in teacher classroom practices, attitudes, and ultimately learning outcomes for students (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Guskey, 2002; Guskey & Sparks, 2000; Hirsh 2001). Teachers serve as an important connection between improved instructional capacity and higher academic achievement for students (Buell et al., 2004). Successful professional learning relies on the expected correlation of teacher learning and improvements in instructional practices (Desimone, 2009). The correlation between teacher learning and instructional improvement aligns with the desired end result of professional learning: to provide learning opportunities for educators that will have a sustained and positive influence on teaching practices (Loughran, 2014). Several scholars have theorized that professional learning may also have immediate outcomes such as improvement in pedagogical and content knowledge, as well as changes in perceptions, attitudes and beliefs. Intermediate outcomes include clearly identifiable changes in practice. Long term

effects may result in a positive change in student achievement and attitudes (Cohen & Hill, 2000; Desimone, 2009; Scher & O'Reilly, 2009).

Professional learning does not have to conform to the ill-reputed, traditional mold that has been created. There exists a variety of methods for providing professional learning which strongly supports personalization. Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) developed five models that could be considered as professional learning models. Each of the models speak to a differentiated style of learning that would provide teachers with choice and voice. Further exploration of those models is shared below:

- **Individually Guided:** Individually guided development provides the teacher with an opportunity to design their own learning activities. The driving force behind this model is the belief that self-direction empowers teachers hereby creating a strong sense of professionalism.
- **Observation and Assessment:** This model is based on the conclusion that through observation and assessment, instructional practices are improved. As an added level of learning, the observer also learns from viewing teaching and learning in action.
- **Involvement in an Improvement Process:** Direct involvement in a process that assesses and identifies specific problems while taking a solution-oriented approach may provide support in changing classroom practices. With this model, new knowledge may be attained through networking, observations, and experimentation.
- **Training:** The training model refers specifically to interactive learning that includes demonstrations of practice and implementation of new skills learned accompanied by feedback and coaching.

- Inquiry: The inquiry model involves teachers taking reflective action by developing questions about their own practice with the intention of finding answers to their questions. The process involves identifying a problem, collecting classroom and research data, analyzing the data, and implementing appropriate changes in practice. This model can be executed individually or in small groups.

Learning Forward's Standards for Professional Learning outlines seven characteristics of professional learning that nurture and support best practices in teaching, leadership, and improved student achievement (Mizell et al., 2011). The assertion of Learning Forward is that the incorporation of these standards in professional learning experiences increases educator effectiveness and student learning. The following characteristics serve as guidelines for designing effective, high-quality professional learning.

1. Learning Communities: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students occurs within learning communities committed to continuous improvement, collective responsibility, and goal alignment.
2. Leadership: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning.
3. Resources: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning.
4. Data: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students uses a variety of sources and types of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning.

5. Learning Designs: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students integrates theories, research, and models of human learning to achieve its intended outcomes.
6. Implementation: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students applies research on change and sustains support for implementation of professional learning for long-term change.
7. Outcomes: Professional learning that increases educator effectiveness and results for all students aligns its outcomes with educator performance and student curriculum standards. (Forward et al., 2011)

In lieu of the standards set by Learning Forward for effective professional learning, common practices of traditional professional development such as lecture oriented presentations, “sit and get” sessions, and brief “one-size-fits-all” workshops continue to be the most prevalent methods used in schools (Attard, 2017). Guskey’s (2003) research found that these traditional professional development methods facilitate neither a change in teacher behavior nor an improvement in student performance. Additional research by Wei et al. (2009) quantified Guskey’s findings by reporting that 90% of U.S. teachers have experienced professional development using the aforementioned methods, which had little to no impact on both student learning and improving teaching practices. By contrast, in a study by Yoon et al. (2007), well designed, high-quality professional learning was found to yield student achievement improvements of up to 21 percentile points.

Based on a review of the literature, the following characteristics are collectively found to be indicative of high-quality professional learning: alignment with the vision and goals of the state, school and district, evaluation systems, and assessment standards; relevance to core content

accompanied by modeling of strategies being learned; opportunities provided for active learning; collaborative learning; and embedded follow-up and feedback for learners (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Desimone et al., 2002; Wei et al., 2009). This dichotomy in findings is the impetus for the study which follows.

Background of the Problem

Wei et al. (2009) define the results of high-quality professional learning as improvements in a teacher's instructional practice through retention of knowledge and improvements in student learning. Typically, professional development convenings in schools are generalized in topics and constrained by both the availability of time for learning and resources needed to provide quality learning experiences. Traditional professional development designs attempt to meet the needs of the masses, in spite of the multiple and differentiated needs of teachers that exist across schools and grade levels. The popular one-time, "sit and get" professional development sessions have little effect on changing teacher practices and no effect on improving student achievement (Yoon et al., 2007). The improvements sought in teaching practices cannot be achieved through isolated trainings of short duration with no follow up or plan for sustainability.

The lack of human and fiscal resources needed to support teachers with effective professional growth has forced Howard County (a pseudonym) to become innovative both in identifying effective professional learning processes, protocols, and practices, and in reimagining the use of available fiscal and human resources. A primary imperative for Howard County, a rural school district in northeastern North Carolina, has become to provide professional learning that enables continuous growth around the knowledge and skills essential to not only achieving professional learning goals and developing agency around the personal learning needs of teachers, but to also increase student achievement. The recognition of the need for and benefits

of personalized professional learning resulted in the development of action item 2.4 of the district's strategic plan which is focused on personalized professional development. See Figure 1. The district has committed to developing and implementing personalized professional development pathways and job-embedded coaching for teachers, teacher leaders, administrators and teacher assistants

The secondary need in Howard County is addressing the differentiated needs of teachers. Much like student learners, adult learners have varied levels of proficiencies that must be addressed and supported on an individual basis. The composite of the teaching staff in Howard County is comprised of 389 teachers. Ninety nine teachers (25.5%) are categorized as beginning teachers. The North Carolina Department of Public Instruction defines beginning teachers as teachers who possess 0-3 years of experience. This population of teachers requires additional support transitioning into highly effective teachers due to their lack of experience. Two hundred ninety teachers in the district (74.4%) are classified as experienced, having more than three years of experience as a classroom teacher. Of the total teaching staff, 15.6% were ranked as "needs improvement" related to teacher effectiveness and only 20.6% were ranked as "highly effective". The remaining staff were labeled "effective" (see Figure 2) (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019a).

According to preliminary data collected through district classroom observations conducted by the district curriculum department from the beginning of the 2019-2020 school year, diverse teacher needs for support ranged from basic classroom management skills to delivery of sound instructional practices and a clear understanding of standards and content being taught. Due to the varied needs of teachers, a personalized approach to professional development may yield improved results for more teachers in Howard County, ultimately



PRIORITY TWO
TALENT RECRUITMENT + DEVELOPMENT

**Action 2.1-
IHE PARTNERSHIPS**

Establish and strengthen partnerships with local Institutions of Higher Education (IHE) to increase the number and diversity of teacher and school administrator interns and new hires. Place specific emphasis on recruiting males and educators of color.

**Action 2.4-
PERSONALIZED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Develop and implement personalized professional development pathways and job-embedded coaching for teachers, teacher leaders, administrators, and teacher assistants that address all key aspects of their roles.

**Action 2.2-
EDUCATOR RETENTION**

Retain educators by evaluating and redesigning our incentive structures and retention strategies. Develop and implement specific strategies for retaining educators of color.

**Action 2.3-
GROWING EDGECOMBE'S OWN**

Using the Scholar Teachers program as a model, partner with CTE and Edgecombe Community College to develop a robust Teacher Cadet program at all ECPS high schools. Develop a similar program to recruit promising ECPS educators to become administrators.

**Action 2.5-
OPPORTUNITY CULTURE TEACHER
LEADERSHIP**

Continue investing in Opportunity Culture roles - Multi-Classroom Leaders, Expanded Impact Teachers, and Reach Associates - to increase the number of students with access to an excellent teacher each year.

Figure 1. Howard County Strategic Plan – Priority 2: Action 2.4.

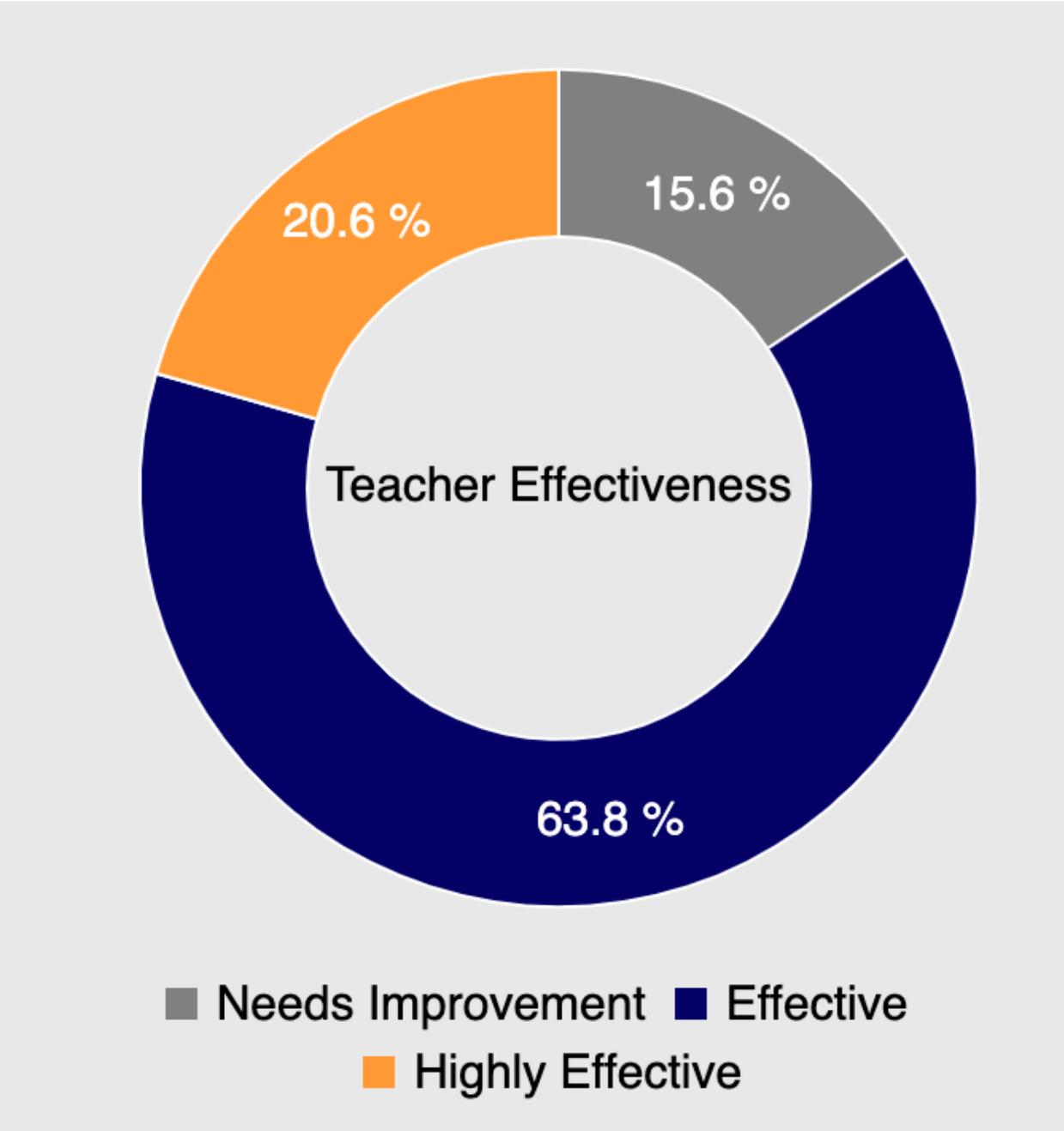


Figure 2. Teacher effectiveness rankings in Howard County (2018-2019 school year).

increasing the likelihood of the transference of new learning to classroom instructional practices. By addressing individual needs, as opposed to whole group professional development designed for the perceived needs of the masses, teachers are more likely to be invested in learning considerate of their voice, input, and learning styles, relevant to their current roles, and designed with their individual professional development goals in mind.

Also relevant to providing teachers with learning specific to individual goals and needs is the consideration of andragogical practices. Knowles (1980) initially defined andragogy as the “art and science” of helping adults learn (p. 4). Knowles’ (1980) theory establishes that there is a difference between the learning needs and modes of adult learners versus those of children and those unique needs must be considered as a part of the design of learning experiences for adults. Adebisi and Oyeleke (2018) affirm that learning for adults requires special teachers, methods and philosophy.

The absence of resources to fiscally support professional development efforts is not a barrier exclusive to Howard County and cannot continue to serve as a roadblock to improving teaching and learning. A new approach to professional learning will require teachers to develop the agency to also hold themselves accountable for their professional growth. In an effort to maximize effective professional development options that make the most of the minimal to no resources available in schools to improve teacher learning, consideration must be given to other available options. School districts, individual schools, and administrators must tap into the expertise available within their schools. The advantages of using professional learning communities, lesson studies, coaching, and observations as professional development options are explained in detail in the following paragraphs.

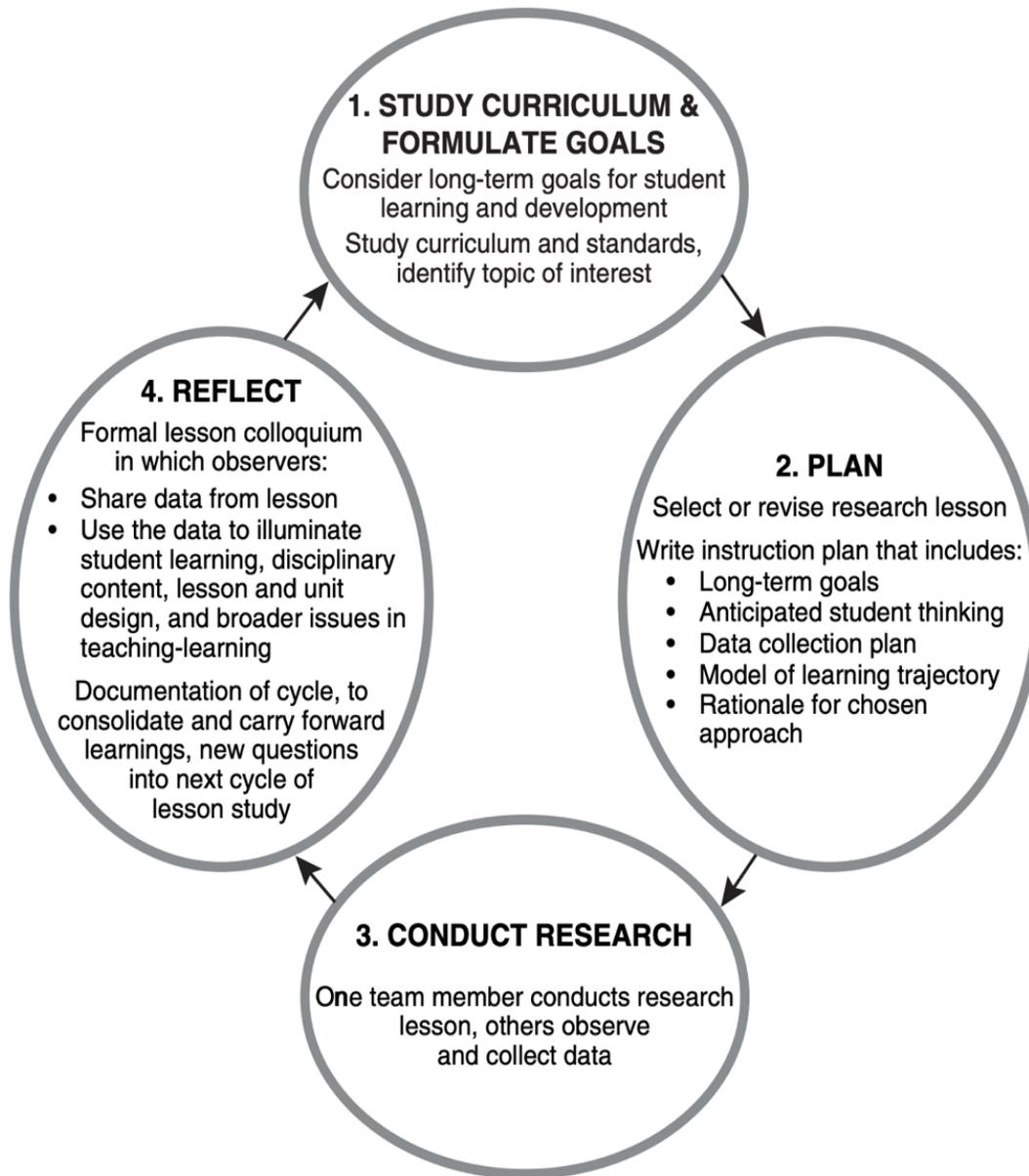
Professional Learning Communities

DuFour et al. (2006) define professional learning communities (PLCs) as educators working collaboratively through a process of inquiry and action research to increase student achievement. The focus of PLCs is to improve learning for students through continuous, job-embedded learning for teachers (DuFour et al., 2006). In order to sustain substantive school improvement efforts, educators must master functioning as professional learning communities (DuFour & Eaker, 2009). In consideration of characteristics that align with high-quality professional development, PLCs provide an inquiry-based approach; facilitate teachers working collaboratively and require data analysis to guide improvement of learning for students (Jones, 2012).

Lesson Studies

Lesson studies are a collaborative method for teachers to research their content and design learning experiences that will have a positive impact on student learning. The concept of lesson study has been accredited for Japan's elementary education improvement (Lewis et al., 2006). The cycle of lesson study consists of four stages (see Figure 3).

The cycle begins with establishing long-term curriculum goals for student learning. The second stage requires the selection, revision, and design of the lesson being researched. An instructional plan is then created, inclusive of collected data and an anticipated student learning trajectory. During the third phase, research relevant to the planned lesson is conducted and additional data collected. The fourth and final stage consists of a reflective process inclusive of data sharing, lesson design, and teaching-learning challenges as an integral part of repeating the cycle towards continuous improvement of the lesson.



Note. (Lewis et al., 2006).

Figure 3. Lesson Study Cycle.

Coaching

Knight (2007) defines coaching as the process where individuals who are well versed in instructional content, work collaboratively with teachers to incorporate research-based practices in their teaching. Through communication, relationship building, and teacher reflection, coaches provide instructional support to address specific teacher deficiencies or needs (Knight, 2007).

Knight (2011) frames successful coaching relationships around seven essential principles. In summary, those principles establish that the coaching relationship is one of equality where each person's input is valued, choices and decisions are made collaboratively, both parties engage in mutual dialogue during the learning process, and reciprocity of learning is a norm. Teacher coaching is considered an essential component of improving classroom instruction and serves as a strong support for transferring knowledge into effective and consistent classroom practices (Kraft et al., 2018).

Observations

Observations are intentional examinations of teaching and learning using a systematic process of collecting and analyzing data (Hopkins, 2003). Classroom observations serve as a vital link between classroom research and the identification of areas in need of professional growth and instructional support (Hopkins, 2003). Observations also provide an opportunity for teachers to receive immediate feedback for areas of improvement.

Playing a vital role in professional growth, principals serve in the capacity of instructional leaders, maintain an intentional instructional focus and set the expectation of continuous learning as a norm for the school (Fullan, 2014). Building level administrators can help harness existing leadership and talent by identifying teachers with leadership potential and setting an example as the "learning leader" for the school (Fullan, 2014). Creating additional

human resources within the school can help strengthen support for professional development. The National Standards for Professional Development includes leadership as one of the seven standards requiring “skillful leaders who develop capacity, advocate, and create support systems for professional learning (Forward et al., 2011).

In previous years, Howard County has relied heavily on two major means for providing and delivering learning opportunities for teachers: Learning Day (a pseudonym), which is a single day event held at the beginning of the school year for the entire staff, designated for professional development in a conference style format. Other times, district professional development is often centered around the adoption of a new program or curriculum, which is provided by vendors of purchased programs.

Barriers to providing professional development have included, but are not limited to, lack of time on behalf of the district and teachers, absence of fiscal and physical resources, and the need for additional human capacity. The mindset around professional development does not reflect a sense of self-directed learning from teachers but that the provision of continuous learning is the responsibility of the school district, as learning opportunities are typically required and provided by the school district.

Problem Statement

As there is evidence of an established connection between professional development and student achievement, “professional development cannot be part of the solution until it is no longer part of the problem” (Mizzell, 2010, p. 2). Systemic challenges related to providing professional development for teachers include, but are not limited to, lack of available fiscal resources for professional development related expenses and adequate time during the instructional day and school calendar for participation in professional development. Recognizing

the need to invest in the growth and development of teachers in a manner that will yield high quality results, Howard County committed to making personalized professional learning a priority for not just teachers, but all staff as a part of their five year district strategic plan.

The New Teacher Project (TNTP), a non-profit organization dedicated to improving education for public school students, concluded in their 2015 study of the 50 largest school districts in the United States that on average, school districts spend approximately \$18,000.00 per teacher each year on professional development. According to the February 2018 North Carolina Budget Highlight Report for the fiscal year 2016-2017, the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction (2018a) spent \$13,973,504.00 on workshops for educators. The February 2019 North Carolina Public School Budget Highlight report reflected a decrease in funding for workshops to \$9,947,924.00 from the aforementioned \$13,973,504.00 (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019b). Fiscal investments for professional learning that does not yield changes in teaching practice is a waste of monetary resources. With annual decreases in funding for professional development from the state level trickling down to school districts, the practice of investing in ineffective, traditional professional development practices will require reform.

Professional development activities such as attending national and local conferences, vendor sponsored workshops, or in-district learning opportunities that occur during the school day require district funding in order to provide substitute teachers, travel, hotel accommodations, meals, conference registration costs, or vendor fees, if the learning is related to a new program or curriculum. According to Foster (2004), professional development activities that accompany scripted curriculum materials often produce short term gains related to improvement in pedagogical practices. In anticipation of future reductions in funding for professional learning,

schools must take advantage of alternative professional learning options such as those previously discussed in Chapter 1. Making the transition from professional development to professional learning not only provides a high-quality learning experience but effectively uses those resources readily available which may also provide some fiscal relief.

According to The New Teacher Project [TNTP] (2015), teachers nationwide invest approximately 150 hours per year, or 10% of the traditional school year, engaging in professional development activities. According to district professional development logs, Howard County teachers spend approximately 20 hours or 1.33% of the traditional school year engaging in district and school lead professional development. At an average of 20 hours per year, the district is failing teachers in Howard County by providing too little time for engagement in the learning process and adequate processing of learning received. To not use best practices when teaching teachers but hold them accountable for using best practices in their classrooms seems to be the highest form of hypocrisy. In the same way educators are taught to acknowledge and individually address learning differences with our students, personalized methods of learning should be used with educators.

Purpose of the Study

This study focused on the impact of personalized professional learning in supporting teachers in actualizing their professional learning goals and assessing their perceptions of personalized professional learning. Personalized professional learning encompasses allowing teachers to have voice and choice in their goals and learning using learning methods reflective of their learning styles (Rodman, 2019). An improvement in teaching practices requires changes facilitated by teachers being able to trust the results of effectively designed professional learning opportunities.

The majority of professional development activities in Howard County consisted of whole-group instructional sessions with a focus on a single instructional need intended to inform the masses. Studies have found that professional development conducted in whole groups, absent of follow up support in the form coaching or professional learning communities, produced no change in teacher instructional practice and no increase in effective instructional practices (Clark et al., 2018; Yoon et al., 2007). This practice is most commonly an effort to quickly accommodate the perceived needs of the masses. According to the prerequisites to effective professional learning established by Learning Forward (Forward et al., 2011), professional learning has a greater impact on improving teaching practices when personalized to the needs of the learner. For the context of this study, personalized learning serves as a viable option for districts with minimal resources.

The findings of this study served as an asset to Howard County's efforts to design and improve the quality of professional learning. By using observational data, analyzing teacher learning preferences, and implementing andragogical best practices, the scholarly practitioner, collaboratively with the district instructional technology facilitators, designed personalized professional development experiences that resulted in positive changes in instructional practices, teacher content knowledge, and classroom culture. Participant perceptions of personalized professional learning were also explored.

Study Questions

The following questions guided this study:

1. How does personalized professional learning impact teaching practices in comparison to traditional professional development?

2. How did teachers perceive personalized professional learning as a result of participating in personalized professional learning?

During the course of this research, the scholarly practitioner held an administrative role at the district level related to curriculum and instruction. The scholarly practitioner facilitated the design of a high-quality professional development experience for teachers by collaboratively creating a professional learning opportunity for teachers using Rodman's Roadmap to Personalized Professional Learning (RPPL). Following Rodman's model ensured the in service provided contained research based best practices characteristic of high-quality professional development. Integrating teacher learning preferences and individual professional growth needs based on data collected about each learner, the personalized learning experiences were facilitated and monitored in an effort to identify a relational change in teaching practices.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework applied to this study was based on the Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning (RPPL) developed by Rodman (2019) (see Figure 4). The RPPL supports a process that requires careful consideration of the following variables when planning and implementing personalized professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers:

1. Voice. Establish a vision for growth that engages teachers and considers their voice in defining areas of improvement and how learning occurs.
2. Co-Creation. Explore the most effective methods for participation in professional learning. Provide a clear understanding of how progress will be measured and collaboratively create an action plan to achieve growth.

3. Social Construction. Maximize the availability of resources, both physical and human, by exploring options for the inclusion of others in designing the learning process.
4. Self-Discovery. Support teachers in developing the autonomy to extend their own learning.

Rodman's Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning served as a guide for ensuring that teachers not only received high-quality professional learning but also had access to personalized learning experiences designed to meet their individual needs and learning preferences. In addition, andragogical practices for adult learning were implemented in order to achieve maximum results from the professional learning provided.

Definition of Key Terms

The following definitions address the way these key terms will be applied for the purpose of this study:

Professional learning – Professional learning refers to various educational experiences related to an individual's work designed to improve practice and outcomes (Mizzell, 2010).

Professional development – Generally, professional development involves a comprehensive, structured and intensive approach to improving teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Although professional development may result in an improvement of learning, the learning that occurs is usually not sufficient enough to make a positive impact (Easton, 2008).

For the purpose of this research, the scholarly practitioner will use the professional learning and professional development in the context defined by Lex McDonald (2014). McDonald (2014) clarifies the difference between professional development and professional

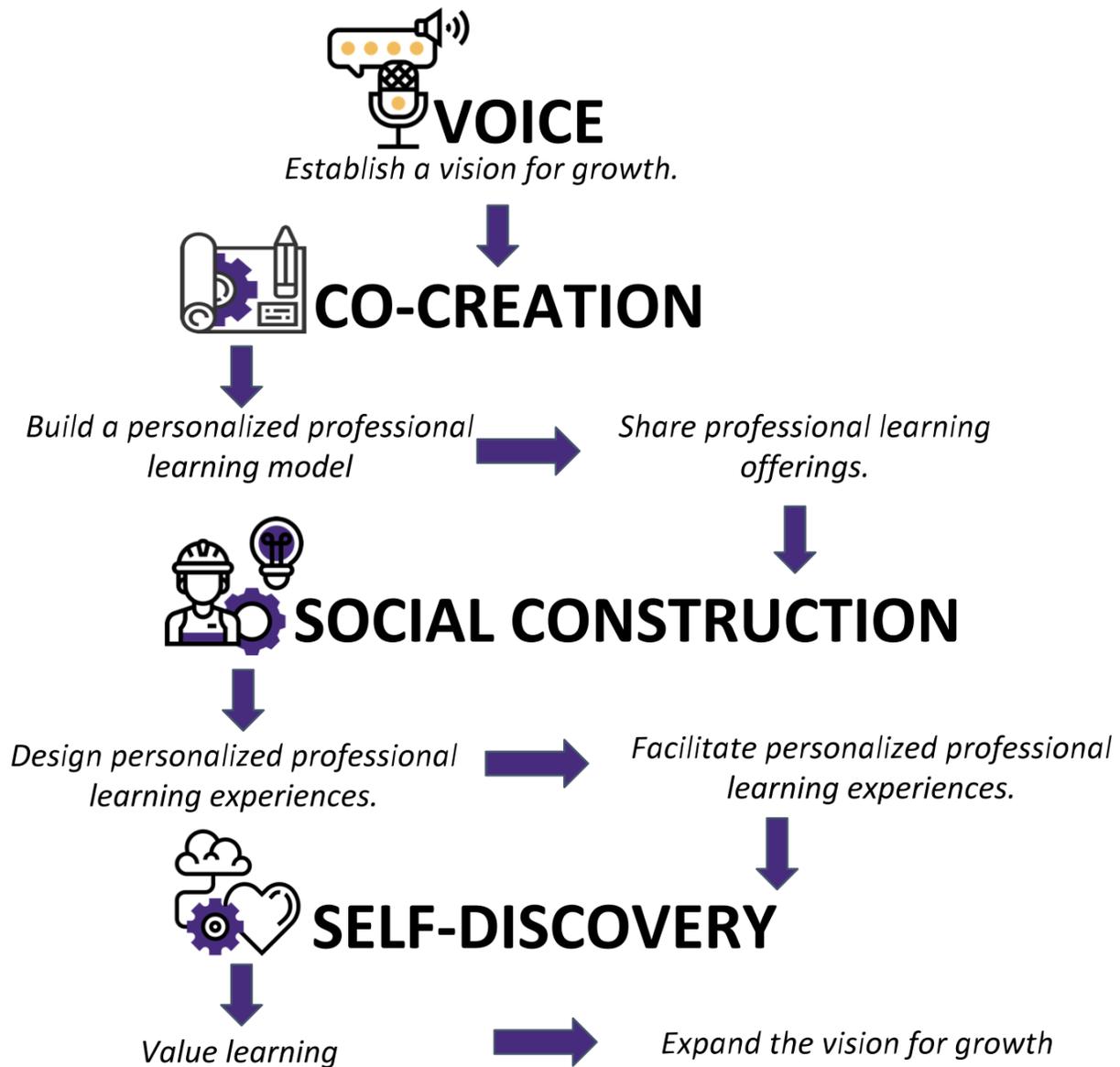


Figure 4. Rodman's (2019) Roadmap for personalized professional learning.

learning as professional development being a passive process of distributing and receiving content versus professional learning being a collaborative constructivist approach to improving teaching practices.

Assumptions

The assumptions of this study are as follows:

- Teachers view themselves as lifelong learners and are willing to invest time and resources in perfecting their craft.
- Teachers are willing to participate in professional learning experiences that have been designed with fidelity.
- Teachers trust that professional learning experiences are research based and relevant to current classroom practices and content.
- Principals will be supportive and transparent in identifying teacher deficits and areas in which teachers need support.
- Teachers always implement new learning from professional development activities to the best of their abilities.
- Professional development being offered is always high-quality and addresses the needs of the school district and schools, as well as the individual needs of teachers.
- Teachers will respond openly and honestly to all survey and interview questions that are genuinely oriented to providing them with better opportunities to refine their teaching practice.

Scope and Delimitations

This study explored the impact of personalized professional learning on teaching practices for teachers in a rural public school in northeastern North Carolina in actualizing their

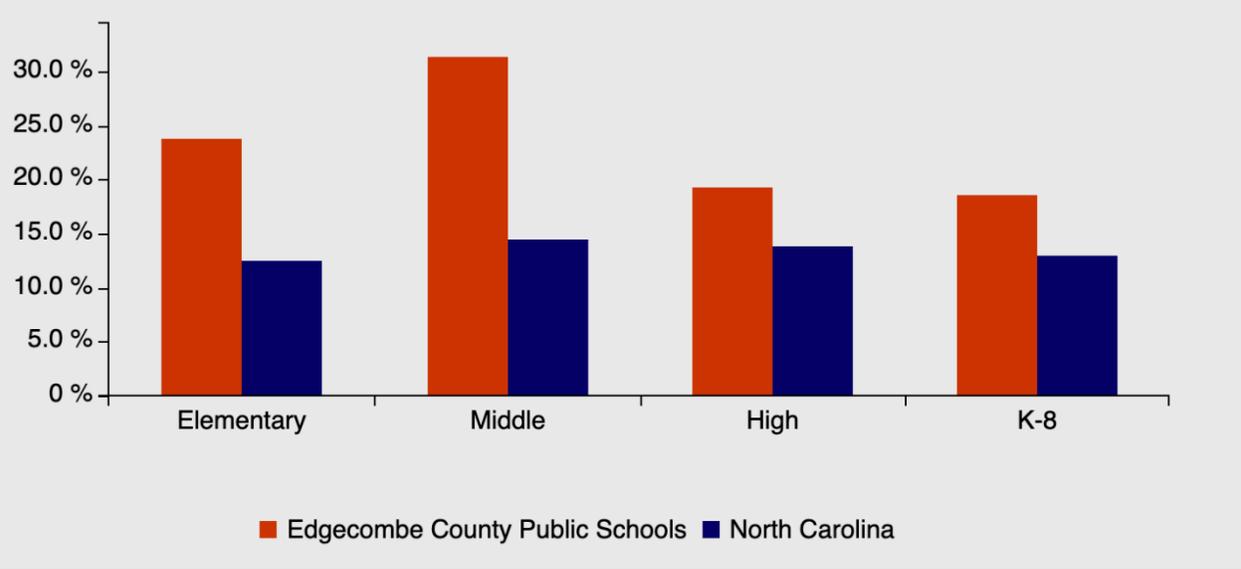
professional learning goals while assessing their perception of personalized learning. An action research approach was implemented with middle and high school teachers in Howard County. Howard County currently has fourteen schools inclusive of five elementary schools, three middle schools, four high schools, one K-8 school and one Early College high school. Although the district has been on an upward trajectory since 2015, performance grades for schools in Howard County range from C – F as designated by the Excellent Public Schools Act. In 2013, the Excellent Public Schools Act was implemented to annually assign school performance grades based on the following formula:

- 80% of the weight of the grade is based on test results (end-of-grade, end-of-course, graduation rate, college/workplace readiness measures)
- 20% of the weight of the grade is based on school growth as measured by SAS EVAAS (Education Value-Added Assessment System) which measures student growth based on multiple years of assessment data.
- Final scores are set on a 15 point scale ranging from A-F.
A = 85–100 B = 70–84 C = 55–69 D = 40–54 F = 39 or Less

Limitations

For the purposes of this study, the following potential limitations were identified:

1. There currently exists no reliable method for measuring the direct impact of professional learning on student achievement due to several other factors that could contribute to the success and/or decline of student achievement.
2. Teachers who begin the study may not complete the study as teacher turnover is an issue in Howard County. See Figure 5.



Note. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018a).

Figure 5. Howard County Schools teacher turnover rate for one year.

3. Teachers may not be completely transparent when answering surveys related to the perception of their knowledge and self-assessment of their teaching practices.
4. Teachers may be uncomfortable being completely honest during portions of the study due to the scholarly practitioner conducting this study holding an administrative role in the district.
5. There may be difficulty designing a professional development model specific enough to meet the individual needs of every teacher.

Significance of the Study

Wei et al. (2009) define the results of high-quality professional learning as being improvements in a teacher's instructional practice through retention of knowledge and an improvement in student learning. Typically, professional development sessions in schools are generalized in topic and designed around available time and resources in an attempt to meet the needs of the masses, although multiple and differentiated needs exist across schools and grade levels. The popular one time "sit and get" professional development sessions have little effect on changing teacher practices and no effect on improving student achievement (Yoon et al., 2007). Poorly designed professional learning may cause a resistance to learning new ideas, a loss of enthusiasm around new learning, and have a negative impact on teaching (Knight, 2007).

In a study conducted by Joyce and Showers (2002), mastery of a new skill by a teacher was found to take an average of 20 practices, with more practice needed based on the difficulty of the skill. Teacher learning experiences that have demonstrated a positive change in teaching practices required at least a minimum of 15 contact hours (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009; Yoon et al., 2007).

This study also examined changes, or the lack thereof, in teacher perception of personalized professional learning as a result of implementing the RPPL model, which was used to design and provide individualized professional development experiences for teachers in rural northeastern North Carolina. By collaboratively designing learning experiences with teachers, inclusive of their preferences and needs, learning resulted in the acquisition of learning and skills which increased the likelihood of new knowledge being used to improve classroom teaching practices.

The lack of human and fiscal resources needed to support teachers with effective professional growth has forced Howard County to become innovative both in identifying effective professional learning processes, protocols, and practices and the redesign and reallocation of available resources. The necessity has become to provide professional learning that results in the acquisition and retention of higher order, complex learning needed as a catalyst for change in instructional practices. Though the lack of adequate resources is a problem experienced by many school districts, it cannot impede progress around the urgency of improving teaching and learning. A new approach to professional learning will require teachers to be held accountable for their learning in addition to tapping into the existing expertise or developing talent readily available in their districts and schools.

This study was significant because it provided clarity around the impact of personalized professional development for Howard County teachers using Rodman's Roadmap for Personalized Learning. This process as outlined by Rodman (2019) includes analyzing data, setting goals as a result of the data analysis, using evidence-based professional development practices, coaching support and assessment of learning. The desired end result was to validate the process of using the RPPL as a process for providing quality, research-based, and personalized

professional development experiences customized to the teacher's learning style and individual goals. Personalized professional learning opportunities should move teachers toward their professional learning goals and yield improvements in teaching practices.

Summary

This study examined processes for establishing effective personalized professional learning practices that ultimately resulted in positive impacts on instructional practices. The study also explored teacher perceptions about personalized professional learning as a result of their experiences. Professional learning “should be just as dynamic as the education its participants are expected to provide” (Matherson & Windle, 2017, p. 32). The following chapter provides a review of relevant literature to this study.

CHAPTER 2: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The following review of literature included a thorough examination of relevant research on professional learning, impacts on student achievement, and best practices in professional learning. The existent literature will be beneficial in determining best practices and processes for creating high-quality, personalized professional learning that results in positive changes in instructional practices and acquisition of teacher content knowledge. First, Rodman's Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning will be explored in greater depth as the conceptual framework to guide this study.

Conceptual Framework

Rodman's conceptual framework served as an outline for designing and delivering high-quality professional learning for teachers. The Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning (RPPL) guided the planning, facilitation, and evaluation of a personalized professional development program. The tenets of this conceptual framework aligned with both the National Standards for Professional Learning and aspects of Knowles' theory of andragogy. Each of the four components of the RPPL, alignment to effective standards for professional development, and theories of andragogy are explained in the paragraphs below.

As teacher voice plays a significant role in designing effective professional development, Part 1 of the RPPL explored how to establish a vision for teacher growth that includes engaging the learner in "the what" and "the how" of their learning. According to Knowles (1989), adults should be active participants in the planning and evaluation of their learning experiences. This step also involved determining teacher needs through the use of data such as observations and data review. The National Standards for Professional Development state that effective professional

development “uses a variety of sources and type of student, educator, and system data to plan, assess, and evaluate professional learning” (Forward et al., 2011, p. 20).

Ultimately, there must be also be an alignment of district, school, and teacher goals in order to achieve best results (Rodman, 2019). A key component of high-quality professional development encompasses new learning for improvement being a part of school and district reform and improvement efforts and goals (Wei et al., 2010). Building a culture of learning involves reviewing district and school goals and needs to better align how teacher learning will support overall growth, as well as individual growth.

Providing teachers the opportunity for buy-in around what and how they learn contributes directly to an increased commitment to the success of the professional learning. A key component of professional learning is that teachers have ownership and understanding of the learning (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011). According to Knowles’ et al. (2005) four principles of adult learning, adults know what they need to learn and as such, should have an active voice in their both the planning and evaluation of their learning.

Part 2 of the RPPL explored effective methods for development and delivery of professional learning. The focus of professional learning should be shifted from format to effective design and implementation (Rodman, 2019). During this step, available fiscal and human resources should be evaluated in order to maximize use. Consideration should be given to personalizing means and modes of professional development best suited for adult learners based on the learning profile of each teacher. The National Standards for Professional Development “requires prioritizing, monitoring, and coordinating resources for educator learning” in order to facilitate an increase in teacher effectiveness as a result of professional development (Forward et al., 2011).

Part 3 of the RPPL focused on facilitating professional learning offerings collaboratively with teachers and designing resources to provide support with continued professional growth. The inclusion of teachers in planning and implementing professional development for their professional learning fosters teacher involvement beyond mere compliance (Baird & Clark, 2018) and serves as an integral part of the personalization process. Knowles et al.'s (2005) characteristics of adult learning includes the observation that adults better prepare for learning when it is directly related to their roles or a developmental task.

Part 4 of the RPPL examined plans for developing a sense of autonomy to encourage teachers to be continued learners. The goal during this step is to transition teachers from professional development to professional learning. McDonald (2014) clarifies the difference between professional development and professional learning as professional development being a passive process of distributing and receiving content versus professional learning being a collaborative constructivist approach to improving teaching practices. Establishing self-directedness or learner agency is instrumental to the learning process and important for creating sustainability for a continued system of learning (Calvert, 2016).

Rodman's Roadmap for Professional Learning outlines a system of detailed processes for developing personalized professional learning experiences for teachers that supports not only the transference of learning but relevance and sustainability of the learning acquired. The RPPL served as a model for the beginning stages of transformation from traditional professional development to personalized professional learning experiences for teachers in Howard County.

Professional Development

Professional development serves as a process by which teachers can facilitate consistent learning oriented to the continuous improvement of their teaching practices (Guskey, 2002).

Education improvement is contingent upon teachers possessing content knowledge and pedagogy most effective for the subject being taught (Blank & de las Alas, 2009). In order for sustainable educational change to occur, there must be a focus on changing knowledge and skills of all involved (Coburn, 2003). Professional development is the most commonly used method for facilitating a change in learning for teachers.

The 2015 New Teacher Project study of 10,000 teachers indicated that large school districts in the United States spent over \$18,000 per teacher annually on professional learning, with teachers investing an average of 150 seat-hours per year participating in professional learning. Costs for high-quality professional development have a tendency to exceed amounts allocated on a per teacher basis (Garet et al., 2001). The aforementioned study by TNTP (2015) also found that only 40% of teachers felt the professional development they received was a valuable use of their time. The end goal of professional learning is for new and improved learning to occur as a result of the learning experiences facilitated by and for teachers (Bates & Morgan, 2018).

Effective professional learning is foundational in enabling teachers to refine the pedagogical skills required to improve student outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). Guskey's (2002) Model of Teacher Change (see Figure 6) established a direct connection between professional learning, change in classroom practices, change in student learning outcomes, and change in teacher belief and attitudes. Guskey's model was based on the premise that teachers change their beliefs and attitudes about teaching and learning after they have evidence of improvement in student learning. Teachers must be able to make a clear connection between changes in their teaching practices and the improvement in student learning. According to Guskey (2002), the shift in belief and attitudes occurs when teachers identify the improvement

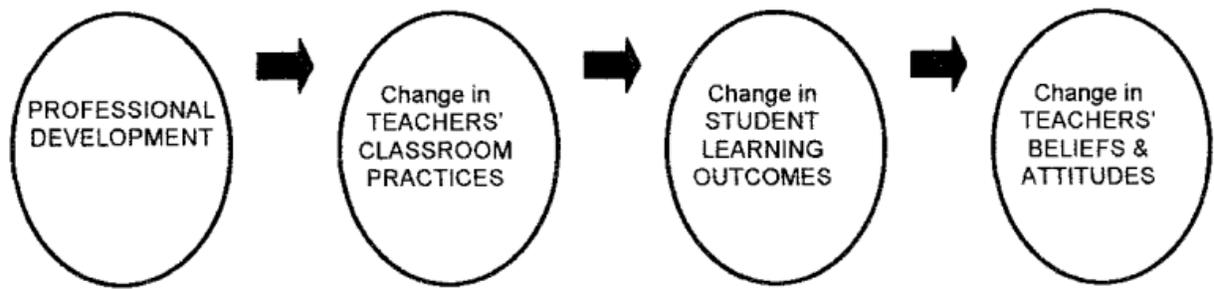


Figure 6. Guskey's Model of teacher change.

in student learning as a result of the professional learning that occurred as a result of successful implementation.

Bayar (2014) found that teaching quality has a direct effect on student learning, making professional learning crucial in producing globally competitive students. Engaging in professional learning provides teachers an opportunity to change what is not being done well and share with others those practices that are successful when implemented with fidelity (Patton et al., 2015). If teacher learning opportunities are well-designed, changes in classroom practices happen and enhanced capacity for learning and professional growth can occur, contributing to improvements in student learning (Duschl et al., 2007).

In an effort to minimize the disparities and inequities in the influence teachers have on student achievement, while increasing their own ability to reduce achievement gaps and grow students instructionally, there must be a redesign of the one method used to prepare, develop, and grow teachers: professional development (Archibald et al., 2011). Redesign of professional development should incorporate elements of professional learning proven to be most effective in growing both teachers and students. Those elements are inclusive of professional learning that is sustained over time, content focused, aligned to state standards, improves and increases teacher subject content knowledge, develops effective instructional strategies, and is evaluated on a regular basis (Yoon et al., 2007). An additional component, personalization, contributes to professional learning by providing teachers agency as a key component of the adult learning process (Calvert, 2016). Teachers are more likely to be invested in learning where they can identify personal value.

Effective Components of Professional Learning

Improvement of professional learning practices cannot be addressed without first aligning existing practices with research based best practices for professional learning. Various professional development models share the following characteristics as the guidelines for effective professional learning: continuous and ongoing, incorporates active learning, content focused, collaborative, supported by coaching, and personalized by teacher needs and interests in order to have a more significant opportunity to improve teacher learning and student achievement (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Patton et al., 2013; Patton et al., 2015; Wei et al., 2009). Professional learning should have the end goal of developing knowledge and skills in teachers to help students learn and achieve at maximum capacity (Mindich & Liberman, 2012). As the field of education remains in a constant state of change, educators “must keep abreast of this emerging knowledge base and be prepared to use it to continually refine their skills” (Guskey, 2000, p. 16).

Recognizing the deficiencies in high quality professional learning opportunities for teachers, The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 mandated that teachers be provided high quality professional development determined as such by the following criteria: sustained and content focused, aligned to state standards, improves and increases teacher subject content knowledge, develops effective instructional strategies, and is evaluated on a regular basis (Yoon et al., 2007). Title II funding allocates in excess of three billion dollars to financially support professional learning (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009). With significant financial resources, time, and human capacity being invested in improving teaching practices, it is imperative to identify and implement a model for professional learning that provides growth and change in instructional practices.

Continuous and Ongoing

Ironically, teachers are trained in a manner opposite to their teaching expectations. Though teachers are expected to use engaging, thought provoking, interactive teaching styles with students as best practices for facilitating learning, typical professional development activities are often a counterintuitive experience. In spite of existing and developing research related to effective professional development practices, schools historically participate in one-size-fits-all, “sit and get” professional development opportunities of minimal duration (Guskey, 2003). Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) found that 90% of teachers participate in the common “sit and get” method of professional development found to have little to no impact on improving teaching practices or student learning. In a national study, Wei et al. (2009) found that teachers had fewer opportunities to participate in professional development with a duration of more than eight hours than available four years prior.

Professional learning is commonly delivered in workshop formats that have demonstrated minimal results related to changing teacher behaviors to improve learning (Yoon et al., 2007). These sessions are usually of a single offering with no additional follow up, coaching, or continued development to accompany the new learning (DiPaola & Hoy, 2014). Though some value exists in single professional learning sessions, shorter periods of time prove to be detrimental in supporting improvement of teaching practices (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

The process of acquiring and implementing knowledge in a manner that influences change requires an extended period of time versus a one session approach to professional development. To accommodate this process, professional development facilitation must be of a significant duration to give teachers time to acquire and implement new strategies, problem solve

and assess results (Gulamhussein, 2013). Providing teachers sufficient time to learn, implement, and reflect upon newly learned strategies strongly supports demonstrated improvement in teaching and learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Vetter, 2012). The lack of continuity in learning may cause professional learning opportunities to be disconnected and unauthentic (Cohen & Ball, 1999).

Yoon et al. (2007) conducted research that revealed a duration effect between professional development and student learning. Six of the studies Yoon et al. conducted indicated that professional development models that provided between 30 and 100 hours of quality learning were more likely to have an impact on the student achievement of the participants than models designed to provide fewer hours. Out of three studies conducted with professional development spanning from five to 14 hours, no significant effect on student learning was noted.

A 2002 study by Joyce and Showers revealed that it takes an average of 20 separate instances of practice in order for a teacher to successfully master new learning with the number being higher if the skill is difficult or complex. The amount of time required for skill mastery is less likely to be obtained in the traditional single session workshop style trainings often present in schools today. Data from nine different studies focused on professional learning for teachers revealed that professional learning experiences of significant durations resulted in more positive changes in teaching and in student achievement (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

In addition to time needed for delivery of the learning component of professional development, time is required to evaluate participant feedback, assess and identify needed supports and changes related to the new learning, evaluate how the new learning is being used, and monitor student learning outcomes (Guskey, 2001). Evaluation data should serve as part of

the adjustment process towards providing and personalizing continued learning experiences for teachers.

Active Learning

Active learning is defined as opportunities for teachers to be engaged in the analysis of learning and teaching (Garet et al., 2001). Teachers experience significant changes in instructional practice when professional learning involves active participation and provides an opportunity for teachers to practice new learning in their classrooms (Desimone et al., 2002; Garet et al., 2001). Through active learning, teachers are afforded the opportunity to immerse themselves in learning similar to what they should be designing for students, as well as a personal investment in identifying their professional growth needs (Patton et al., 2013). Through active learning, teachers have an opportunity to engage in discussions, model, plan, and practice their new learning to allow teachers to make a direction connection between the learning and its relevance to teaching practices.

Garet et al. (2001) established four dimensions of active learning: observations, planning, analyzing student work, and leadership. Active learning as a component of professional development may be expanded to include peer observations, analysis of student work, designing and modeling lessons, and coaching. These components represent methods for active learning integration (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Desimone, 2009). The inclusion of active learning in professional development transfers new learning to being embedded in teaching practices relevant to current teaching responsibilities (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017).

Content Focused

Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009) found that effective professional development has a focus on instructional strategies that are connected to specific curriculum content.

Developing teacher content knowledge and strengthening content-specific pedagogy results in changes in teaching practices (Desimone, 2009). A national study performed in 2001 was the first large-scale research to examine professional development characteristics that affected teaching practices (Garet et al., 2001). The findings indicated that change centered around a specific content area had a strong impact on visible improvement of teaching skills (Garet et al., 2001). Similarly, other studies revealed that teachers do not find professional development around generic teaching techniques, presented in the absence of relevant content matter, to be effective (Garet et al., 1999).

The focus on content may include both subject matter knowledge as well as pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986). In studies conducted by Yoon et al. (2007) on the effects of professional learning on student achievement in math, reading, and science, the research indicated that content specific learning had a moderate effect on student outcomes. Additional outcomes that resulted included: enhanced teacher knowledge, changes in teacher practices, and improvements in student learning (Yoon et al., 2007).

Collaborative

Effective professional learning also affords teachers the opportunity to work together with the common goal of improving instructional practices (Jaquith et al., 2010). Teachers who work collaboratively are more inclined to have additional time to discuss problems and solutions, share resources and strategies, and can better assess results, especially if they share the same students (Garet et al., 2001). Collaboration also provides an opportunity for teachers to collectively share similar and different experiences, pedagogies, and resources (Goddard et al., 2015; Ronfeldt et al., 2015). Desimone et al. (2002) found a positive correlation between

changes in teacher classroom practices and professional development activities that engaged teachers collectively.

Collaboration in professional development can be approached from two aspects. First, that teachers work in tandem with those responsible for creating professional development in order to create individual learning experiences for teachers (Patton et al., 2013). Effective professional learning is more about collaboration around shared knowledge and less about the knowledge being controlled by one person or by teachers figuring it out alone (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

The second aspect of collaboration in professional learning focuses on professional learning needing to include a social aspect in order for participants to form a collegiality that will inspire participants to work towards a common goal (Hord & Tobia, 2012).

High-quality PD creates space for teachers to share ideas and collaborate in their learning, often in job-embedded contexts. By working collaboratively, teachers can create communities that positively change the culture and instruction of their entire grade level, department, school and/or district (Darling Hammond et al., 2017, p. 1).

Creating professional development, inclusive of a collaborative element, supports the coaching and feedback process, as working together creates community and accountability for the learners involved (Stewart, 2014).

Coaching, Evaluation, and Feedback

Professional learning generally requires that teachers acquire new knowledge, have the opportunity to implement this knowledge and be supported through the process of acclimating to the new learning (Vetter, 2012). Specifically, during the implementation phase, support must be present to help teachers navigate the challenges associated with change in classroom and

instructional practices (Gulamhussein, 2013). Coaching provides a non-evaluative, positive relationship with teachers to encourage working together to improve both instruction and student achievement (Knight, 2006). Professional development accompanied with coaching allows the opportunity for sharing of evidence-based best practices with a focus on the teacher's individual needs (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 2011).

Joyce and Showers (2002) reported that when the coaching component is combined with demonstration, practice, and feedback, the transfer of new skills increased to 90% versus the 5% transfer that happens with training as a stand-alone method of professional learning. In a 2003 study conducted by Truesdale, findings revealed that teachers who were coached through the implementation of new learning were able to successfully transfer their new knowledge to instructional practices in comparison to teachers who solely attended a "workshop". Those who only attended the workshop did not find an interest or justification to attempt to try implementing their new learning in their classrooms. Coaching in this aspect can also serve as a personalized form of professional development when paired with effective coaching methods.

Professional Development and Student Achievement

Challenging to the work of finding an effective model for professional learning is the difficulty in establishing a solid positive correlation between professional development and student achievement (Kerka, 2003). Evidence from existing professional learning models rooted in diverse contexts that supports a positive correlation between improvement in teaching practices and student learning is limited (Guskey, 2014). As the effects of professional development are rarely evaluated, little is known about the impact of teacher learning on student achievement (Allen & Nimon, 2007; Guskey, 2002). A study by TNTP (2015) revealed that teachers felt professional learning did not have a positive impact towards improving their

teaching or student achievement and improvements in teacher performance could not be definitively linked to structured professional learning.

Harris and Sass (2009) found that no research exists that establishes a coherent link between teacher learning and student achievement. In addition, there is also an absence of research that clearly distinguishes which models of professional development have proven to be most effective with influencing and improving instructional practices and student achievement (Martin et al., 2018).

Many school districts invest extensive time and money in providing and implementing professional development without assessing the effects of the learning on student achievement (Desimone et al., 2002). Missed research opportunities exist that could substantiate or refute the claims that professional development has a positive correlation to student achievement. Although there exists a logical connection between professional development and improvement in student achievement, substantiating that connection proves to be difficult in the absence of supporting data (Borko, 2004). In instances where teaching practices demonstrated improvement, concrete evidence of the conditions that directly impacted improvement were difficult to verify (Hirsh, 2001).

In contrast to research that does not substantiate positive effects of professional development on student achievement and the absence of research around the same, Rhoton and Stiles (2002) found that “teacher expertise can account for about 40% of the variance in students’ learning in reading and mathematics achievement-more than any other single factor, including student background...” (p. 1). Effectively developing a teacher’s expertise may in turn influence student learning. As proposed by Joyce and Showers (2002), if a community of teachers engage

in relevant professional learning for an extended duration of time, accompanied by consistent implementation, it is highly likely that student achievement will experience a positive increase

According to Yoon et al. (2007), professional learning influences student achievement through three steps: enhancing teacher knowledge and skills which, when done successfully, improves instruction, providing knowledge and skills to improve teaching practices, and using those improved teaching practices to increase student achievement. Any lapse in this process can negatively impact student achievement, especially a teacher's failure to apply new learning to classroom practices.

Personalized Professional Learning

The New Teacher Project's Mirage report (2015) could not definitively trace improvement in teacher practices to a specific professional development but instead found identified improvement when a "highly individualized process" was used to address areas of learning for teachers. By analyzing specific teacher needs, coupled with the use of andragogy which focuses on the needs of adult learners, teachers are able to receive support for specific areas of need in lieu of attempts to educate the masses through whole group instruction. In order to maximize the impact, professional development must be designed, facilitated, and evaluated with the needs of the individual teacher as the driving force (Guskey & Huberman, 1995).

The diverse needs of educators have caused traditional professional learning opportunities and practices to become relatively ineffective and obsolete. Cookie cutter professional development leaves a large population of teachers with unmet professional needs related to improved instruction for students. Personalized learning experiences are designed to be engaging, allow for deeper learning, focus on the specific needs of the learner, require consistent and frequent follow up, and are directly connected to the role of the learner (Basye, 2014). A

personalized approach to professional learning requires connecting teachers' personal strengths, preferences, and individual needs with academic knowledge required for improvement (Korthagen, 2017).

Personalized professional learning requires using components of effective professional learning and integrating means and modes that best fit the individual teacher. In order to influence a significant change in current ineffective teaching practices, professional learning must be guided by both individual teacher and student needs (Hirsh, 2001). Investing the time to include teachers in this process facilitates an interest from the teacher as well as a better understanding of what is needed from the facilitator (Morgan & Bates, 2018).

An additional component of the redesign of professional learning related to personalization involves empowering teachers with input and decision making around their own learning. Teachers should have the autonomy to establish goals and input around what is needed to reach those goals (Diaz-Maggioli, 2014). When teachers are granted the freedom to have an active role in not only establishing professional goals but what is needed to reach their goal, professional development has a more solid foundation to influence positive change (Mizzell, 2010). When teachers are not afforded the opportunity for buy in related to their professional improvement, the disconnect may cause resentment at initiatives designed for them but feel as if they are being done to them (Diaz-Maggioli, 2014).

If teachers are not afforded an active role in planning and facilitating professional learning, urgent needs may be overlooked. While personalization serves as a crucial element of successful professional development, there should also be a balance where teachers are additionally provided guidance on what professional development they engage in (Knapp, 2003).

Teachers find professional development more meaningful when they have ownership of both content and processes (King & Newman, 2000).

Evaluating Professional Development

According to Kang et al. (2013), evaluating professional development should define the professional development, provide a clear understanding of how the professional development will affect teaching practices and learning outcomes, and clarify the contextual factors of the professional development. Desimone's (2009) model for evaluating professional learning clearly outlines the process for mapping intended outcomes from professional development:

1. Teachers experience high-quality professional development.
2. Professional development provided increases teachers' knowledge and skills and/or changes their attitudes and beliefs.
3. Knowledge and skills learned are used to improve instructional practices, pedagogical approaches or both.
4. Changes in instructional practices ultimately lead to improved student learning.

There exists several challenges associated with effectively evaluating professional development. The two major challenges are determining "the what" and "the how" of evaluating professional development (Merchie et al., 2018).

Andragogy

As the needs of adult learners differ from those of children (Knowles et al., 2005), effective methods for professional development must be inclusive of best practices specific to the unique needs of adult learners. According to Connolly (1996), a unique characteristic of adult education is the goal of doing substantially more than imparting information to learners. Henschke (1998) defines andragogy as a discipline focused on the study of teaching and learning

which brings adult learners to their full potential. As this definition aligns with the end goal of professional development, andragogy must play a key role in the design and facilitation of professional development for teachers.

The andragogical model, created by Knowles et al. (2005), introduces principles and assumptions about adult learners. Knowles' most recent iteration includes four principles applicable to adult learning and six core assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners. The four principles of Knowles' Adult Learning Theory are shared below.

Principles for Adult Learning

Knowles' Adult Learning Theory serves as a model to better understand requirements for adults to maximize learning experiences. Not intended to be the panacea to adult learning, Knowles (1989) described andragogy as being a model comprised of assumptions about adult learning that could also be interpreted as a springboard for emerging theory. Below, the four principles applied to adult learning are shared.

1. Adults should be active participants in the planning and evaluation of their learning experience.
2. Prior experience serves as a baseline for learning.
3. Adults have an interest in learning that has immediate relevance to their work.
4. Adult learning should be problem-centered.

Characteristics of Adult Learners

Before designing high-quality professional development experiences for adult learners, understanding how that best supports adult learning helps prove that traditional professional development formats are ineffective. Assumptions about the characteristics of adult learners provide a solid foundation for planning and designing relevant and purposeful professional

development experiences for teachers. Knowing what the adult learner wants and expects from their professional development experience helps create a more robust and effective learning experience. Knowles et al.'s (1998) six characteristics of adult learners are stated as follows:

1. Adult learners need to understand the why of what they are learning before they engage in the learning.
2. Adult behaviors and abilities are dependent upon a transition toward self-direction.
3. Prior experiences are a resource for learning.
4. Adults become ready to learn when there exists a need to perform a developmental task.
5. Adults view education as a process of increasing competency levels towards their full potential.
6. Adult motivation is internal versus external.

J. P. Cross (1981) also developed characteristics of adult learning (CAL) outlining her theory of lifelong learning that supports Knowles' characteristics of adult learning. The CAL aligns with many of the characteristics in Knowles' model, especially in confirming that adults should have choice in the availability and organization of learning activities and new learning should build upon the experience of the learner (Cross, 1981). This supports the theory that adults possess different learning methods from children.

Contrary to Knowles' belief that adults learn differently, Houle (1972) and others viewed the process of education as being the same for boys and girls as for men and women. Elias (1979) also questioned the theory of andragogy preferring to support the concept of unity in educating adults and children. Knowles (1980) even later acknowledged that there are instances where andragogy may be used with students and pedagogy used with adults. Hartree's (1984)

conflicts with the theory of andragogy was centered around three areas of concern: if andragogy applies to teaching or learning; the overall relationship between child and adult learning; and clarity as to whether or not andragogy deals with theory or practice. In an effort to embrace both the similarities and differences, Knudson (1980) introduced humangogy, which combines both pedagogy and andragogy. The debate between andragogy and pedagogy is fueled by the fact that there currently does not exist a method or instrument to measure whether andragogical practices are being implemented in schools as a part of professional development (Taylor & Kroth, 2009).

Summary and Conclusions

There appears to be a level of ambiguity around a direct correlation between professional development and its effect on improving teacher instruction and student achievement. Difficulty exists in measuring the effects of one element of student achievement when most schools have several factors that may or may not have a direct correlation on student academic performance. There currently exists no method for connecting learning to a specific professional learning experience, especially if learning opportunities have been provided from multiple sources.

In addition, there are essential components that must be a part of professional learning in order for positive change to occur with teacher learning and implementation of learning to classroom practices and the transfer of the learning to the classroom. High quality professional learning is inclusive of the following: sustained duration, incorporates active learning, focuses on content, includes learner collaboration, supported through coaching, and personalized by teacher needs and interests

Through dissection of the research, it is possible to identify success factors related to professional development that may increase the chances of experiencing positive changes in instructional practices, teacher content knowledge, and classroom culture. Providing

personalized professional learning for teachers aligns with andragogical best practices that will yield better results with professional development as opposed to the continued use of antiquated, traditional methods, proven to be less effective.

The following chapter provides a thorough exploration of the study design used to study changes in instructional practices, teacher content knowledge, and classroom culture as a result of personalized professional learning. Chapter 3 also provides an outline of the investigative process, data gathering methods, and information obtained during the action research cycles. Each action research cycle is detailed and chronicles the research process from beginning to end.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

As explored in Chapter 1, there is a distinction between professional development and professional learning. Professional development is the process teachers are drawn into with the assumption that learning will ensue. By contrast, professional learning involves the teacher having an active role in “the what” and “the how” of learning (Rodman, 2019), taking ownership of the translation of professional learning experiences into teaching practices, while embracing being a lifelong learner committed to strengthening teaching practices. The transition that teachers undertake from professional development to professional learning is fostered through establishing an approach to personalized learning whereby teachers are empowered to have a voice in their growth, professional learning experiences are designed to support individual areas of need, and teachers develop the autonomy to expand their vision for growth (Rodman, 2019).

The problem of practice that is the focus of this study is the reality that, far too often, professional development does not support teachers in making the transition to professional learning. For example, in a study conducted by Darling-Hammond and Richardson (2009), 90% of teachers who participated in workshop-style professional development sessions experienced minimal impact on improving either their teaching practices or their students’ learning as a result of attending those sessions. Research suggests that workshops, though the most common format for professional development, are generally not the most effective (Penuel et al., 2007).

Hence, the purpose of this study determined, through an action research approach, if adopting a personalized learning approach to professional development for teachers results has a direct impact on their instructional practices and nurtures positive perception of the personalized professional learning process. Research revealed that initiating an action research-oriented study to

implementing and refining a personalized professional development approach best facilitates the transition from professional development to professional learning for teachers. Howard County has committed to talent recruitment and development in the form of providing personalized learning to support and grow staff in excelling in their roles. The scholarly practitioner supervises the district's curriculum instruction and support services division responsible for facilitating the identification and facilitation of learning needs for teachers.

Fiscal resources and available time for professional development are in short supply, even as the demand for additional human capacity is increasing. Given these dynamics, it is vital to the operation of public schools in general, and Howard County in particular, to maximize existing resources and utilize research-based best practices to provide teachers with high-quality growth opportunities through personalized professional learning.

The two questions that guide this study are as follows:

Study Question #1: How does personalized professional learning impact teaching practices in comparison to traditional professional development? While it is understood that attribution of causality is difficult in this case, it is reasonable to attribute some level of change in instructional practices to participation in self-selected professional development involvement as measured by professional learning content specific assessments.

Study Question #2: How did teachers perceive personalized professional learning as a result of participating in personalized professional learning? The intent of this study was to establish a priority for translating professional development into professional learning on the part of the participating teachers—to prioritize the making of the impact that is anticipated. An important part of this study was to demonstrate that a key element of translating professional

development into professional learning is an administrative imperative to make a positive change in instructional practices through the facilitation of personalized professional learning.

The philosophical approach to teaching of the scholarly practitioner leading this study is that human beings are fundamentally learning organisms and that, given optimal conditions, students will respond positively to the prompting and encouragement of the teacher. To address this question, the practitioner will chronicle the process of developing and training the collaborative action team to support teachers through the personalized professional learning process.

Study Design and Rationale

As evidenced by the study questions, an action research approach to examining personalized professional development will be adopted through the implementation of the RPPL. This model is designed to guide and support the design of professional learning experiences that will support capacity building among teachers. Use of a personalized professional learning model will positively influence changes in the quality of instructional practices and teacher perceptions and provide a format to support consistency of the development of future professional learning opportunities.

Sagor (2000) defined action research as “a disciplined process of inquiry conducted by and for those taking the action with a primary focus of assisting the ‘actor’ in improving and/or refining his or her actions” (p. 7). The RPPL has been chosen for the purpose of this study to be representative of a model that reflects research-based best practices for personalized professional development. Exploration of teacher perceptions related to the process of personalized professional development will also serve as a metric for measuring the success of personalized professional learning.

The action research approach will involve collaboration with participants in the study to identify areas of need and promote instructional practices that will have a direct impact on improving learning experiences for students. In light of research that verifies the ineffectiveness of traditional professional development practices, there is little reason to believe that traditional professional development methods in isolation provide enough support for teachers to transform learning in the classroom or that traditional professional development practices positively influence change in teaching practices. The RPPL framework will implement strategies for designing and facilitating personalized professional development that support and sustain new learning. Through the use of voice, co-creation, social construction and self-discovery, teachers will become integral designers of their own personalized professional development. Through the personalization process, teachers will initiate and maintain positive changes in their instructional practices and develop an autonomy towards becoming self-directed learners.

Data will be collected through resources created by the scholarly practitioner, interviews, and surveys. See Table 1. Specifically, findings to inform the study questions will be supported by qualitative data collected from the assessment of teacher artifacts submitted during the professional learning experience. Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with teachers to gather feedback about their perception of the process, their progress, and interactions with their coaches.

An effective professional learning initiative begins with a needs assessment to “determine teacher philosophies, knowledge, and strengths while identifying potential gaps and needs” (Parsons et al., 2016). Teachers will participate in a pre-assessment survey related to their individual professional development needs, prior professional development experiences, and learning preferences. The data from the pre-assessment will be used to design a personalized

Table 1

Data Collection Methods

Study Question	Data Sources
How does personalized professional learning impact teaching practices in comparison to traditional professional development?	Pre and Post Surveys Teacher Artifacts Coaching Feedback Observations Semi-structured interviews
How did teachers perceive personalized professional learning as a result of participating in personalized professional learning?	Pre and Post Surveys Semi-structured interviews

professional learning experience for participants. Prior perceptions and knowledge about personalized professional learning will be compared with post experience perceptions to analyze growth in perceptions of personalized professional learning. Data will also be used to identify differences between personalized professional learning and traditional professional development experiences.

As part of the North Carolina Educator Evaluation System (NCEES), teachers are required to set professional development goals related to one of the five standards assessed by NCEES.

- Standard I: Teachers Demonstrate Leadership.
- Standard II: Teachers Establish a Respectful Environment for a Diverse Population of Students
- Standard III: Teachers Know the Content They Teach
- Standard IV: Teachers Facilitate Learning for Their Students
- Standard V: Teachers Reflect on Their Practice

An important part of professional growth for teachers involves setting learning goals considerate of their individual strengths and needs and the needs of their students. Action research supports educators in becoming more effective at teacher and student development (Sagor, 2000). The RPPL is a process inclusive of combining a teacher's preferred learning styles with research-based professional development practices to increase teachers' retention of content, as retention is the first step in translating the teacher's learning over to the classroom. The RPPL transitions teachers across the threshold from professional development to professional learning by supporting specific needs of teachers through an inclusive and personalized process. Through a collaborative partnership and process with administration, teachers, and instructional coaches,

areas of professional growth are identified, nurtured, and transformed to influence positive shifts in both teaching and learning. As shown in Figure 7, the study design consists of three Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) action research cycles. Each cycle consisted of a “planning” phase of 1 week, a “doing” phase of 1 week, and a combined “studying and acting” phase of 1 week. The PDSA Cycle is most often used to transform ideas into action and create a bridge from action to learning (Langley et al., 2009). Use of the PDSA cycle allowed the scholarly practitioner to ask questions, make predictions, plan for data collection, execute the plan, observe, compare data, and design next steps (Langley et al., 2009).

Collaborative Action Team

The role of the Collaborative Action Team (CAT) was to collaboratively design the personalized professional learning experience and modules and also provide coaching and feedback to participants as they progressed through the modules. The team consisted of the scholarly practitioner and three district instructional technology facilitators. The collaborative action team was also responsible for monitoring the progress and needs of the participants in this study, as identified through artifacts submitted or during coaching sessions.

During Cycle 1, once the need for support around online teaching and learning was identified for the personalized learning design, the scholarly practitioner met with the CAT to begin planning for the personalized learning experience which was the design of the Online Bootcamp modules. The scholarly practitioner and CAT all participated in professional learning modules and courses to gather materials and acquire knowledge to support teachers with improving online learning practices. The team also gathered resources and began to develop a timeline for the module offerings and submission of artifacts completed during the module. The

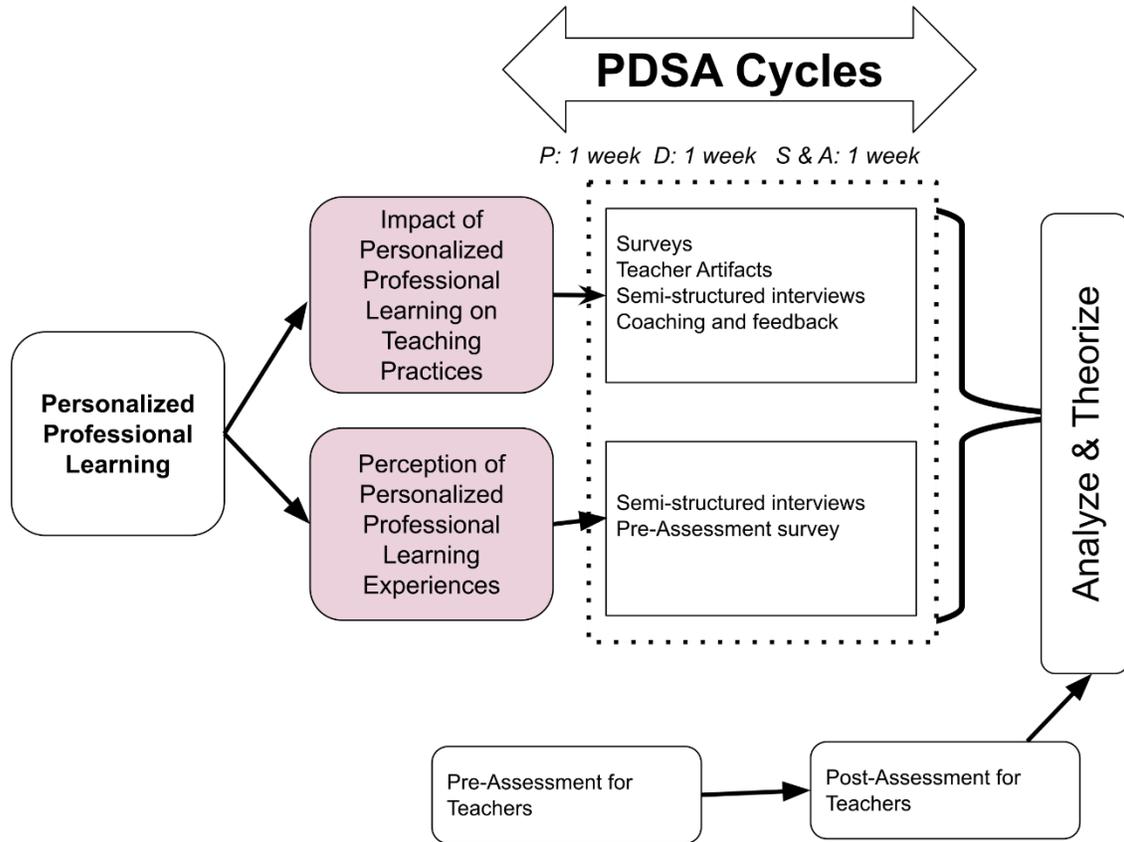


Figure 7. Conceptual framework for action research cycles.

CAT also participated in the initial orientation session to answer any questions and provide encouragement for those participants who volunteered to participate in the modules.

During Cycle 2, the CAT was responsible for reviewing submitted activities and reflections and monitoring and providing individual feedback in a timely and productive manner. As all three of the district instructional technology facilitators were based in schools throughout the district, they had an existing relationship with teachers participating in the personalized learning experience which served as a positive benefit. The CAT continued the coaching, feedback and support during Cycle 3 as well.

Plan

The process began during the plan phase by collaborating with teachers and administrators to identify goals and relevant needs that could be addressed through personalized professional learning. All principals were polled during a monthly administrator's meeting to identify areas of need for their schools. Once those areas of need were identified, they were affinity mapped to identify the most common themes. Those themes with the most momentum were integrated into the design of the professional learning experiences.

A pre-assessment survey was distributed to all research participants to gauge their personal preferences related to the mean and mode of professional development and to serve as a self-assessment for teachers about the quality of their current instructional practices and prior professional development experiences. See Appendix C. Interview questions were created in preparation of analyzing teacher perceptions of personalized learning as well as identification of individual growth. See Appendix D. A flyer was designed and distributed to the target audience to advertise the benefits and content of the personalized learning experience. See Appendix E. After participants registered, an orientation meeting was held with participating teachers to

explain the details of the study, request completion of consent forms, and provide an understanding of the research process.

Do

The second phase in the PDSA process consisted of data gathering using information gathered from the orientation session, pre-assessment survey results, and participant responses from the semi-structured interviews with those participating in the study. Use of the semi-structured interview afforded the interviewer the opportunity to ask questions, outside of the interviewer-prepared predetermined questions, and allow the participants an opportunity to provide additional input through conversation (Longhurst, 2003). Baseline data for each teacher was determined from the assessment of teacher artifacts and teacher interviews and used to update and redesign the next module of personalized professional development experiences considerate of the teacher's needs and preferences.

Study and Act

The study and act phases consisted of disaggregating qualitative data to identify trends and themes. Changes were implemented in order to maintain a positive trajectory towards improving and developing quality instructional practices, content knowledge, and positive classroom culture. Collaboratively with the district instructional technology facilitators, adjustments to professional learning needs were made and the cycle repeated.

The RPPL is a continuous improvement process that incorporates the tenets of personalized learning with research based best practices for professional development. Traditionally, teachers are observed in an effort to identify and target potential areas for growth around the competencies listed in Howard County's Instructional Framework. See Appendix F. The Howard County Instructional Framework was created to establish a common language

across the school district that will enable all educators to understand the expectations for quality teaching and learning through strong pedagogical classroom practices. The framework was a foundational point of reference in the design of personalized professional learning.

Upon the completion, next steps will include the identification of an area or areas of support for individual teachers. A personalized approach for improvement will be collaboratively created and executed as a partnership between the instructional staff and teachers. The teacher's progress was closely monitored and adjusted based on evidence of positive and consistent change in practice or lack thereof as evidenced by submitted teacher artifacts.

Population

Howard County Public Schools consists of 14 schools located in a rural, low-wealth school district that serves approximately 5,963 students. Based on the 2017-2018 demographic data for Howard County Public Schools, 13.7% of students are enrolled in the exceptional children's program, 3.8% are English Language Learners (ELLs), and 6.1% are academically and intellectually gifted (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018b). Of the total student enrollment for Howard County, the ethnic groups and percentages are as follows: 56.7% African-American, 30% White, 10.4% Hispanic, and 1.8% Multi-Racial (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018b).

According to the Howard County Data Card, 70.9% of students in Howard County come from impoverished homes and 10 of the 14 schools in the district qualify for Title I low-income funding (North Carolina Child, 2018). Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), provides financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools with high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards (U.S. Department of Education, 2004). The

2017 North Carolina Data Report lists Howard County as a Tier I district, as noted by the North Carolina Department of Commerce, with an unemployment rate of 7%, one of the highest in the state.

According to the 2019 North Carolina School Data Report Card, Howard County currently has one school with a performance grade of “A”, four schools with a performance grade of “C”, seven schools with a performance grade of “D” and two schools with a performance grade of “F” (see Figure 8). As defined by North Carolina statute, low performing schools have received a school performance grade of ‘D’ or ‘F’ and a growth status of ‘Met’ or ‘Not Met’. 63.9% of students in the district are categorized as economically disadvantaged compared to the state average of 44.3% (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019a).

Howard County has consistently progressed in the number of schools that have moved their growth status from not meeting growth to meeting and/or exceeding growth. Since 2015, the district has grown from six out of fourteen schools exceeding and/or meeting growth to twelve schools meeting and/or exceeding growth. Six of the twelve schools exceeded growth and six met growth. Only two schools remain who have not met growth. Clearly, Howard County is on a trajectory for improving student success that could only be complimented through the provision of personalized learning experiences for teachers.

Sample and Sampling Procedures

The population of this study was derived from a purposeful sample of 15 teachers from Howard County Schools (grades 6-12). Howard County Schools employs 389 teachers with only 29 with National Board certification (see Figure 9). Close to 100% of the teaching staff in Howard County is fully licensed (see Figure 10), as were all participants of this study. The level

Note. (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2019a).

Figure 8. Performance grade and growth status for Howard County Schools.

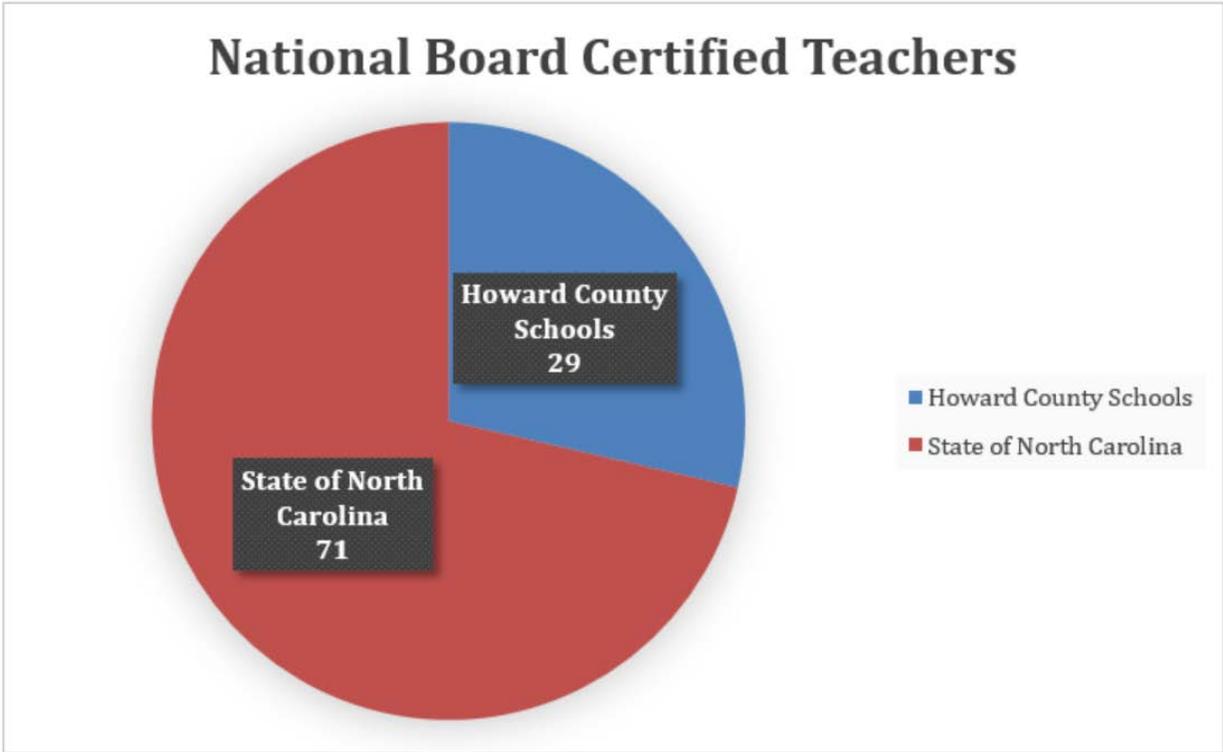


Figure 9. Howard County Schools National Board Certified Teacher composite.

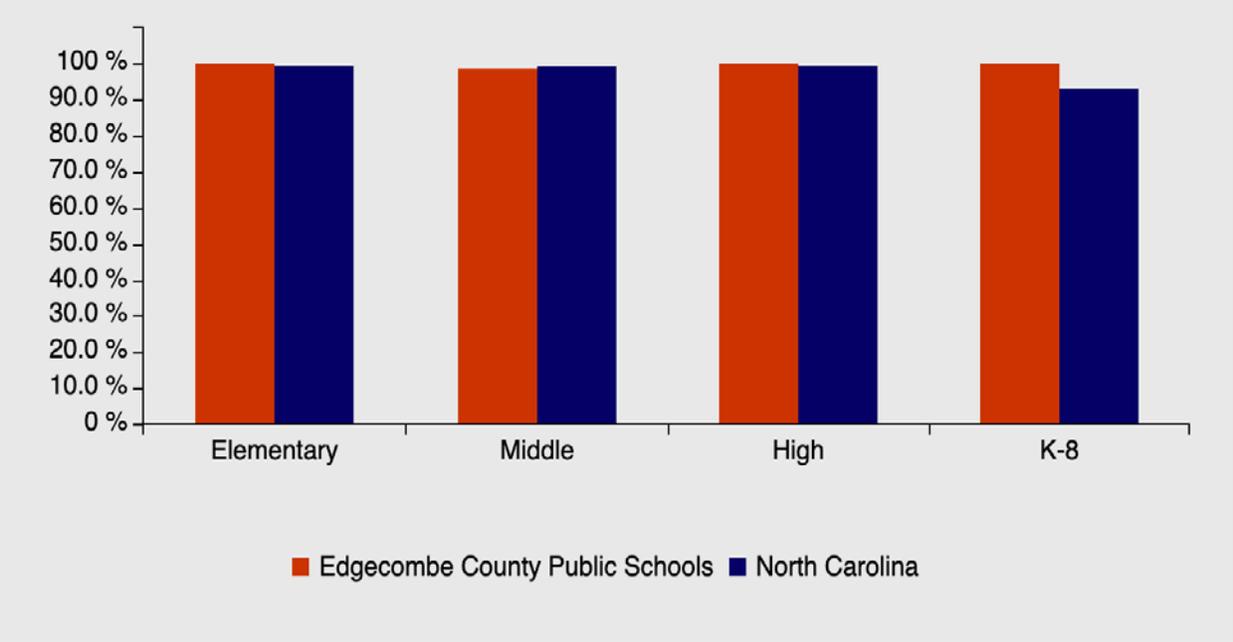


Figure 10. Howard Elementary School fully licensed teacher composite.

of teacher experience is varied as 37.9% have less than 3 years of experience, 43.9% have four to ten years of experience and 24.3% have more than 10 years of experience.

Teachers in grades 6-12 received an invitation to participate in the study based upon the criteria that they currently teach a core subject online at their respective schools as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Core subjects are defined as English Language Arts, Math, and Science, which are also state tested subject areas. By recruiting teachers who were core content teachers, findings from additional data sources such as local benchmark testing and North Carolina state testing results could be considered for use as a method of monitoring student growth.

Ethical Considerations and Informed Consent

Before initiating any elements of this study, the scholarly practitioner completed the necessary modules with the Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) and received CITI certification. CITI certification is required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) processes at East Carolina University to ensure research is conducted in an ethical manner. Upon receipt of support from the doctoral committee, the proposal for IRB approval was submitted and approved. See Appendix A. In addition, written permission was granted also by the Howard County Superintendent in order for the scholarly practitioner to conduct the study with teachers in the district.

According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (2013) regulation §§46.116(a)(4), “prospective subjects must be provided with information that a reasonable person would want in order to make an informed decision”. As part of the informed consent process, an orientation session was held with teachers involved in the study to discuss the data collection process and assure them of confidentiality during the study.

Participants were informed that participation in the study was not directly linked to nor would negatively affect their employment. Participants had a choice in participating in the additional aspects of the research study including surveys and needs assessments. They were not under any obligation to participate for the duration of the study.

Data collected for this study was not stored under teacher names. Participants were identified through the use of pseudonyms not readily associated with the participants' names. The participants' pseudonyms will be used in the findings as identifiers. Identifiers such as grade and subject level will be included to assist with keeping acquired data organized.

All participants were provided with information explaining the purpose of the study and any procedures that accompany the research process. See Appendix B. All data collected was stored securely in a locked file cabinet in the scholarly practitioner's office located at the district central office and in a locked file cabinet in the scholarly practitioner's home office.

Instrumentation

Qualitative data was collected by conducting teacher interviews and assessing teacher artifacts. This data was analyzed at the end of each PDSA Cycle in order to make informed decisions for further personalization of the professional learning. Coaching feedback and observations were also considered in content redesign efforts.

Interviews

Semi-structured teacher interviews were conducted in an effort to gather qualitative and anecdotal data from each teacher participating in the study. Semi-structured interviews allowed for the use of both closed and open-ended questions, in conjunction with follow-up questions to extend dialogue with participants (Adams, 2015). Additional probing questions were used as needed to collect additional information.

Observations

Classroom observations were planned to be conducted by the scholarly practitioner and with other instructional staff to gather qualitative data and monitor progress towards each teacher's goal. Due to the restrictions of COVID-19, classroom observations could not be physically conducted. Teacher artifacts and coaching feedback was used for continued evaluation purposes. Chapter 4 will outline the results of the study in detail.

Procedures

Action Research Cycle 1

Teachers completed a pre-assessment survey at the beginning of the study. See Appendix C. Data from pre-assessment surveys was collected and analyzed to compare similarities and differences in needed areas of support around current teacher instructional practices and teacher content knowledge. The scholarly practitioner collected quantitative data from a survey included in the pre-assessment whereby participants determined their professional development preferences regarding mode and shared prior knowledge about personalized professional learning, prior professional development experiences, and prior coaching interactions. As part of the pre-assessment, teachers were asked to rate the quality of professional development they received during the previous school year in Howard County. Data collected from the pre-assessment assisted in exploring learning preferences for professional development for the teachers of Howard County Schools. Semi-structured interview questions were used to provide an opportunity for additional clarifying questions to a select group of participants (Mertler, 2019).

As outlined above, the Plan Do Study Act (PDSA) Cycle included one week for observations and identification of areas of need, one week for professional development and

coaching support, and one week to assess the impact of the professional development provided. The three-week cycle was repeated during action research Cycles 2 and 3.

Action Research Cycle 2

Data collected during Cycle 1 was analyzed and compared by the scholarly practitioner and Collaborative Action Team. Data from teacher submitted artifacts and pre-assessments continued during Cycle 2, with additional results collected and analyzed to identify progress towards internalizing new learning and using the new learning as part of their instruction. Using NVivo results were coded to identify themes around sustained positive changes in teacher instructional practices as a result of coaching and interventions designed to address each teacher's specific needs.

Professional learning was designed to accommodate the preferences and needs of each learner. Adjustments to professional learning modes were made in preparation of improving Cycle 3 results, as well as providing additional data points. The second action research cycle spanned 3 weeks.

Action Research Cycle 3

Adjustments made in Cycle 2 were assessed with necessary additions and changes being made. Professional learning opportunities provided based on individual needs were cross walked with teacher artifacts to study individual teacher improvements. Data was revisited for any revisions and to evaluate effectiveness. The third action research cycle spanned three weeks. At the conclusion of Cycle 3, a semi structured interview was conducted with participants. Data results and final recommendations to continue positive trends or continue work towards positive improvement will be shared with teachers and administrators.

Role of the Scholarly Practitioner

The scholarly practitioner has worked in the field of education for 18 years in the roles of teacher, curriculum specialist and professional development consultant. Currently, she holds an administrative position in Howard County as the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. No participants in this study report directly to the scholarly practitioner as their immediate supervisor.

Previous roles in education held by the scholarly practitioner also included conducting research and focus groups on the university level to collect data related to instructional improvement for various school districts. Prior experience with collecting data and understanding the protocols for conducting quality focus groups will likely prove to be an asset. Support for unfamiliar protocols and concepts were actively sought out from persons with expertise, in addition to resources obtained through research.

Summary

Research tools and methodologies used for this research provided vital information to designing, facilitating, and personalizing professional development for elementary school teachers in rural North Carolina. Data gathered through interviews, observations, surveys, and focus groups were instrumental in identifying changes in practices that will result in the transition of learning for teachers. Data from this research will also help substantiate or rebut that there exists a positive correlation between effective professional development and teacher professional growth.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

The purpose of this action research study was to facilitate change in implementing and integrating elements of personalized professional development practices for teachers of Howard County Schools to improve the quality and internalization of the learning for teachers, directly impacting teaching practices. The goal of the scholarly practitioner was to evaluate if providing personalized professional learning experiences for teachers, designed on the premise of Rodman's Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning, would (a) allow teachers to be more invested in the content of the professional learning consequently affording them the opportunity to be better prepared to internalize the learning, and (b) evaluate participants' perception of personalized learning in an effort to improve the overall design of professional learning in Howard County, potentially having a positive instructional impact on teaching practices. Due to the variety and amount of professional development the average teacher experiences throughout the course of a school year, it is difficult to establish a direct relationship between professional development and a change in student achievement. To this end, measuring the success of this study was dependent upon careful observation and analysis of participant interviews and feedback.

The following questions served as the basis for this study:

1. How does personalized professional learning impact teaching practices in comparison to traditional professional development?
2. How did teachers perceive personalized professional learning as a result of participating in personalized professional learning?

The results from this study will be used to improve the design of future professional learning experiences for teachers in Howard County. Utilizing the data and feedback from

teachers, instructional leaders will be trained on incorporating elements of personalized learning in an effort to improve professional learning experiences for teachers of Howard County.

Traditional ineffective professional development methods such as whole group, “sit and get”, and lecture only based approaches commonly used in most school districts, will hopefully become obsolete in Howard County.

The data collected in this study is representative of 15 teachers who participated in an online course designed around effective online learning practices, entitled “Online Boot Camp”. These teachers represented educators from grades 6-12 intentionally. During March of 2020, the United States was so heavily impacted by the COVID-19 viral pandemic that schools were required to transition to complete remote instruction for the remainder of the 2019-2020 school year. This meant that students would receive instruction online or through the distribution of offline materials. With minimal preparation time, teachers were inundated with having to transition from in person to remote learning. This transition proved to be a challenge for teachers in Howard County. As the district’s instructional technology integration efforts were in the beginning phases in most schools in Howard County during the 2019-2020 school year, teachers had to quickly acquire additional learning to support logistical and instructional strategies related to providing classroom instruction remotely. The timing and necessity of this new learning required all teachers to undergo numerous professional learning sessions ranging from use of a learning management system, use of multiple technology tools to be used for remote instruction and effective engagement strategies to be used in a remote environment. In addition, there was preparation involved in providing educational alternatives for students who were not able to access instruction via an online portal due to connectivity issues or lack thereof. Due to safety

concerns and social distancing limitations around in person gatherings, the only mode available for teachers to receive professional learning was virtually.

In the midst of the uncertainty of the COVID-19 pandemic, the state of North Carolina issued three reopening plans for education continuity in June of 2020. These plans were referred to as Plans A, B, and C. See Figure 11. At the onset of the pandemic in March of 2020, all schools were operating on Plan C. This plan required full remote learning with no students in school facilities. In September of 2020, North Carolina Governor Roy Cooper announced that elementary schools could choose to return under Plan A (North Carolina Governor's Office, 2020). This option allowed for the return of students for in person instruction as long as schools adhered to the minimal social distancing requirements. All school districts were required to offer continuation of the remote learning option for parents who were not comfortable with their students returning to in person instruction. The escalation in the severity of the pandemic later resulted in additional instructional modifications around in person attendance for students being extended during the 2020-2021 school year as well.

The first attempt to return to in person instruction in Howard County was made available to students in grades Kindergarten through grade 5. In an effort to adequately gauge the number of elementary students returning to in person instruction and to sufficiently plan the implementation of appropriate safety precautions for students who opted to return to in person instruction, parents of Howard County students were required to complete a registration form to indicate their intention for their student to return to school remotely or in person. According to results from registration forms submitted by parents in Howard County, over 53% of parents of elementary-aged students elected to choose in person learning for their students. Kindergarten – grade 5 students whose parents selected in person learning returned to school on November 5,

REOPENING PLANS for EDUCATION CONTINUITY

COVID-19 REOPENING PLANS	School Facilities and Students	Health Precautions *	Teaching and Learning	Scheduling Options
REOPENING PLAN A <i>Minimal Social Distancing</i>	Open All students in school at same time	Enhanced health protocols See NCDHHS requirements and recommendations	Traditional with preparation for Blended Learning	Change within day, see below
REOPENING PLAN B <i>Moderate Social Distancing</i>	Open Limit density in facilities to no greater than 50% maximum occupancy	Enhanced health protocols See NCDHHS requirements and recommendations Increased requirements in addition to Plan A	Blended Learning for all	Multiple options, see below
REOPENING PLAN C <i>Remote Learning</i>	Closed No students in school facilities	N/A All at home	Remote Learning for all	Full change to Remote Learning

Note: NCDHHS StrongSchoolsNC: Public Health Toolkit (K-12) from June 8, 2020.

Figure 11. Reopening plans for North Carolina Public Schools during COVID-19 Pandemic.

2020. Because all students did not return to in person learning, elementary classroom teachers were placed in the position of having to balance providing instruction for both in person and remote students. As this new instructional model was intensive for teachers with regard to their time and effort, the scholarly practitioner opted to focus on educators for grades 6-12 for two reasons: (1) the content of the professional learning involved in this study had a strong focus on online learning, which was the sole method of instruction for grades 6-12 and (2) educators in grades 6-12 did not have the additional workload of providing both in person and remote instruction for students. All Howard County educators for grades 6-12 were still operating on Plan C, total remote learning. The scholarly practitioner was of the opinion that targeting grade levels with a singular focus related to mode of instruction may increase the number of participants for this study, as participation in this study was voluntary.

Participants ranged in years of teaching experience from beginning teachers (0-3 years of experience) to veteran teachers (15+ years of experience) with the majority of the participants (45.4%) having more than 15 years of experience. All participants at the time of the study taught in Howard County in a completely remote environment. Aligned with the RPPL Roadmap, topics selected as the focus of professional learning were determined by collecting feedback from district administrators and instructional coaches around areas in need of professional learning. During individual monthly elementary, middle, and high school principals' meetings, administrators were asked to identify and prioritize areas of need. The identified needs were affinity mapped to identify themes. Based on these themes, in conjunction with instructional observations, and teacher feedback, online learning support emerged as a primary theme.

Intervention

The Online Boot Camp professional learning personalization plan was collaboratively designed and facilitated by the scholarly practitioner and district instructional technology facilitators. The course consisted of three modules for participants to complete using the Google Classroom Learning Management System. See Appendix G. The scholarly practitioner and instructional technology facilitators also served as coaches in order to ensure participants received personalized feedback and support through the duration of the learning modules. Feedback was an important component to consider as Guskey (2014) found that:

Teachers are reluctant to persist in implementing new practices in the absence of evidence that what they're doing makes a positive difference. Therefore, it's important to build some mechanism into the implementation process to show teachers that these new practices are working.

The original plan for providing personalized professional learning was derailed due to COVID-19 restrictions which forced the adjustment in mode of learning from face to face to online. After considering the areas of relevant needs and concerns of teachers, most of which emerged as a result of the transition to remote learning, planning meetings with the instructional technology facilitators were used to design a professional learning opportunity for teachers that incorporated elements of Rodman's (2019) Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning.

Using The Online Learning Playbook as a content guide in tandem with the high needs of teachers, and the RPPL as a model for design, a three module online course was developed to address best practices related to online learning (Fisher et al., 2020). Each module and activity was intentionally designed to provide guidance and provoke deeper thinking around the most effective way to provide online teaching and learning in a remote environment. Aligned with the

tenets of RPPL, the course was considerate of the learning preferences of participants which included choices in how to complete activities and the provision of resources and learning that could immediately be implemented in the classroom.

Once the course was designed, invitations to participate were extended to all 6-12 educators via school email. Although the course was designed for 6-12, one grade 3 teacher was interested in participating and was not turned away. An orientation session was held for teachers who registered for the course to explain the design of the course, answer any questions, and provide an overview of expectations. Teachers were then enrolled via Google Classroom to begin their personalized professional learning experience.

Data Collection

Data collection occurred in three, three-week PDSA cycles beginning in the fall semester of 2020 and concluding in the spring semester of 2021. Due to the disruption caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, cycles were amended to accommodate the availability of teachers who were on an adjusted school schedule. This was to ensure proper consideration of the numerous additional responsibilities teachers were having to face as a result of the transition to online learning. In addition to daily teaching duties, educators were now tasked with multiple professional learning requirements involving the day-to-day operation of technology and implementation of instructional technology strategies in addition to ongoing trainings and meetings required by their schools. For example, in order to provide remote learning, the entire district would need to be familiar with the Zoom or Google Hangout video conferencing applications. Howard County also adopted a graduated model for learning management systems (LMS) in order to establish uniformity with where student assignments were accessed and stored. Elementary schools were assigned SeeSaw and Class Dojo as their LMS platforms, Google

Classroom was selected for middle schools, and Schoology was chosen for high schools.

Teachers who may have had experience with a different LMS were now tasked with learning a new system. Moreover, with remote learning came the use of a plethora of new instructional technology tools to support workflow, engagement, and classroom management.

The data set from the first PDSA cycle focused on teachers' prior knowledge and experiences with personalized learning. Individual learning preferences were determined from individual survey data. This data set was inclusive of the preferred type, mode, and frequency of professional learning in general. The results were used to design the Online Boot Camp personalization plan. The results from the survey were also used to customize subsequent iterations of the Online Boot Camp course. Components of personalized learning will continue to be integrated in the planning of future development sessions in an effort to break the cycle of ineffective professional learning experiences for teachers of Howard County.

The second PDSA Cycle, conducted during the spring semester of 2021, targeted the monitoring of teacher engagement and performance in the Online Boot Camp course while analyzing individual participant needs for areas of coaching. Teachers completed a pre-assessment and post-assessment before and after each module to provide feedback on their perception of the acquisition of learning for each module. Post-assessments also served as reflections for participants to identify adjustments needed in teaching practices for each learning objective in the modules.

The third PDSA Cycle, conducted during the spring semester of 2021 consisted of interviews with participants to evaluate the effectiveness of the attempts to personalize professional learning for teachers, as well as self-identification of any changes in instructional practices. Data were gathered from the interviews to further investigate the needs of teachers

around professional learning. The goal was to provide any supports that would help participants better internalize the information needed in order for the transference of knowledge to occur. This transference would be key in order for the learning to have a positive impact on classroom instruction, whether in person or remote.

Attendance restrictions and modified schedules due to the COVID-19 pandemic forced several amendments to the scholarly practitioner's planned study. In an effort to be considerate and mindful of the newly imposed dual instructional demands on both remote and in person teaching, the study was adjusted to target teachers in grades 6-12 who were solely providing remote instruction. However, any teacher was welcomed to participate.

Data Collection and Analysis

The request for participation in the Online Bootcamp was advertised to teachers through a flyer that was distributed via email in an effort to recruit educators. See Appendix E. Fifteen teachers voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. Due to social distancing mandates, communication and convenings took place using the Google Meet video conferencing platform. Participation in the study was considerably low as teachers reported feeling overwhelmed with current teaching obligations and other professional learning commitments required by their schools and the school district. In addition, teachers were balancing dual teaching duties for online and in person learners as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The initial demographic and personalized learning perception data was collected via an electronic survey from each participant who registered for the Online Boot Camp course during December of 2020. See Appendix C. Personal interviews were conducted and recorded, with participant permission, by the scholarly practitioner. Each participant was assigned a participant number in an effort to protect the identity of the teachers. Upon completion of the participant

Table 2

Participant Demographics

Participant	Grade Level Taught	Years of Experience	Race	Gender
1	11	4-9	White	Female
2	3	10-14	White	Female
3	9	15+	White	Female
4	11	10-14	White	Female
5	9	15+	Black/African American	Male
6	7	15+	White	Female
7	8	15+	White	Female
8	6	0-3	Black/African American	Female
9	9	4-9	White	Female
10	10	15+	White	Female
11	6	10-14	Black/African American	Female
12	9	4-9	White	Female
13	10	15+	White	Female
14	6	10-14	Black/African American	Female
15	6	0-3	White	Female

interviews, the scholarly practitioner transcribed the content from each video into a Microsoft Word document. Completed interview transcriptions were uploaded into NVivo. The scholarly practitioner read through each of the responses and highlighted words relevant to a particular point in order to establish themes of significance to the study. This process was completed for each transcript line by line. Inductive coding was used as codes for the data were identified as the transcripts were being reviewed. Creswell (2015) defines coding as the process of analyzing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way” (p. 156). Coding frequencies and patterns were identified from all collected responses. The scholarly practitioner then identified emerging categories and themes related to the two study questions.

Demographics

Demographic data for the participants in this study are outlined in Table 2. Data were collected during PDSA Cycle 1 via a survey that was distributed to participants who voluntarily agreed to participate in the Online Boot Camp professional learning. This study consisted of 15 participants. Out of the 15 participants, 53.33% represented the secondary setting (9-12), 40% represented the middle grades setting (6-8) and 6.66% represented the elementary setting (K-5). The variance in years of experience ranged from 40% having 15 or more years of experience, 26.66% having 10-14 years of experience, 20% having 4-9 years of experience, and 13.33% having 0-3 years of experience. All but one of the participants were female, and all but four were white.

Results

Study Question 1

Study Question 1: How does personalized professional learning impact teaching practices in comparison to traditional professional development?

Analyzed from the initial participant survey, participants were questioned about their perceptions and knowledge of personalized professional learning in addition to information about their prior professional learning experiences. Data were gathered regarding how frequently the teacher participants independently sought opportunities for professional development that was not provided by Howard County or professional learning acquired through peer or administrator coaching and feedback. As evidenced in Table 3, responses indicated that almost half of the participants proactively and independently sought professional development opportunities outside of what was provided by Howard County School District. Professional learning from administrators, coaches and colleagues in the form of constructive feedback was received mostly on a monthly and weekly basis. Few teachers received feedback on a daily basis. When asked about their current understanding of personalized professional development, nearly all responses were representative of participants possessing a clear understanding of the concept of personalized learning. Additionally, the perceptions of participants about personalized learning before participation in this professional learning experience were overall positive. The scholarly practitioner was able to assess that the common understanding of the participants around personalized learning was that personalized learning was learning designed to meet both their personal and professional needs.

Table 3

Participant Survey Questions and Responses for PDSA Cycle 1

Question	Monthly	Weekly	Daily
Learning and Feedback - How often do you proactively seek out professional development opportunities for yourself outside of district provided professional development?	7 (46.66%)	8 (53.33%)	0 (0%)
How often do you receive constructive feedback about instruction from administrators, coaches and/or colleagues?	6 (40%)	7 (46.66%)	2 (13.33%)

Participant 9 stated, “Personalized professional learning to me is an opportunity to receive information in a way that informs, demonstrates and allows opportunity for practiced implementation, and provides ready-made resources to carry it back to my classroom and implement.” Aligned with the thoughts of Participant 9, Participant 11 shared her definition of personalized professional learning as, “...professional development that I’m interested in and is tailored to what I need.”

Providing a detailed definition of personalized professional learning, Participant 15 shared, “Personalized professional learning to me is an opportunity to receive information in a way that informs, demonstrates and allows an opportunity for practiced implementation, and provides readymade resources to carry it back to my classroom and implement.”

After analyzing the data for preferred mode for professional learning, 12 out of 15, or 80% of teachers listed virtual professional learning that could be completed on their own time as the preferred method of learning. One participant selected no preference and two participants stated in person, after school as their mode for receiving professional learning. Although these responses could not influence the mode of learning, as the distancing restrictions of COVID-19 mandated that professional learning sessions must be conducted virtually, it was beneficial that the required mode aligned with the preferred mode of learning for the majority of participants. When asked about prior professional learning experiences, 80% of the participants listed “none” or “not sure” in reference to prior experiences with prior personalized professional learning experiences.

During PDSA Cycle 2 which occurred during December of 2020 and January of 2021, participants continued their participation and engagement with the Online Boot Camp modules. Having completed analyzing the data from module 1 of the Online Bootcamp Course, the

scholarly practitioner and Collaborative Action Team monitored completion rates for the remaining two modules included in the PDSA cycles. Each of the two modules consisted of mini lessons as detailed in Table 4. The content for each of the modules was based on The Distance Learning Playbook (Fisher et al., 2021) and took approximately three hours on average per week to complete (see Figure 12).

During PDSA Cycle 3 which occurred during January and February of 2021, participants were to complete the final module in the course. After reviewing the completion data and noticing a decline in the amount of work completed, participants were granted an extension for the completion of module 2. Module 3 was still made available for those who were ready to complete the final module. As the completion of module 2 was due during the middle of the transition of students back to in person learning, teachers expressed that they were overwhelmed with planning and preparation efforts and as a result did not have the time to invest in finishing the modules.

The Online Boot Camp was housed in the Google Classroom platform. An overview of course topics is outlined in Table 4. The Google Classroom platform was chosen because the majority of teachers in the district were already familiar with how to use this learning management system both before and after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Three modules were loaded with interactive activities that were also submitted for feedback and assessment through Google Classroom. The scholarly practitioner and instructional technology facilitators checked daily for the completion of the activities in order to guide feedback and identify additional supports and resources needed. Coding frequencies were identified, which lead to categories being created. Emerging themes were then identified from the codes and categories. Themes and coding frequencies from personal interviews with

Table 4

Overview of Online Bootcamp Course Modules

Deep Dive Module 1	Deep Dive Module 2	Deep Dive Module 3
<p>Teacher-Student Relationships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mindframes of Visible Learning • Preventing a “Chilly Classroom” • Reaching the Hard to Teach • Increase Touchpoints with All Students 	<p>Learning Intentions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Clarity • Create Learning Intentions • Planning Online Lessons 	<p>Engaging Tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Functions of Engagement • Dimensions of Student Engagement • Design Tasks with Engagement in Mind

Get To Know Each Other ⋮

- 📄 Getting To Know Each Other

Overview ⋮

- 📖 Deep Dive 1 Overview:

Deep Dive 1: Teacher-Student Relationships ⋮

- 📖 Deep Dive 1: Learning Intentions
- 📄 Teacher-Student Relationships Self Evaluati...
- 📄 Activity 1- Make It Personal: Jot and Sha... 🗨️ 5
- 📄 Activity 2- Teacher-Student Relationshi... 🗨️ 1
- 📄 Activity 3- Teacher-Student Relationship Da...
- 📄 Activity 4- Every Opportunity Video Reflect...
- 📄 Activity 5- A Chilly Classroom Activity 🗨️ 1
- 📄 Activity 6- Elements of Teacher-Studen... 🗨️ 1
- 📄 Activity 7- Teacher- Student Relationships (...
- 📄 Activity 8- Increase Your Touchpoints With ...

Figure 12. Online bootcamp module activities.

participants are represented in Table 5. Participants had varying responses that yielded common themes. Three prominent themes emerged from those responses. Additional themes were identified and considered outliers for the purpose of this study and were not included as a part of the major themes listed in Table 5. These themes were omitted due to having a low number of coding references.

Changes in Instructional Practices as a Result of New Learning

The first theme that emerged was that teachers were able to identify positive changes in their instructional practices that built their instructional capacity as a result of the new learning acquired from participation in the Online Boot Camp personalized learning experience. When asked to identify changes in instructional practices that could be attributed to their personalized learning experience, Participant 2 reported:

It [the Online Boot Camp Course] reinforced some things I had been doing and I learned some things I haven't had a chance to use yet but I have placed in my notebook for later. We always fall back on what we are used to and I really learned something new to use right away with my students. Once you really learn it, you will stick with it.

Citing a more comprehensive moment of learning, Participant 11 agreed with the thoughts of Participant 2 by stating:

This course helped me to understand the difference between teaching virtually and face to face. I learned how to interact more positively with students and adjust my pacing. I also learned about providing the appropriate amount of feedback in an appropriate time frame.

One of the goals of the course was the intention to inspire teachers to use the learning shared with their students in the classroom. This objective was achieved with Participant 5 as indicated in the following comment:

Table 5

Major Themes from Focus Groups and Personal Interview Questions

Theme	Aggregate number of coding references
Theme 1: Changes in instructional practices as a result of new learning	7 (87.5%)
Theme 2: Benefits of personalized learning	8 (100%)
Theme 3: Time as a barrier	7 (87.5%)

Going through this felt like a good in service. It inspired me to personalize learning with my students. I learned relationship skills to help me see my students as people. This really helped me along the way.

During PDSA Cycle 3, the scholarly practitioner reviewed the completion rates and quality of work completed for each module. Ten of the 15 participants fully completed both of the first two modules but all 15 participants completed at least 50% of modules 1 and 2. The completion rate for the third module was not available at the completion of the study due to the extension of the due date for module 2 being granted. The scholarly practitioner felt it was advantageous to encourage and allow time for completion of the modules as opposed to moving forward quickly with new learning. During the exit interview, an overwhelming theme reflected was the lack of time the participants had available to invest in the professional learning due to the demands of teaching in person and remote students. During the beginning of Cycle 3, Howard County schools announced that students in grades 6-12 would have the option to return to in person. This announcement came after teachers had prepared materials and lessons for remote learning to continue upon their return from the holiday break in December. Being considerate of the time needed to develop plans for in person instruction, the deadline to complete the modules was extended to accommodate the additional demands placed on teachers.

Study Question 2

Study Question 2: How did teachers perceive personalized professional learning as a result of participating in personalized professional learning?

Personal interviews conducted by the scholarly practitioner provided insight into teacher perceptions of personalized learning after their participation in the Online Learning Boot Camp. Responses collected from interviews with participants about their experiences with personalized

professional learning, considerate of their needs and preferences, in comparison to traditional professional development are represented below.

Benefits of Personalized Learning

Although responses varied, the second theme captured educators being able to identify the benefits of personalized learning in comparison to past traditional professional development experiences. When asked how the personalized learning experience was different, all participants were willing to share a personal benefit. Participant 13 spoke to the advantages of being able to work at a self-established pace as time was a valuable commodity.

I was able to work at my own pace. I liked the fact that it was on Google Classroom because if I wanted to, I could pull it up on my phone. It was more personalized for how I like to learn. Time is a luxury most of us don't have so convenience is important.

Participant 15, a veteran teacher with over 15 years of experience, spoke to the level of autonomy over how and when the course materials could be processed. The self-paced option seemed to provide a sense of freedom for Participant 15 as she said, "For me, this was different because I had to read and comprehend for myself. Sometimes that gives you an opportunity to really digest the information your way without someone just giving it to you."

For Participant 14, individual attention received during coaching was a highlight in addition to the self-paced option, "I definitely liked the self-paced option. I really loved the feedback component. My coach was responsive and I felt the support and encouragement there.

Participant 2 was able to make the connection between the benefits of personalized professional learning with the advantages the same type of learning would have for students by sharing:

I liked the way that with some of the modules we had more than one option as a choice for how to complete an assignment. As a person who learns different ways, having a variety of ways to accomplish something was helpful. This helped me see that my students also need to have choices to match their learning styles. If I enjoyed that, most likely my students are going to enjoy it also.

Although the general consensus of the group was that the personalized learning experience was a positive experience, Participant 2 captured the sentiment of the group best by stating:

I liked the way the activities were broken into chunks. It was nice to be able to work at your own pace in manageable chunks. I also liked that the reading we did because it didn't seem like a lot of reading. It was relevant. Traditional PD would have you reading four or five articles and answering questions. This wasn't dry at all. This was more lively and more interactive, especially the activities. We even worked together like you would in a traditional PD session and it was interesting. I have enjoyed doing this. It was cool that we could do it at our own pace and we can keep going. Things come up, schedules change, and things happen. Sometimes it's nice to keep working the way you prefer at something that is building your capacity and growing more in the content.

There appeared to be an underlined appreciation for an experience that was relevant and useful to participants.

Time as a Barrier

Although all participants expressed satisfaction with this experience, the third major theme that emerged was that lack of time was a huge barrier to the potential for additional learning that could occur in tandem with the personalized components. It has been no secret that

teachers have been historically overworked and underpaid. Compound those existing factors with the COVID-19 pandemic and time truly becomes a luxury that teachers simply do not have.

Participant 11 spoke to the disadvantages of time related to professional learning:

I don't have time to do all of the research I need to sometimes so having it provided for me is helpful. I feel that giving me what I need how I need it is respectful of the time I don't have.

Speaking in detail about the many responsibilities, Participant 13, one of the elementary school participants reported:

I have Hill Center training and Emerging Leaders sessions but needed this content due to virtual learning. We now have more work, paperwork and trainings. On top of that, students need interventions more than ever. My plate is just really really full. I just can't get all of my stuff done and find time to learn.

Participant one was in favor of the learning and content but also expressed disdain with not having adequate time to learn by saying:

I feel like we need to keep virtual learning incorporated because we don't know what the future is going to hold. It is valuable what we're learning with this Boot Camp. I just wish we had more time to give to it so that we can use what we learned more.

Based upon the responses, teachers need a streamlining of required learning to allow them to use what limited time they have available to truly engage in the material. This can be accomplished by exploring other types of professional learning models that make use of classroom teaching time, observations, and peer networking as learning opportunities. The integration of multiple models better supports the concept of personalized learning.

Summary

This study is exploring whether implementing and integrating elements of personalized professional development practices for teachers of Howard County Schools improves the quality and internalization of the learning for teachers thereby impacting teaching practices. Due to mitigating factors caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, participation and interaction with participants was affected. From the data gathered, the scholarly practitioner was able to ascertain that teachers enjoyed their experience in the Online Boot Camp personalized professional development as evidenced by their feedback via personal interviews and surveys.

Chapter 5 explores summaries, conclusions and recommendations based on the findings of this study, as well as recommendations for future studies relative to designing effective personalized professional learning. The ultimate goal is for Howard County Schools to consistently design professional learning experiences for teachers that will change the stigma which traditional professional development has rightfully earned.

CHAPTER 5: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, & RECOMMENDATIONS

One of the primary objectives of schools is to provide students with a sound and quality education. In the ongoing quest to improve classroom instruction and student achievement, there exist strong factors for improving student learning. Improvement of teacher quality has been identified as one of those factors (Delisle, 2017; Hanushek, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004; Rivkin et al., 2005). The most prominent core practice for developing teachers in an effort to improve the quality of their instruction has been through professional development. A problem exists with the quality and design of traditional professional development which does not afford teachers the opportunity to access personalized high quality learning on a consistent basis. The New Teacher Project's Mirage report identified improvement in teaching practices when a "highly individualized process" was used to address areas of learning for teachers (Rivkin et al., 2015). The disconnect in the design of professional learning could be a direct result of research-based design practices not being included as the foundation for creating learning opportunities for educators.

This study explored the impact of personalized professional learning on teaching practices as compared to traditional professional development models. The findings sections discusses the major outcomes of this study relative to each of the study questions. The chapter also includes limitations of the study and implications for practice and equity. Recommendations for future studies and the conclusions from conducting this study close out the chapter.

Findings

The scholarly practitioner consulted the research from Chapter 2 in order to validate the design and implementation of the Online Boot Camp personalized professional learning offering. Rodman (2019) clearly outlined that the success of high-quality professional learning requires an

alignment of district, school, and teacher goals in order to achieve best results. The premise of the Online Boot Camp course was collaboratively designed to meet the current and relevant needs of teachers and administrators in Howard County as a result of their feedback and input. The onset of the COVID-19 pandemic created an immediate need around best practices for remote instruction, which surfaced as the primary need for teachers. Providing the opportunity for stakeholder buy-in contributed greatly to the success of the professional learning (Darling-Hamond & McLaughlin, 2011). Inclusion in planning and implementation also fosters teacher involvement beyond mere compliance (Baird & Clark, 2018).

In order to facilitate an optimal learning environment, personalizing the means and modes of the professional learning based on the learning profiles of participants helps to support learners in the way they prefer to learn. Inferential statistics of the survey data collected from participants were heavily considered in the design of the Online Boot Camp modules. Due to the mandated COVID-19 distancing requirements, use of an online platform was a component of the learning that did not allow for much flexibility but ended up being the most preferred mode of instruction as indicated by the survey results.

As various professional learning models list characteristics for effective professional development, several characteristics surfaced as common denominators among them. Effective professional learning is continuous and ongoing, incorporates active learning, is content focused, collaborative, supported by coaching and personalized by teacher needs and interests (Blank & de las Alas, 2009; Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999; Darling-Hammond et al., 2017; Patton et al., 2013; Wei et al., 2009). In alignment with these components for effective professional learning, the design of the Online Boot Camp was inclusive of active learning within each module, as each module required teachers to try something new in their classroom related to the learning.

Teachers were also asked to provide a reflection of their efforts in order to self-assess the effectiveness of new learning. The content of the Online Boot Camp modules was focused on an immediate and relevant need for teachers, and coaching and feedback was provided to all participants in a timely manner.

Data from the semi-structured interviews revealed that overall teachers had a positive experience with the Online Boot Camp course. Participants were able to identify components from each module that they used during online instruction that had a positive impact or brought them to a reflective moment about their own areas of improvement or deficiencies in their teaching practices. Participants were also appreciative for the coaching feedback. In the interest of showing participants that their time was valued, submitted artifacts were reviewed and assessed for best next steps to provide additional growth in that content. Although the study group was small, the time required for assessment and coaching was intense. When talking with participants about their experiences during interviews, the scholarly practitioner realized that there were three participants who could have served as peer coaches due to their stellar performance in the Online Boot Camp course.

Working collaboratively with the instructional technology facilitators provided an opportunity for reciprocal learning that increased the capacity of both the scholarly practitioner and the instructional technology facilitators. By sharing the design process for personalized professional learning, the instructional technology facilitators are now able to support and design future learning experiences for staff. The scholarly practitioner gleaned from this collaborative work insight around technology resources and teacher needs as all technology facilitators work in schools with teachers on a full-time basis.

The overall perception of teachers after their participation in the Online Boot Camp was that personalized learning provided a feeling of customization that gave them ownership in the learning. Even related to mode of instruction, participants enjoyed the convenience of the modules being housed in a platform they were familiar with and could access across multiple devices as Google Classroom is a mobile friendly classroom. The most valuable commodity for teachers related to the course was the respect of time. Teachers were given the autonomy and freedom to truly work at their own pace.

Teachers place a greater value on time because they consistently have much to do and little time to do it. This course valued participant time by assessing artifacts submitted and providing coaching feedback. The flexible structure afforded the opportunity to work at your own pace. Recognizing the need to attract the different learning style of participants, materials and activities were presented with options for viewing, reading and/or creating. Although flexibility of time was communicated as a positive aspect of the training, lack thereof was a common theme presented as a barrier to completion of the course in its entirety. As a result, the course will remain open through the end of the school year to allow participants to finish and continue providing feedback.

Limitations

Through the course of this study, there were four limitations identified. These limitations were a combination of the potential limitations identified in Chapter 1 and other limitations that became apparent over the course of conducting this study. The limitations identified were often factors well beyond the scholarly practitioner's control.

The first limitation previously identified was that there currently exists no reliable method for measuring the direct impact of professional learning on student achievement. As

observed during this study, teachers were consistently participating in multiple professional development endeavors of the same and different content. During the timeframe of this study, there were multiple school and district provided professional development offerings being provided from the use of technology tools and resources to literacy strategies. There would be no valid means for measuring which in service opportunity provided a specific instructional and achievement changing practice.

The second limitation, also previously mentioned, was the concern that teachers may not be transparent with questions related to their current knowledge or teaching practices. This limitation was compounded by the fact that the scholarly practitioner holds a district level administrative role in the district. During personal interviews, the scholarly practitioner did not sense any hesitancy in participants comfortably answering questions. Through the use of probing questions, the scholarly practitioner was able to encourage participants to open up about the positives and negatives of professional development and their interactions and perceptions of personalized professional learning.

The third limitation identified was that participants ranked perceptions of their current knowledge higher than the level evidenced by the completion of the module activities. At the start of each module, participants completed a self-assessment to rank their current knowledge levels on the topics to be covered in each Online Boot Camp module. This was done by providing Likert scale questions. The pre-assessment was compared with the post assessment provided at the end of the module in an effort to measure potential growth around each of the module topics. Over 87% of participants ranked themselves as completing each of the behaviors asked on a regular basis, when principal feedback, evaluations, completed assignments, and coaching sessions revealed otherwise. This could also have been hesitancy on the part of the

participant to be transparent about shortcomings while working in tandem with a district level administrator.

The final and most significant limitations were those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic which placed restrictions on the amount of data collected and number of participants recruited. The scholarly practitioner talked with several teachers who expressed interest in taking the course, but the additional instructional responsibilities related to providing dual instruction during the pandemic made it difficult for educators to find the time to participate. Due to physical restrictions implemented for safety reasons, all trainings and meetings were being conducted in an online environment. Educators were not only providing instruction online and in person for a large portion of the day but were also held hostage to their screens to complete other meetings and in service. The 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey for Howard County revealed that 27% of Howard County teachers spent more than five hours and less than 10 hours during an average week on school-related activities outside of the regular school/workday (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018c). This included before or after school and weekends. Thirty percent reported that they spend more than 10 hours on school-related activities weekly (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018c). With the many demands placed on teachers, it is important that we value their time by offering quality learning experiences worthy of the time they don't have.

Implications for Practice

Howard County Schools is a school district showing great promise, as evidenced by their consistent progress in moving schools towards proficiency. In a three-year period, the district moved from eight out of 14 schools not meeting proficient growth as measured by North

	2016 -2017	2017 - 2018	2018 - 2019
SCHOOLS THAT MET OR EXCEEDED GROWTH	<p>6</p> <p><u>3</u> Exceeded <u>3</u> Met</p>	<p>11 ↑</p> <p><u>4</u> Exceeded <u>7</u> Met</p>	<p>12 ↑</p> <p><u>6</u> Exceeded <u>6</u> Met</p>
SCHOOLS THAT DID NOT MEET GROWTH	<p>8</p>	<p>3 ↓</p>	<p>2 ↓</p>

Figure 13. Howard County State of Schools.

Carolina state requirements to 12 out of 14 schools meeting growth. Six of the 12 schools that met growth also exceeded growth. See Figure 13. Being directly involved with curriculum and instruction, the scholarly practitioner felt strongly that leveraging how professional learning was designed and facilitated would provide the district with the momentum needed to continue moving in an upward trajectory with student achievement.

As apparent from the survey data and interviews with participants of the Online Learning Boot Camp, there were several aspects of personalized professional learning that made the professional learning experience enjoyable and engaging for teachers: being mindful of learning preferences related to means and mode, providing participant choice, collaboratively identifying specific learning needs, and modeling instructional strategies that can immediately be used in the classroom. Participants also found value in receiving coaching and feedback. Being able to assess teacher created products provided a more definitive indicator of learning in comparison to a “sit and get” professional development session with no teacher interaction or assessment of learning.

For the purpose of this research, direct feedback from teachers proved to be the most valuable resource when considering change in practices. Rodman’s RPPL was instrumental in the design and facilitation of the personalized learning experience for educators of Howard County. A priority for Howard County is to adopt Rodman’s Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning as a staple for the design of future professional learning for in service provided on the district level. Unfortunately, professional development provided by outside vendors would not be within the district’s control. The provision of professional learning will become a process of collaboration and intentional design in order to not only maximize learning

but to be respectful of the differentiated needs that educators have and time that they clearly indicated they did not have.

The 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey asked teachers how much time was devoted to professional development in an average week (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018c). An in-depth review of the results revealed that 12% spent no time, 52% spent less than one hour, 27% spent more than one hour but less than three hours, 8% spent more than three hours but less than 5 hours, 1% spent more than 5 hours but less than 10 hours and 1% spent more than 10 hours on professional development (2018). The amount of time invested by the majority is not of a significant amount to influence a change in instructional practices. The availability of professional learning opportunities tailored to meet the needs of teachers in a personalized format may change teachers' perception about professional learning as something of value. This change in perception could also create teacher agency to seek out professional growth opportunities.

Implications for Equity

The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was established as an effort to honor the nation's commitment to equal opportunity for all students. ESSA was enacted to replace the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Title II, Part A is dedicated to supporting effective instruction. Recognizing that highly qualified teachers are instrumental to the success of students, monies under Title II, Part A are dedicated to support "professional learning experiences that improve the skills of teachers, principals and other school leaders..." (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017). These funds are designated to support efforts to provide high quality instructional support in an effort to provide high-quality instruction statewide. These learning opportunities may be provided through online, face-to-face and blended forums. As defined

under ESSA, high-quality professional learning must meet six criteria: sustained, intensive, collaborative, job-embedded, data-driven, and classroom-focused. If highly qualified teachers are the pathway to the success of students, inequities in the development of highly qualified teachers present an inequity for students.

Committing to a model of professional learning that ensures the components proven to provide successful professional learning experiences are integrated is a strong start to leveling the playing field for teacher development. The expectation that any professional learning provided to improve instructional practices will be relevant, effective, and engaging should be normalized. Professional learning experiences should guarantee the same high level of quality because there is a model or process implemented to guarantee such.

The ability to “grow our own” teachers is of utmost importance for a rural district, as counties similar to Howard County generally experience difficulty recruiting high quality teachers due to no or low supplements in pay and lack of living conveniences often absent in a rural area. This is not to say that rural areas do not have highly qualified teachers. Larger districts are often more alluring to teachers because of the availability of increased supplements and amenities provided by larger towns and cities. From an equity standpoint, it is our obligation as leaders to make a conscious effort to extend all available energy and resources towards meeting the individual needs of our teachers in order to nurture their talents for teaching. By participating in personalized professional learning, teachers will be “more effective with ALL students, able to differentiate to individualized learners, and provide quality online instruction” which sets the stage for a more equitable instructional experience (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2017). Sparks (2004) best summarized the most equitable and logical reason for professional learning by saying:

...if all students — black, white, rich, and poor — are to acquire deep understanding; learn to solve problems creatively; develop the ability to work in teams and independently; and seek, through their concern about others, to contribute meaningfully to the public good, teachers must pursue deep and continuous professional learning (p. 305)

Recommendations for Practice

The task at hand of changing the how and why of professional learning is not one that will happen instantly. The scholarly practitioner proposes the following recommendations in an effort to make the improvement of professional learning practices one that can be sustained with fidelity.

The first recommendation is that the Online Boot Camp run a second iteration inclusive of the findings explained in this study. Teachers and administrators experienced buy in because they served as co-creators of this professional learning experience. The modules addressed immediate needs of teachers in a format that was flexible and convenient. The flexibility and design of the course was based on input from the intended audience. This eliminated the feeling that something was being done to teachers to a feeling of something being designed with teachers.

The second recommendation is that the district explore options to create protected times and days within the school calendar as protected time for professional learning. In the 2018 North Carolina Teacher Working Conditions survey, only 3% of Howard County teachers selected professional learning as the aspect of their teaching condition most important in promoting student learning (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2018c). In order to

make greater strides in improving student learning, we must get teachers to see the importance of being a lifelong learner.

The third recommendation involves expanding training on the RPPL to all district and instructional personnel who assist in the design of professional learning. Use of the RPPL should serve as the norm for all professional learning sessions. Teachers should be able to trust that no matter the subject or content, they will receive a quality learning experience that will positively influence teaching practices. As the availability of individual coaching and feedback was expressed as a positive of this course, teachers will also need to be trained to serve as peer coaches to help support the strengths of one another. The aspect of teacher as coach or presenter was not explored in this study but should be a component of future personalized professional development planning.

Recommendations for Future Studies

The first recommendation of the scholarly practitioner is that additional research be conducted around personalized professional development to monitor the impact on instruction and continue the incorporation of best practices that will support the transference of knowledge from teachers to classroom instruction. Most important is that this transference occurs in a manner that will improve teaching practices for teachers and students. Additional literature and case studies should be reviewed to not only support personalized professional learning as a best practice, but also explore additional methods for strengthening or improving the process used in this research. The internalization of new material learned cannot occur when teachers experience a disconnect with how the material is being presented and/or a lack of fundamental understanding around the connection of the learning to relevant teaching needs. These barriers

can be addressed by committing to implement a sound model for personalized professional learning.

Secondly, schools should explore closely monitoring the connection between the goals teachers select in their individual professional development plans, required as part of the North Carolina Educator's Evaluation System (NCEES), and the progress teachers make towards those goals as a result of personalized professional learning. The cause-and-effect nature of the "what's in it for me" mindset is based on the premise that if an action is a person's best interest, they are more likely to do it. Making a direct connection between the achievement of individual professional goals while improving classroom instruction is a win-win for all involved.

Finally, in an effort to be more considerate and respectful of a teacher's time, the consolidation of individual teacher goals, school goals, and district goals should be closely examined for areas of alignment. This would enable a school district to identify and streamline areas of need for professional learning that could be designed to address multiple goals. Exploring options around the development and use of an authentic needs assessment system for the identification of teacher needs would prevent teachers from having to participate in learning they are already proficient in and allow them to spend their time acquiring new learning.

Conclusions

The findings of this study indicate that designing personalized professional development in alignment with Rodman's Roadmap for Personalized Professional Learning results in a custom learning experience that encourages new learning for teachers. The new learning occurs in a manner which is more likely to carry over to classroom instruction. The RPPL is a model that seemed to deliver positive results related to the internalization of the material presented.

Key components for the success of professional learning were outlined in Chapter 2 of this study. Adding the component of personalization only increased the effectiveness of the professional learning experience. Normalizing the design, facilitation, and participation of quality professional learning will become a practice embraced by Howard County. As Rodman (2019) stated, “Effective professional development must be focused, sustained, job-embedded, and personalized. Otherwise, it is simply a hope...not a practice” (Rodman, 2019, p. 9).

Scholarly Practitioner’s Reflections on Leadership

Barber et al. (2010) attribute overall improvement in student achievement to effective school leadership. Leadership alone is not enough. Leadership that ignites change is what makes the difference. As I reflect upon leadership lessons learned during the course of this study, there are three points of personal growth and development that stand out to me. Leadership is truly about collaboration, having a focus on the development of others, and most of all leading. This study has shown me that much like the tenets of effective personalized professional learning, all voices must be heard in a state of co-creation, specific needs must be met, and the success of one initiative can have a trickle-down effect to our students. Most of all, the focus of any school related research and improvement efforts has to be providing the best educational opportunities for our students.

In my career experiences in various leadership roles, collaboration has been one of the most important factors for success. In an effort to create a team environment where all are a part of the overall vision of a school district, teachers must feel as if decisions that involve them are made with them and not done to them. The creation of an environment that focuses on shared visions and expectations creates a prime environment for effective teaching and learning to occur (Huguet, 2017). The development of our district strategic plan involved the voice of our staff,

students, parents and community. The creation of our district Instructional Framework outlines the responsibilities of teachers, parents, students, and community. Conducting research on the effective components of personalized learning was demonstrative of the positive effects that can occur when stakeholders are a part of the design and implementation of initiatives and efforts that will bring about positive change for students. Schools that implement a collaborative focus are found to experience more success in improvement of student achievement (Huguet, 2017).

The RPPL model sought to establish agency in teachers to commit to being lifelong learners. As a leader, I have learned that being a lifelong learner is not an option. Trends in education consistently come, go or are recycled. In addition, as the world changes, so do our students. It is imperative to commit to living in a state of constant learning in order to make informed decisions about students and instruction. The amount of new learning acquired through this research has not only made me a better leader but has shown me areas of improvement and goals to set for myself as a leader striving to be an asset to her district.

A true leader not only leads but creates leaders. The creation of leaders goes beyond delegating tasks to those who work with you. The creation of leaders involves establishing trust, modeling, sharing knowledge, and supporting those who follow you to become leaders in their own rights. Day et al. (2014) posed an interesting distinction related to the difference between developing individual leaders and leadership development by stating “leader development focuses on developing individual leaders whereas leadership development focuses on a process of development that inherently involves multiple individuals” (p. 64). Leadership development is finding the talents in the people who are a part of your team and nurturing the development of that talent in a way that also develops leadership potential. There is a Latin proverb that I keep at

the forefront of my mind as it relates to my work in education: It is by the hands of many that a great work is made light. A true leader knows this work cannot be done in isolation.

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APPENDIX A: INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL

EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY

University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board

4N-64 Brody Medical Sciences Building · Mail Stop 682

600 Moye Boulevard · Greenville, NC 27834

Office 252-744-2914 · Fax 252-744-2284 · rede.ecu.edu/umcirb/

Notification of Exempt Certification

From: Social/Behavioral IRB

To: Abbey Futrell

CC: Travis Lewis

Date: 4/30/2020

UMCIRB 20-000819

Re: FROM PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING: A PERSONALIZED APPROACH TO PROFESSIONAL LEARNING FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS IN RURAL NORTHEASTERN NORTH CAROLINA

I am pleased to inform you that your research submission has been certified as exempt on 4/30/2020. This study is eligible for Exempt Certification under category # 2b.

It is your responsibility to ensure that this research is conducted in the manner reported in your application and/or protocol, as well as being consistent with the ethical principles of the Belmont Report and your profession.

This research study does not require any additional interaction with the UMCIRB unless there are proposed changes to this study. Any change, prior to implementing that change, must be submitted to the UMCIRB for review and approval. The UMCIRB will determine if the change impacts the eligibility of the research for exempt status. If more substantive review is required, you will be notified within five business days.

Document	Description
Consent Form(0.01)	Consent Forms
Final Defense Proposal (0.01)	Study Protocol or Grant Application
Interview Protocol (0.01)	Interview/Focus Group Scripts/Questions
Interview Questions (0.01)	Surveys and Questionnaires

For research studies where a waiver of HIPAA Authorization has been approved, each of the waiver criteria in 45 CFR 164.512(i)(2)(ii) has been met. Additionally, the elements of PHI to be collected as described in items 1 and 2 of the Application for Waiver of Authorization have been determined to be the minimal necessary for the specified research.

The Chairperson (or designee) does not have a potential for conflict of interest on this study.

IRB00000705 East Carolina U IRB #1 (Biomedical) IORG0000418
IRB00003781 East Carolina U IRB #2 (Behavioral/SS) IORG0000418

APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT



Informed Consent to Participate in Research Information to consider before taking part in research that has no more than minimal risk.

Title of Research Study:

From Professional Development to Professional Learning: A Personalized Approach to Professional Learning for Teachers in Rural Northeastern North Carolina

Principal Investigator: Abbey L. Askew

Institution, Department or Division: Edgecombe County Public Schools

Address: 3211 N. Main Street – Tarboro, NC. 27886

Telephone #: 252-396-5543

Researchers at East Carolina University (ECU) and Edgecombe County Public Schools study issues related to society, health problems, environmental problems, behavior problems and the human condition. To do this, we need the help of volunteers who are willing to take part in research.

Why am I being invited to take part in this research?

The purpose of this research is to explore the impact of personalized professional development on teaching practices. You are being invited to take part in this research because you are an elementary teacher at the school being studied. The decision to take part in this research is yours to make. By doing this research, we hope to learn if personalized professional learning impacts teacher instructional practices.

If you volunteer to take part in this research, you will be one of about 10 people to do so.

Are there reasons I should not take part in this research?

There are not any known reasons why an individual should not take part in this research.

What other choices do I have if I do not take part in this research?

You have the option to choose not to participate in this research.

Where is the research going to take place and how long will it last?

The research will be conducted at Stocks Elementary School. You will be asked to volunteer for this study during the normal school day over the next four months.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to do the following:

- Participate in classroom observations
- Participate in coaching sessions with instructional staff
- Complete surveys and needs assessments
- Attend orientation and information sessions

What might I experience if I take part in the research?

We don't know of any risks (the chance of harm) associated with this research. Any risks that may occur with this research are no more than what you would experience in everyday life. We don't know if you will benefit from taking part in this study. There may not be any personal benefit to you but the information gained by doing this research may help others in the future.

Will I be paid for taking part in this research?

We will not be able to pay you for the time you volunteer while being in this study.

Will it cost me to take part in this research?

It will not cost you any money to be part of the research

Who will know that I took part in this research and learn personal information about me?

ECU and the people and organizations listed below may know that you took part in this research and may see information about you that is normally kept private. With your permission, these people may use your private information to do this research:

- The University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) and its staff have responsibility for overseeing your welfare during this research and may need to see research records that identify you.

How will you keep the information you collect about me secure? How long will you keep it?

All information will be kept in a locked file cabinet and all electronic information will be kept on a flash drive that will be in the locked file cabinet as well. The file cabinet will be kept in the office of the researcher. The research will be destroyed after seven years.

What if I decide I don't want to continue in this research?

You can stop at any time after it has already started. There will be no consequences if you stop and you will not be criticized. You will not lose any benefits that you normally receive.

Who should I contact if I have questions?

The people conducting this study will be able to answer any questions concerning this research, now or in the future. You may contact the Principal Investigator at 252-396-5543, Monday – Friday between the hours of 8:00 am and 5:00 pm.

If you have questions about your rights as someone taking part in research, you may call the University & Medical Center Institutional Review Board (UMCIRB) at phone number 252-744-2914 (days, 8:00 am-5:00 pm). If you would like to report a complaint or concern about this research study, you may call the Director for Human Research Protections, at 252-744-2914

Is there anything else I should know?

There is no additional information that you should know.

I have decided I want to take part in this research. What should I do now?

The person obtaining informed consent will ask you to read the following and if you agree, you should sign this form:

- I have read (or had read to me) all of the above information.

- I have had an opportunity to ask questions about things in this research I did not understand and have received satisfactory answers.
- I know that I can stop taking part in this study at any time.
- By signing this informed consent form, I am not giving up any of my rights.
- I have been given a copy of this consent document, and it is mine to keep.

Participant's Name (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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Person Obtaining Informed Consent: I have conducted the initial informed consent process. I have orally reviewed the contents of the consent document with the person who has signed above and answered all of the person's questions about the research.

Person Obtaining Consent (PRINT)	Signature	Date
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APPENDIX C: PRE-ASSESSMENT SURVEY

1. How effective has instructional coaching support you have experienced prior to January 2021 been in helping you improve instructional practices?
 - a. Very effective. Somewhat effective Not effective No coaching received
2. How effective has district sponsored professional development provided prior to January 2021 been in helping you improve instructional practices?
 - a. Very effective. Somewhat effective Not effective No coaching received
3. Please rank the following learning formats in your order of preference:
 - a. Face to face
 - b. Online
 - c. Blended
4. Please indicate your preference for the following resources when receiving instructional support:

a. Text	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
b. Video	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
c. Examples	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
d. Peer observation	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
e. Dialogue	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
f. Modeling	Preferred	Neutral	Not Preferred
5. How do you prefer to receive feedback? (Please select all that apply.)
 - a. Face to face
 - b. Emailed
 - c. Both
6. When do you prefer to engage in professional learning support (Coaching)?
 - a. Before school
 - b. After school
 - c. Planning period
 - d. Virtually
7. What is your current understanding of personalized professional learning? Please define below.
8. Describe any previous personalized professional learning experiences you have experienced.
9. Years of teaching
 - a. 0-3
 - b. 4-9
 - c. 10-14
 - d. 15+

10. Race

- a. Black or African-American
- b. White
- c. Hispanic / LatinX
- d. Native American
- e. Other
- f. Prefer not to disclose

11. Gender

- a. Male
- b. Female

12. How often do you proactively seek out professional development opportunities for yourself?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Yearly
- e. Never

13. How often do you receive constructive feedback about instruction from administrators, coaches and/or colleagues?

- a. Daily
- b. Weekly
- c. Monthly
- d. Yearly
- e. Never

APPENDIX D: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. As you reflect on your personalized professional learning experience in the Online Boot Camp, what changes in your instructional practices have occurred that you would attribute to your personalized learning experience?
2. Explain how this professional learning was different from prior professional development sessions you've experienced?
3. What about this professional learning made it personalized for you?
4. Tell me how you feel personalizing professional learning makes a significant difference in learning for you?
5. What about this experience could be different to better accommodate your professional learning needs?

APPENDIX E: COURSE FLYER



ECPS INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNOLOGY BOOT CAMP NAVIGATING ONLINE TEACHING

Looking to strengthen your online teaching muscles? The ECPS Digital Teaching and Learning Team, in conjunction with CISS, will be offering the first iteration of the Navigating Online Teaching Boot Camp.

BOOT CAMP MODULES INCLUDE:

- BUILDING ONLINE TEACHER-STUDENT RELATIONSHIPS
- ESTABLISHING TEACHER CLARITY & CREDIBILITY
- CREATING ENGAGING TASKS
- PLANNING UNITS FOR DISTANCE LEARNING
- QUALITY FEEDBACK & ASSESSMENT

Cohort 1 will begin on December 7, 2020
and run through February 19, 2021
Please email afutrell@ecps.us with any questions

ONLY 25 SEATS AVAILABLE FOR
COHORT 1

REGISTER AT: [BIT.LY/ECPSONLINE](https://bit.ly/ecpsonline)

APPENDIX F: HOWARD COUNTY INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK



The diagram shows a circular process with four main stages: DESIGN (top, yellow), FACILITATE (right, red), REFLECT (bottom, blue), and ADJUST (left, green). Each stage is connected to the next by arrows. Surrounding the cycle are four phrases: 'LEAD WITH COURAGE' (top), 'PURSUE TO IMPROVE' (right), 'CHILDREN FIRST' (bottom), and 'STAND TOGETHER' (left). The center contains the text 'ECPS INSTRUCTIONAL FRAMEWORK'.

ECPS Framework for Learning

What is the **ECPS Framework for Learning**?

The ECPS Framework for Learning helps provide a common language shared by the district to ensure high quality learning experiences for ALL students. The ECPS Framework for Learning will serve as a foundation for identifying **high-impact** daily instructional practices to best inform teaching and learning.

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	STAKEHOLDERS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design student experiences marked with cognitive rigor.* Set clear goals for learning. Develop and use collaborative learner profiles in the design process. Leverage community resources and Purposeful Partnerships to support and enhance learning. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand learning objectives and expectations for learning. Set and achieve goals for learning. Participate in developing their own collaborative learner profile. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand learning objectives and expectations for learning. Understand student interest demographics to provide support for educational experiences.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage students in learning every day, inclusive of the ECPS Everyday Essentials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reading Writing Critical Questioning (formative assessments) Critical Thinking Speaking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with the ECPS Everyday Essentials on a daily basis. Advocate for and utilize instructional accommodations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Collaborate with schools to create purposeful partnerships to support student needs and goals.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze student progress towards goals through the use of multiple interim, diagnostic, and formative data sets. Consider accommodations and interventions customized for each student. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Analyze and use data sets to set goals for instructional growth and improvement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand the ECPS Everyday Essentials as an expectation for teachers and students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modify instruction in response to data. Align classroom practices to the MTSS Plan for Tiered Instruction. Model collaborative practices around data and instructional practices. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage in classroom practices that allow students to receive appropriate extensions, redirections, and interventions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support student needs by volunteering time and resources to support instructional and emotional needs and extensions of learning.

Rev 8/12/19

*Cognitive rigor is marked and measured by the depth and extent students are challenged and engaged to demonstrate and communicate their knowledge and thinking. Cognitive rigor also marks and measures the depth and complexity of student learning experiences.

APPENDIX G: SAMPLE MODULE ASSESSMENT FORM

2/26/2021

Deep Dive 1: Teacher-Student Relationships from a Distance

Deep Dive 1: Teacher-Student Relationships from a Distance

Evaluate your current level of implementation:

* Required

Reflecting on teacher-student relationships and mindframes of great teachers *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly

Considering characteristics of teacher-student relationships *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly

Maintaining teacher-student relationships *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly



Fostering healthy peer relationships *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly

Reaching the hard-to-teach student *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly

Increasing touchpoints with students and families *

1 2 3 4 5

Never Regularly

Next

This form was created inside of Edgecombe County Public Schools. [Report Abuse](#)

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