Professional Development for Principals in the Accountability Era

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Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL)
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Introduction

What is the state of the art and science with regard to professional development for principals? What is the status of principal professional development in the four-state region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia? This policy paper attempts to answer these two questions through a review of the literature, seven interviews, and a document review concerning professional development practices for principals in the region. It concludes with implications for policymakers and recommendations.

The reform of public education has been a major policy issue for more than 20 years, dating back to the 1983 publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Reform efforts have had as primary goals the development of higher standards or higher expectations for students and the use of assessment instruments to gauge whether students and schools are meeting these standards.

To say that perceptions of the results of those efforts have been mixed is an understatement, with advocates of higher standards arguing that externally imposed, top-down mandates can substantially improve public schools and opponents contending that such efforts are both heavy-handed and intrusive. Thompson (1994) believes the competing entities have one thing in common:

> After more than a decade of marginally effective reform, diverse stakeholders are coming to the same conclusion: Demanding more from our schools is not enough—the system itself (at local, district, and state levels) must be fundamentally changed. Piecemeal reform efforts of the past, some suggest, have been tantamount to applying a bandaid to assuage schools' ills when what is needed is major surgery.

Central to this conclusion is the question of whether the public education system has the ability, or capacity, to meet increased demands. O'Day, Goertz, and Floden (1995) define capacity as "the ability of the education system to help all students meet more challenging standards," and suggest that system capacity can be enhanced by improving worker performance (e.g., teachers and administrators), increasing resources (e.g., personnel, materials, or technology), restructuring how work is organized, and/or by restructuring how services are delivered.

All of these capacity-building recommendations have a pronounced effect on those who work in schools. If students are to rise to higher standards, so must teachers, administrators, and others who are involved in educating students in public schools. Any discussions of enhancing capacity, therefore, must include such factors as "relationships between individual [e.g., teacher or administrator] capacity and the abilities of schools and districts to accomplish standards-based, or systemic, reform"[1] (O'Day et al., 1995).

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[1] This use of the term *systemic reform* is consistent with that of both Thompson (1994) and Lewis (1989), who view it not as a list of detailed prescriptions for improving education but rather a philosophical perspective that

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The relationship between capacity building and this report is that the majority of reforms aimed at building capacity are provided through routine professional development offerings—most often for teachers. This approach is often predicated on the premise that if educators are exposed to new ideas about teaching and learning, they will improve teaching or leadership practice by themselves and outside experts are the best sources for providing those new ideas.

Little (1993) argues that this particular strategy for capacity building is of limited utility if the aim is to deepen practitioners' knowledge or to cultivate their ability to apply their own learning to practice. O'Day and colleagues (1995) confirm that the traditional model of professional development, in which the involvement of participants is largely passive, "reflects a limited conception of the dimensions of teacher capacity necessary to support and sustain instructional reform. This model also ignores the role of the school and other communities of practice." Instead, O'Day and colleagues recommend capacity-building professional development that focuses directly on student learning and achievement, is school-embedded, and is ongoing rather than intermittent.

In this policy paper, the literature review concerning principal professional development and documentation of professional development practices for principals in the four-state region incorporates the following constructs as the lenses through which the findings will be viewed:

- the extent to which professional development activities are focused on specific school improvement goals (i.e., on-task)
- the extent to which they are job embedded (i.e., on-site or deal with on-site issues and data)
- the extent to which they feature cycles of evaluation and revision (i.e., ongoing)

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advocates a broader rethinking and restructuring of schools. Systemic reform efforts, unlike specific reform strategies, embrace almost every aspect of schooling and include such dimensions as the learning environment, educational relationships, working conditions, school-community relations, shared decision making, and the nature of teaching and learning.

Literature Review Findings

Any effort to assemble the literature on professional development for principals into a concise but thorough examination encounters some limitations. First, there is no universal framework that is appropriate across all contexts for exploring education leadership. This is particularly true where multiple constructs are involved (e.g., the effectiveness of professional development for principals' learning; the relationship, if any, of principals' professional development to school improvement and/or student learning; and the effects of principals' leadership in general).

Second, while various frameworks have been proposed for examining connections between education leadership and related phenomena, as well as for exploring leadership in general (Griffiths, 1995; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood, 1994; Ogawa & Bossert, 1995; and Slater, 1995), the result has not been a substantial body of empirical research. As Hallinger and Heck note, "This presents a challenge for a review seeking to summarize the effects of educational leadership" (1998, p. 160).

Third, frameworks and theories can themselves become problematic to the extent that they are unable to account for the complexities that characterize schools, an issue that also creates challenges for researchers who hope to study causal relationships. The axiom that correlation is not causation appears to summarize well the difficulties researchers have encountered in attempting to isolate variables in such a multifaceted environment. All of these limitations apply to the current review.

The literature review was to focus on the relationship between professional development activities for principals and (1) the principal's role as instructional leader and (2) student learning. What we discovered, however, as did Lammert (2004) in a similar endeavor, was that it was exceedingly difficult to extract research on principals' professional development from the broader literature related to principal preparation and performance. As Lammert notes, "Many of the documents . . . pertaining to this topic discuss problems with principal training as a whole, either not making the distinction between preparation and professional development programs, or blurring the 'line' between the two" (p. 1).

A related problem is the virtual absence of any scientifically based research linking professional development to changes in administrator behavior, school functioning, or student learning. Most of the literature is in the form of anecdotal information or reporting of perceptions with no follow-up or validation. This lack of empirical data necessarily relegates much of the "research" on professional development for principals to the realm of reasoned conjecture.

Given those circumstances, we have chosen to begin the review with an examination of the condition of research in the field of professional development in general. An investigation of a strand of research within the school effectiveness literature that examines the principal's influence on student achievement follows. In an effort to situate principals' professional development within the broader context of recommendations for improving school leadership,

the review continues with a brief look at principal preparation programs and criticisms thereof, provides an examination of the types of traditional professional development programs available to principals, and concludes with an exploration of an emerging shift toward principal-centered professional development (Barth, 1986).

The search for relevant literature was conducted using Academic Search Premier, which offers full-text documents from more than 4,600 publications, 3,600 of which are peer-reviewed journals. That search was supported by consulting the Current Index to Journals in Education, the Educational Resource Information Center (ERIC) database, ERIC abstracts, Electronic Collections Online (ECO), FirstSearch Dissertation Abstracts, InfoTrac, JSTOR, LexisNexis Academic, PapersFirst, SpringerLink, TopicSearch, and WorldCat.

The Condition of Education Professional Development Research in General

Michael Schmoker (2004), an author, speaker, and national consultant, argues that "among education's most curious contradictions is the persistence of feckless staff development practices that nearly everyone recognizes but few step up to change" (p. 429), adding that while we know full well, and have for some time, how to improve schools and the lives of the people who inhabit them, we nonetheless continue to engage in reform initiatives that have consistently proven useless. That we persist in the pursuit of strategies known to fail is a claim also forwarded nearly 15 years ago by Seymour Sarason in *The Predictable Failure of School Reform* (1990). Six years later, Sarason concluded, regretfully, that the "adage [he] stated repetitively in the book" remained true: "the more things change, the more they remain the same" (1996, p. 338).

Schmoker (2004) points to the absence of an evidence-based culture in professional development, citing a study of district practices (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001) that found that "whims, fads, opportunism and ideology" prevailed rather than the promotion of "coherence and alignment between staff development and academic goals" (p. 83). Workshops tended to focus on the hot topics of the day, the effectiveness of which were evaluated by high participation rates rather than whether the offerings led to any changes in practice or increases in student achievement.

Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, and Wahlstrom (2004) take the same position, writing that "little research to date has inquired about how practicing administrators—outside their participation in formal programs—continue their professional learning. . . . We know little about which experiences are helpful and why" (p. 67). Achilles and Tienken (2005) are equally troubled by the prevailing lack of evidence in the literature of professional development:

> Regardless of self-reports and surveys, scant, if any, replicable, scientific-based research (SBR) relates PD to (a) changes in teacher behavior and (b) improved student outcomes. . . . Because professional development has been around a long time and has received huge expenditures of time, funds and effort, one might expect demonstrable, replicable SBR evidence of PD successes. (2005, p. 305)

Leithwood and colleagues challenge anyone to provide two or more high-quality, replicable, independent, empirical studies that demonstrate conclusively any positive effects of professional development on student short- or long-term success.

Also, Carpenter (2000) reports that professional development has had little impact on either student achievement or school improvement in general, and Newmann, King, and Youngs (2001) write that "The case for substantial investment in [professional development] is vulnerable because of an absence of research that links specific forms of [professional development] to changes in teacher learning and practice and to student achievement gains." Covert (2003) cites "a lack of studies which demonstrate professional development effects on teachers or student outcomes" (pp. 16-17) as well, and Tienken (2003) finds minimal evidence that professional development changes either teacher practice or student achievement.

Similarly, Guskey (1997) writes that "For decades, researchers have tried unsuccessfully to determine the true impact of professional development," but concludes "we still know relatively little about what difference [staff development endeavors] make." He cites "confused criteria of success" as one of the particularly notable reasons why past attempts to identify the effective components of professional development practices have failed. Our literature review confirms the accuracy of Guskey's (1997) observation concerning confused criteria of effectiveness. The most prevalent effectiveness measure appears to be determining participant satisfaction through evaluations concerning topic relevance, presentation skills of presenters, and locale and format of the presentation. Corcoran, Fuhrman, and Belcher (2001) note that high participation rates and high levels of teacher satisfaction are the primary criteria for evaluation of professional development activities. Such evaluations may, as Guskey notes, improve the design and/or delivery of professional development, but they are "extremely limited as a measure of effectiveness." He describes them as "highly subjective and not particularly reliable" if one is looking for scientifically based research.

An examination of the Kentucky Leadership Academy (KLA) by Coe and Adams-Rodgers (2000) reflects Guskey's concern with effectiveness criteria as well. Relying on self-reporting of changes by participating principals and interviews and observations of teachers whose principals were KLA participants, the authors report that "the main impacts of principals' KLA training on teachers were closer monitoring of their classroom performance and increased opportunities for teacher teamwork, mentoring and reflection on their work." They make clear that there was no attempt to analyze student achievement data, focusing instead on "documenting the ways in which participants changed what they do" (p. 9).

Other criteria for assessing the effectiveness of professional development have included examining how participants' acquisition of new knowledge or skills has affected such phenomena as classroom behavior, student attitudes, and attendance or graduation rates. The use of student learning as the principal criterion for effectiveness appears to be rare (Guskey & Sparks, 1991; Sparks, 1995).

At least two investigations, however, seem to have avoided the pitfalls of confused criteria of effectiveness. Both Acquarelli and Mumme's (1996) and Killion's (2002) research demonstrated documented increases in student achievement on standardized subject matter

examinations as a result of professional development activities designed for participating teachers. The conclusion drawn in both studies was that the professional development activities resulted in significant changes in teaching practices and student achievement as documented by surveys, observations, case studies, school profiling, and test data.

Six years after his initial search for studies linking professional development to student learning, Guskey revisited the issue, examining 13 lists concerning effective professional development practices, all of which had been published in the previous decade.[2] The two studies in the previous paragraph notwithstanding (Acquarelli & Mumme, 1996; Killion, 2002), Guskey suggests that little has changed. Characterizing the "evidence" as "inconsistent and sometimes contradictory," he came to three related conclusions:

1. There still appears to be little agreement among professional development practitioners or researchers about criteria for effectiveness.
2. Currently identified characteristics of effective professional development are tentative, tending to feature "yes, but" elements (e.g., yes, sufficient time and resources are necessary, but time and resources are scarce).
3. While the potential of research-based decision making in professional development has not been fulfilled, it need not remain so. (2003, pp. 749-750)

Guskey finds that the qualities influencing the effectiveness of professional development are "multiple and highly complex," and concedes that it may be "unreasonable . . . to assume that a single list of characteristics leading to broad-brush policies and guidelines . . . will ever emerge" (2003, p. 250).

In their meta-analysis, Achilles and Tienken observe that "mixed results are the norm" (2005, p. 310) in regard to a substantial evidentiary basis for relating professional development to student learning:

Results of almost 50 years of legislated spending on teacher improvement and its impact on student achievement have not yet been determined by consistent, replicable, empirical studies. The literature landscape is strewn with studies that possess one or more of the following characteristics: (a) the study is based primarily on teachers' self-reported perceptions of the impacts of PD on their teaching behavior or student achievement; (b) mixed, neutral or negative impact on student achievement and teacher behavior; and (c) flawed methodology. Even some of the stronger studies have one of the weaknesses listed. (2005, p. 310)

From the meta-analyses undertaken by both Guskey (2003) and Achilles and Tienken (2005), one can safely conclude that the relationship between professional development and student

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[2] The lists were obtained from publications by the American Federation of Teachers, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the Education Development Center, the Educational Research Service, the Educational Testing Service, the Eisenhower Professional Development Program, the National Governors' Association, the National Institute for Science Education, the National Partnership for Excellence and Accountability in Teaching, the National Staff Development Council, and the U.S. Department of Education.

learning has not yet been established in a scientifically acceptable fashion. There is even less evidence for linking the principal's role as an instructional leader to improvements in student learning, as the bulk of the literature on professional development focuses on teachers.

It is clear that accountability for instructional leadership rests with principals. It is they who are learners-in-chief, bearing the responsibility for maintaining positive learning environments throughout their schools, and, as is the case with professionals in any field—law, medicine, or education—they require the necessary support and resources to successfully execute their roles.

Improving School Leadership

Over the past two decades, dozens of reports have issued recommendations for improving America's schools. Congressional commissions; legislative and governors' associations; foundation think tanks; the business community; university researchers; and various regional, state, and local education agencies have weighed in on the subject of heightened accountability for both teachers and administrators, exerting pressure on educators to ensure that students achieve at increasingly higher levels. In order to keep up with these demands, professional development programs for classroom teachers have expanded.

Similar programs for administrators, however, have been slower to develop. A possible explanation for this may be that there is much more research available about effective teaching than about effective leadership, owing perhaps to the semantic abstraction of the term leadership. Instructional leadership in particular suffers from a lack of definitional consensus, and is "more often a slogan than a well-defined set of leadership practices" (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 6).

Additionally, most school improvement programs and strategic plans emphasize improvement of instruction, leading to a greater focus on professional development for teachers rather than for principals. The National Staff Development Council reports that the programs they provide for teacher development outweigh those for principals by a ratio of three to one (Caldwell, 1986).

As teachers are the closest points of instructional contact with students, it is logical that their professional development is a priority. The widespread emphasis in the literature, as well as in the standards of various accrediting bodies, on the role of the principal as instructional leader, however, suggests that efforts also need to be made to provide systematic professional development opportunities for principals. With the current emphasis on increased student learning, accountability measures, and standardized assessments engendered by the federal No Child Left Behind Act, principals need this kind of support.

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) echo the findings of the effective schools research when they contend that if you "scratch the surface of an excellent school . . . you are likely to find an excellent principal." Likewise, Barth (1986) reports that a growing body of literature suggests, "behind every successful school is a successful principal" (p. 156). Drake and Roe (2002) and

Pierce (2000) call the principal "the passport to school success," emphasizing that contemporary models of school reform acknowledge the many roles of the principal (e.g., organizational manager, staff team leader, promoter of teacher development, instructional leader, and community leader). But are those models predicated on any evidentiary standard? Is there empirical proof linking principal performance and student achievement?

Zirkel and Greenwood (1987) raised those questions some time ago, taking note of a number of studies (Bennett, 1986; Brandt, 1982; Edmonds, 1982; Finn, 1984; Fiske, 1986; and Ratner, 1985) that claimed to confirm "the simple, common sense notion that the great school principal is indeed principal in making the school great." As a result, the authors point out, "this 'principal principle' has been given virtual legal legitimacy without regard to limitations in the underlying research" (p. 255).

Among the limitations Zirkel and Greenwood (1987) list is an absence of "multivariate, longitudinal studies designed to trace causation" (p. 256). Others shared their concerns, expressing caution in attributing causation arising from the leadership variable (Murphy, Hallinger, & Mitman, 1983; and Rowan, Bossert, & Dwyer, 1983).

While there is much yet to learn about principals' leadership and how it affects student learning, there is now some evidence on which to build. In particular, there are three fairly recent meta-analyses that attempt to establish that connection (Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Leithwood et al., 2004; and Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). All three analyses conclude that principals do, in fact, have a measurable impact on school effectiveness and student achievement.

To be included in the Hallinger and Heck (1998) meta-analysis, studies needed to have clearly conceptualized and measured principal leadership as an independent variable and an explicit measure of school performance as a dependent variable. In addition to studies published within the United States, the investigators sought to include studies conducted in other countries in an effort to provide an international perspective. Forty published journal articles, dissertations, and papers presented at peer-reviewed conferences were chosen for analysis.

The authors employed variations on models developed by Pitner (1988) to classify the studies they examined. The first, the direct-effects model, proposes that principals' practices can have direct effects on school outcomes; the second, the mediated-effects model, hypothesizes that principals achieve their effects on school outcomes through indirect means;

and the third, the reciprocal-effects model, explores how principals affect those around them and are, in turn, affected by them in an interactive process resulting in particular outcomes.

More than half of the studies examined by Hallinger and Heck (1998) in this analysis featured direct-effects models, which assumed that the identified effects could be both measured reliably and viewed independently (i.e., apart from other related variables). Researchers who used this model generally felt it unnecessary to control for the potential

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effects of other variables (e.g., climate, teaching, and instructional schedule). The few investigators who did take into consideration competing variables such as socioeconomic status or previous student performance did not hypothesize them as variables that interact with principal performance or mediate effects on selected outcomes.

Most of the direct-effect studies were conducted in the early 1980s, and many came under criticism for conflating assumptions with findings (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Pitner, 1988; Rowan, Dwyer, & Bossert, 1982; and Zirkel & Greenwood, 1987). The analytical methods used were primarily bivariate, involving correlation, *t* tests or chi square types to examine principal effects. Unsurprisingly, given the complexities inherent in the school environment and their probable interaction, researchers using the direct-effects model have been unable to generate any sufficiently sound or consistent evidence of principal influence on student outcomes (Braughton & Riley, 1991; Cantu, 1994; Cheng, 1994; Krug, 1986; O'Day, 1984; and van de Grift, 1990).

Hallinger and Heck (1998) conclude that the direct-effects model has limited utility at best for studying the effects of principals' leadership with respect to student outcomes, owing largely to its conceptual limitations. The model "offer[s] little hope as a means of contributing substantially to our understanding of questions concerning either if or how leadership influences student outcomes" (p. 166).

Mediated-effects models produced the second highest number of studies in the meta-analysis conducted by Hallinger and Heck (1998). This model hypothesizes that leadership practices can contribute to desired school outcomes, but that the contribution is virtually always mediated through other people, events, or institutional factors (Leithwood, 1994). Mediated-effects studies, thus, take into account the interplay of variables within the school environment. The primary analytical methods employed in these kinds of studies are likewise more complex than those used in direct-effects research.

Initially, investigators who were involved in mediated-effects studies relied largely on regression analyses in which "the strength of the indirect effects [were] implied through the use of interaction effects" (Hallinger & Heck, 1998). Later studies began to employ more sophisticated techniques (e.g., variations on path analysis) that permit the simultaneous calculation of direct and indirect effects (Hallinger, Bickman, & Davis, 1996; Heck, Larson, & Marcoulides, 1990; Leithwood, 1994). Hallinger & Heck (1998) contend that improved consistency in findings emerged only after these kinds of methods began to be used by researchers.

The third model used by Hallinger and Heck (1998) to classify studies of principals' influence on school effectiveness, the reciprocal-effects approach, yielded the smallest number of studies in their review, with only 2 of the 40 consistent with the model. A potential explanation is that two of the necessary elements for studying reciprocal effects—sophisticated design methods, such as structural equation modeling or hierarchical linear modeling, and ample longitudinal data for analysis—were not widely available to researchers at the time the meta-analysis was done. The assumption that underlies the reciprocal-effects approach (i.e.,

that such effects are most likely to accrue over time) creates the need for longitudinal data, which are typically difficult to acquire.

Among the conclusions reached by Hallinger and Heck (1998) is that the number of studies investigating principals' effectiveness in the period from 1980 to 1995 was a substantial increase over the number Bridges (1982) found between 1967 and 1980. They discern an increasing sophistication in research design and analysis as well, which they find encouraging. They are clear, however, about the limitations of the research they reviewed:

> The general pattern of results drawn from this review supports the belief that principals exercise a measurable, though indirect, effect on school effectiveness and student achievement. While this indirect effect is relatively small, it is statistically significant and, we assert, meaningful. . . . Despite this generally positive assessment of the literature, we must also emphasize the limitations of this body of research. Even as a group the studies do not resolve the most important theoretical and practical issues entailed in understanding the principal's role in contributing to school effectiveness. These concern the means by which principals achieve an impact on school outcomes as well as the interplay with contextual forces that influence the exercise of school leadership. (p. 186)

Leithwood and Riehl (2003) share a similar position, writing that "Amidst the seeming certainty that leadership matters, there is much that we do not yet understand about effective educational leadership" (p. 1). They agree with Hallinger and Heck (1998), however, that a growing body of research evidence documents the effects of leadership and the effects of leadership on student learning are small but significant: "Leadership has significant effects on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of curriculum and teachers' instruction" (p. 2).

Like Hallinger and Heck (1998), Leithwood and colleagues (2004) examined the research connecting principals' leadership with student outcomes. They also identified three kinds of research models that have been used to examine claims about the effects of school leadership on student learning. The first model is the case study (Gezi, 1990; Mortimore, 1993), which generally focuses on atypical school environments (i.e., those in which students appear to be performing significantly above or below expectations). These kinds of studies, because they generally involve outlier designs, have typically demonstrated fairly large leadership effects on student achievement (Mortimore, 1993; Scheurich, 1998).

The second model identified by Leithwood and colleagues (2004) is the large-scale quantitative study of the sort reported in Hallinger and Heck (1998). As was noted by the latter, these investigations have concluded that the combined direct and indirect effects of school leadership on student achievement are small but educationally significant. Leithwood and colleagues support that finding and report that, while leadership explains only 3% to 5% of the variation in student learning across schools, that figure accounts for about one quarter of the total variation (10% to 20%) explained by all school-level variables (Creemers & Reezigt,

1996) after controlling for student intake factors. Hill (1998) argues that classroom factors explain only a slightly larger proportion of the variation in student achievement—about a third.

Leithwood and colleagues (2004) identify the third strand of research on the effects of leadership on student achievement as also large scale and quantitative in nature. The difference is that the studies in this model focus not on effects of overall leadership, but on the effects of particular leadership practices. Included are Braughton and Riley's (1991) examination of principals' knowledge of reading processes and elementary students' reading achievement, Duggan's (1984) study of the influence of differing principal supervisory communication styles on teacher and student outcomes, and Vernotica's (1988) investigation of principals' goal clarity and interaction behaviors on teacher and student outcomes in elementary schools.

The third meta-analysis, conducted by Waters, Marzano, and McNulty (2003), focuses on large-scale studies of specific leadership practices. To be included in their analyses, each study had to possess the following: quantitative student achievement data; student achievement measured on standardized, norm-referenced tests or some other objective measure of achievement; student achievement as the dependent variable; and teacher perceptions of leadership as the independent variable (p. 2).

From an examination of 70 studies dating back to 1970, Waters, Marzano, and McNulty identify 21 specific leadership responsibilities (e.g., discipline; knowledge of curriculum, instruction, and assessment; and communication) and calculate an average correlation between each responsibility and whatever measures of student achievement were used in the original studies. From these data, they establish that a 10% improvement in student test scores can be expected if the principal increases her "demonstrated abilities in all 21 responsibilities by one standard deviation" (p. 3).

The difference between the meta-analyses provided by Hallinger and Heck (1998) and Leithwood and colleagues (2004) and the meta-analysis by Waters and colleagues (2003) lies primarily in the conclusions they draw. The former analyses identify a small but significant correlation between principals' influence and student achievement and assert that the influence is indirect in nature. The latter analysis, on the other hand, takes the position that "there is a substantial relationship between leadership and student achievement" with an average effect size of .25 (p. 3) and the findings can be translated into a taxonomy of behaviors which, appropriately implemented, can have a direct impact on student achievement. Waters and colleagues state:

> [We have] identified 21 leadership responsibilities that are significantly associated with student achievement. We have translated these results into a balanced leadership framework which describes the knowledge, skills, strategies, and tools leaders need to positively impact student achievement. (p. 2)

Any attempts to draw conclusions from these meta-analyses or the studies reported therein must be tempered by the fact that the data are correlational and do not support causal relationships.

These meta-analyses and studies are in agreement that the principal who can positively impact student learning needs to be adequately prepared and provided with ongoing support in the form of relevant professional development. Whether principals' preparation and professional development are measuring up to expectations remains an open question.

Preparation for the Principalship

The same entities that catalyzed the accountability movement by pronouncing the condition of American education inadequate, drowning in a "rising tide of mediocrity," and unable to prepare students to compete with their global counterparts, acknowledged that superintendents and principals should play a major role in leading schools through the proposed reforms. As a result of these declarations, most states began to re-examine both their preparation and continuing education requirements for principals (DuFour, 1991; Moorman, 1997).

While institutions of higher education have long been the primary providers of programs for the preparation of both teachers and school administrators, universities have come under fire lately from those who charge they have failed to keep pace with current demands (Barkley, Bottoms, Feagin, & Clark, 2001; Educational Research Service, 1999; Farkas, Johnson, Duffett, & Foleno, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 1991; National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1992; National Staff Development Council, 2000; Ramsey, 1999; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Citing major weaknesses in the areas of recruitment, admissions standards, curriculum, and professors, these critics contend that many school administrators are simply ill-prepared to assume the roles and responsibilities of leadership.

Peterson (2002) agrees with the need for high quality preparation to ensure proper training of a new generation of principals. It has been estimated that more than 60% of all principals will leave their positions between 2001 and 2006 either because of retirement or dissatisfaction with the job. It is this job dissatisfaction that concerns most who write on the subject. Studies conducted on the subject of a pending shortage of K-12 administrators had also indicated that any potential crisis would result not from a lack of qualified applicants, but rather from the increasingly unattractive dimensions of the job (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000; Nicholson & Leary, 2001). Among the unfavorable conditions cited by practicing principals were those that, in large part, make up the hostile environment mentioned by Mills (2002): inadequate compensation, long work hours, increased pressure from policymakers and legislators, ongoing criticism, and decreased public confidence. Gerritz, Koppich, and Guthrie (1984) and Haller, Brent, and McNamera (1997) have suggested that there may, in fact, be an overabundance of credentialed administrators given the number of positions available.

Another view concerns the inadequate preparation of principals. In a qualitative study involving interviews with 180 principals in a three-state region, Nicholson and Leary (2001) found that principals expressed discontent with their preparation curricula, which they considered "more theoretical than practical," saying they were left to learn many of the skills

necessary to lead a school "by trial and error" (p. 210). This finding replicates the results of studies conducted by Maher (1987), Goldman and Kempner (1988), and Schnur (1989).

The research thus points to a possible shortage of qualified principals in the near future unless conditions in the schools change, more resources and support systems are put in place to assist principals in their work, and preparation programs and professional development opportunities are realigned to more closely match the demands and responsibilities of the position.

There is, clearly, no shortage of reports or authors contending that the preparation of school leaders is deficient. Levine (2005) argues that existing preparation programs are grossly inadequate and "the quality of leadership in our schools has seldom mattered more" (p. 5). Hess and Kelly (2005) observe that meaningful reform of principal preparation programs must rise to the "challenges confronting principals in 21st-century schooling." Both recommend that education administration programs be rigorously evaluated and those that are found to be inferior be either closed or significantly strengthened. They also recommend an increase in meaningful field experiences with more commitment and resources from districts. However, according to Wildman (2001), the available research providing evidence to claims of program inadequacy at the university level is sparse.

Levine (2005) and Hess and Kelly (2005) give the impression that efforts to reform the field from within are either inadequate or nonexistent, a suggestion that overlooks many of the aggressive and complex changes occurring in leadership preparation programs across the country. Neither report mentions the well-documented changes that have been underway in leadership preparation programs for several years.[3] The Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Administration (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2002), authorized by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) for accreditation decisions, increased programmatic expectations and held programs accountable to them. To date, only 67% of the university educational leadership programs reviewed under the new standards have received accreditation. To suggest that the field has been doing nothing to address the health of the discipline is simply wrong. Young, Orr, Grow, and Ogawa (2005) observe that a number of high-quality programs that are aligned to national standards and based on current research and best practice already exist.

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[3] Entities from individual universities, accrediting bodies, regional research laboratories, states, and professional associations in both educational administration and research (e.g., the American Educational Research Association) convened task forces more than a decade ago to address the issue. The establishment of the Educational Leadership Constituent Council represented the work of such a consortium and was authorized by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) to conduct reviews and make decisions about the quality of university-based graduate programs in educational leadership using the standards developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA). Participating associations included the American Association of Colleges of Teacher Education, the American Association of School Administrators, the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the National Association of Secondary School Principals, the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, and the University Council for Educational Administration. These associations, along with the Council of Chief State School Officers, the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education and the National School Boards Association now comprise the membership of the National Policy Board for Educational Administration.

In summary, in the four years that have passed since Wildman (2001) reported an insufficiency of evidence to claims of program inferiority in universities, little has surfaced to contradict his contention. While a few studies have evaluated various dimensions of leadership programs, nothing conclusive has emerged regarding overall effectiveness. McCarthy (2002) agrees that there is a lack of evidence thus far to support any correlation, positive or negative, between leadership programs and principal effectiveness.

Traditional Professional Development for Principals

Barth (1986) has referred to professional development for principals as a "wasteland," characterized by assorted courses at universities or episodic in-service activities in school districts, incoherently planned and designed by state departments, large school systems, and some universities.

He also points out a paradox in professional development for principals; that is, professional development can be both energy and time depleting, and energy and time replenishing. This paradox, played out to its logical conclusion, can result in barriers to professional development.

There are principals who feel that to engage in professional development is to admit some level of deficiency in knowledge or performance. Others hesitate because, as a result of professional development, they will be required to do or change something for which there is little or no time. Barth (1985) describes such principals as "building up antibodies" to attempts by others to remediate them; so they covertly or even overtly resist professional development. Many principals quite simply refuse to give up precious time to attend programs for their own learning. Principals, it seems, can occasionally be their own obstacles to professional development.

Many traditional forms of professional development draw on common assumptions and logic. Barth (1986) advised: "Find schools where students are achieving at high levels, observe the principals in those schools, identify those behaviors as 'desirable traits,' devise professional development programs based on those traits, and enlist principals into these programs" (p. 156). While this may appear to be sound practice, the flaw in the design comes from the assumption that the schools are sufficiently similar to justify a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development.

Additionally, Caldwell (1986) asserts that we often expect a great deal of change for a minimal amount of effort, assuming that increased leadership competence will derive from simply exposing principals to new ideas and motivational speakers. The effect of that assumption is that professional development activities for principals have been primarily short-term and topic-specific and have been focused on enhancing awareness rather than building skills of an ongoing nature or leading to substantial behavior change.

Prior to 1980, it appears there was no widely held expectation that principals needed professional development. Opportunities at the time were largely incidental, underfunded, and limited in scope and content (Hallinger & Murphy, 1991). Only in the 1990s did mandatory participation in administrative staff development become common, with many states requiring that administrators complete a specified number of in-service hours or courses over a period of years.

Recent research supports the argument that principals need continuous professional development to support their efforts toward school improvement and to revitalize their commitment to maintaining positive learning communities (Alvarado, 1998; Barth, 1986; Birman et al., 2000; Calhoun, 2002; Easton, 2002; Evans & Mohr, 1999; Farkas et al., 2001; Foster, Loving, & Shumate, 2000; Guskey, 1997; Guskey, 2003; Hoffman & Johnston, 2005; National Association of State Boards of Education, 1999; National Staff Development Council, 2000; Neufeld, 1997; Richardson, 2000; Scherer, 2002; Sorenson, 2005). Today's principals are guiding their schools through increasingly difficult challenges posed by increasingly complex circumstances, what Vandenberghe (1995) describes as a *turbulent policy environment*.

The measures of student achievement required by local, state, and federal entities have, in fact, changed the landscape of education accountability. While scrutiny has been directed toward educators in the collective sense, it is primarily principals on whom the burden of school reform—specifically improved student achievement—rests.

However, as was previously noted, a meta-analysis by Leithwood and colleagues (2004) reports that the leadership influence by principals on student learning is more indirect than direct. Principals can indirectly have a positive impact by setting a direction, by providing teachers and others with the necessary support and training to succeed, and by making the institution work—in other words, by developing the vision, the people, and the institution.

Traditional views of professional development for principals have proven disappointing and inadequate to principals. They were based mainly on the assumptions that periodic in-service offerings need to be remedial in nature; that the goal of professional development is to transfer knowledge from experts to practitioners; that the most effective way for principals to learn is to listen to a speaker; and that professional development for principals is a luxury, taking up valuable resources and time (North Central Regional Educational Laboratory, 1994). Traditional practice also assumed that professional development involved acquiring new skills and techniques (Evans & Mohr, 1999) rather than building the capacity for a reflective practice that would assist principals in evaluating their effectiveness in establishing a vision and developing the institution's people and climate.

Joyce and Showers (1983) argue that effective professional development involves a sequence of relevant activities, including presentation of theory, demonstration, practice, feedback, and application. They further contend that short-term conferences or workshops can seldom provide these because the importance of the application phase of training lies in the power of experiential learning (i.e., we learn by doing).

These criticisms of traditional professional development practices are fairly widespread in the recent research, but they are not new. National Staff Development Council President Dennis Sparks (2001) has contended for some time that "only a small portion of what is known about quality staff development is used" and that it is critical that the "belief in 'experts' who 'deliver' knowledge" be replaced with communities of educators who learn through "ongoing collaboration and practice."

Joyce and Showers (2002) agree, noting that traditional professional development practices "probably will not generate the amount of change necessary to affect student achievement" (p. 35). They recommend, as do Fullan (in Sparks, 2003), Sparks (2001), Guskey (2003), and Darling-Hammond (1997), the creation of educator learning communities in which participants "engage in focused, recurring cycles of instruction, assessment and adjustment of instruction" (Schmoker, 2004, p. 430).

Responses from principals to researchers who inquired about their perceived professional development needs would seem to confirm those ideas. Among principals' requests were development opportunities focused on enhancing instructional leadership abilities such as engaging in curriculum development, building team commitment, creating learning communities, and cultivating positive learning climates (Bunce, 2001; Lancaster, 2003; Ricciardi, 1999; Salazar, 2001; Walker, Mitchel, & Turner, 1999); improving supervision and evaluation practices (Petzko et al., 2002); fostering relationships within the school community as well as with parents (Salazar, 2001); and dealing with such daily issues as time management, student discipline, special education issues, technology implementation, and stress (Petzko et al., 2002; Walker et al., 1999). Salazar (2001) notes that the 623 principals who responded to her survey identified the areas in which they were being held accountable by the district or state as their primary interests.

What these studies suggest is that principals do perceive a need to continue their learning. Barth (1986) addresses the concept of the principal-as-learner and suggests three appropriate questions for framing effective professional development opportunities for principals:

1. Under what conditions will principals become learners?
2. Under what conditions will principals assume major responsibility for their learning?
3. What conditions will principals devise to encourage and support their own learning? (p. 157)

Arguing that "too many attempts at professional development for principals are attempts at group growth," Barth believes that participation in learning communities can create "a shared sense of purpose" (p. 159).

The recommendation for establishing communities of learners to enhance school improvement echoes another set of assumptions that serve to empower principals not only as school leaders, but as adult learners. These assumptions include the following: ongoing professional development is required for significant change to occur; school change is due in

part to individual change; a goal of professional development is to support the inquiry into and study of teaching and learning; principals learn as a result of training, practice, feedback, and reflection; professional development is essential to school development; and professional development should be primarily school focused and embedded in the job (Mann, 1997).

The last point (i.e., that professional development should be school focused and embedded in the job) is also one on which there is a growing consensus (Alvarado, 1998; Birman et al., 2000; National Staff Development Council, 2005; Scherer, 2002; Stigler [in Willis, 2002]).

Acknowledging principals as key figures in the effort to improve student learning is imperative to understanding the special professional development needs they have. Principals are crucial to creating conditions that lead to effective schools. A number of studies indicate that in schools with high achievement and a clear sense of community, components necessary for school improvement, principals make the difference (Boyer, 1983; DuFour, 1991; Elmore, 2000; Hallinger & Heck, 1998; Institute for Educational Leadership, 2000; Keller, 1998; Walters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003; Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Improved professional development gives principals not only the confidence to take on their leadership roles, but also the competence to be successful and motivated through satisfaction with their work (Howley, Chadwick, & Howley, 2002).

Over the years, three major philosophical views that have guided the training and professional development of school administrators have emerged: traditional/scientific management, craft, and reflective inquiry (Daresh, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). Each view or model proposes unique principles on which the purposes and content of professional development are predicated.

Traditional management exposes the principal to the research base on management and the behavioral sciences and the rules of efficient and effective organizational management. In the older versions of this model, the learner was the passive recipient of established knowledge, whereas current versions center on academies, workshops, and seminars in which the content varies. This approach appears to continue to dominate professional development activities.

In the craft model, principals are trained by more experienced professionals. The less-seasoned principal shadows or observes how another principal interacts with others and deals with situations in the school setting. The source of professional knowledge in this model comes from the wisdom of the mentor and the setting of the school itself (Daresh, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002).

The reflective-inquiry model challenges principals to generate knowledge through the process of systematic inquiry by making reflective, self-critical judgments about their professional practice as they engage in their daily work. The goal is to encourage principals to reflect on their values and beliefs about leadership, applying their new knowledge in their own school settings (Barth, 1985, 1986; Daresh, 2001; Fenwick & Pierce, 2002). This model, which includes such activities as journal writing, peer study, and action research groups (Garet et al., 2001; Neufeld & Roper, 2003), provides the transition from the traditional and craft approaches

to "principal-centered" (Barth, 1985, 1986) professional development in support of reflective practice.

"Principal-Centered" Professional Development

Roland Barth (1985) coined the phrase "principal-centered professional development" in connection with his work with the Harvard Principals' Center. The reflective-inquiry model incorporates features considered necessary to effective professional development for principals, which are reflected in the tenets of the Harvard program. Bezzina (1994) compiles this succinct list of effective professional development activities for principals: (1) they are built upon praxis and reflection, (2) they take place largely in the context of the school, (3) they are most successful in a collaborative learning culture, and (4) they require appropriate resources. Scherer (2002) adds the following effective professional development practices: activities that "shed light on how students learn in the classroom" and "improve student achievement" (p. 5).

There is also a range of methods in the literature suggested for principal professional development. Hallinger and Murphy (1991), for example, advocate problem-based learning because it integrates the content of a principal's role (e.g., legal issues, instructional supervision, and staff development) with the management processes that go along with the role (e.g., communication, problem solving, and decision making). Elmore's advice (as cited in Black, 2000) is similar: "[Effective principal development] should provide principals with substantive research on teaching and learning, take place in the principal's home school, focus on solving real problems, and include networks of principals who serve as 'critical friends'" (p. 48). That recommendation is consistent with Szabo's position on the importance of communities of practice (in McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996). Pointing out that virtually everything about schools is oriented toward "going it alone" professionally, Szabo argues that a collaborative culture of problem solving and learning must be established—one that views collegiality as a professional asset. Fullan (1991) agrees, advocating "cross-role participation" in professional development activities as a means of fostering shared understandings of school goals as opposed to activities which view principals, teachers, and other professional staff as segregated groups for whom different goals and subjects are relevant.

As Leithwood and colleagues (2004) note, a great deal is expected from principals as education leaders in developing and maintaining a positive school climate and healthy organization. Professional development programs, then, should offer opportunities for principals to learn new behaviors or refine skills that can be directly related to the responsibility of providing leadership to the school (Caldwell, 1986)—what Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1995) describe as providing "top-down support for bottom-up reform" in schools.

The National Staff Development Council (2000) appears to be dedicated to providing professional development opportunities, as are the state and national professional principals' associations. According to the council, when the principal engages in learning through professional development, teaching and learning are validated as the central activities of the school. The principal both becomes immersed in and also models effective learning processes.

Evans and Mohr (1999) have proposed several professional development premises that seem to summarize what it is that school administrators need. These include the ideas that principals' learning is personal, yet takes place most effectively when offered in collaborative groups; that principals foster more powerful teacher and student learning by modeling their own learning; that reflection is central to learning; and that rigorous planning is an absolute necessity for effective professional development. The authors contend that principals need to connect with other principals to create shared understandings and engage in intellectual dialogue and debate about their work.

Continued learning for principals is emerging as a fundamental ingredient of successful school improvement. If principals are to be held accountable for creating successful learning communities, schools in which both teaching and learning thrive, they will require opportunities to learn about how to create those environments and how to sustain them. Preparing principals for those responsibilities will require commensurate changes in the content and delivery of professional development.

Summary

This section summarized the literature related to professional development for principals in an effort to contribute to the current interest in improved school leadership as a key to the successful implementation of other large-scale reforms. The vast majority of research or writing concerning professional development focuses on teachers, and there is little empirical research on what constitutes effective practice in the professional development arena. There is even less evidence concerning effective development practices for principals.

It is clear that current demands for accountability and increased student achievement are shaping a nontraditional role for principals—one in which "the principal must now be as vitally engaged in teachers' ongoing professional development as teachers are themselves" (Alvarado, 1998, p. 22). Central to this role is the principal's ability to provide the kind of leadership that Leithwood and colleagues (2004) identify as influencing student learning: by setting a direction, providing teachers and others with the necessary support and training to succeed, and making the institution work—in other words, by developing vision, people, and the institution. "Of all the factors that contribute to what students learn at school," they write, "present evidence led us to the conclusion that leadership is second in strength only to classroom instruction. Furthermore, effective leadership has the greatest impact in those circumstances (e.g., schools 'in trouble') in which it is most needed" (p. 72).

This literature review confirms that the kinds of professional development activities typically provided to principals have been widely perceived as less than effective in helping them acquire the skills necessary to successfully execute escalating accountability expectations. As Scherer (2002) writes, "That traditional professional development has not always been meaningful is an understatement. At the same time, relevant professional development has never been more important" (p. 5). Schmoker (2004) agrees, describing professional development as "perhaps the most prominent but chronically confused area of school improvement" (p. 429).

Achilles and Tienken (2005), disenchanted with traditional professional development practices and alarmed by the absence of empirical research confirming the effectiveness of professional development, suggest that rather than spending more money on professional development practices that have no evidence of effectiveness, districts should instead turn to proven innovations and factors known to exert a positive effect on student achievement (e.g., small schools and classes, quality prekindergarten programs, looping, and cohorts). Consistent with the findings of Leithwood and colleagues (2004) that the power of the principal to positively affect student learning is indirect rather than direct, Achilles and Tienken note that it is "administratively mutable factors [i.e., factors that the administrator has the power, resources and ability to change] such as scheduling, program design, coordination, organization for instruction and other elements" that are most likely to improve student achievement (p. 315).[4]

Achilles and Tienken (2005) do not, however, advocate eliminating professional development altogether:

> We are not advocating that schools discard completely their professional development activities. Professionals strive for lifelong learning and continue to hone skills. Would you go to a doctor or lawyer who has not updated her or his skills in 5, 10, 20 years? Of course not! You would not want your child with a teacher who teaches based on outmoded ideas. Unquestionably, professional development is an integral part of being a professional, but it is not the primary focus. (p. 317)

The literature indisputably expresses a sense of dismay regarding the "wasteland" of traditional professional development for principals (Barth, 1986). Researchers agree that traditional professional development practices are unlikely to affect student achievement in a positive fashion, are grounded in only the most superficial way in what we know about providing quality professional development experiences, and are too often predicated on "whims, fads, opportunism and ideology" (Corcoran, Fuhrman, & Belcher, 2001, p. 83).

There is also, however, a discernible level of consensus concerning what meaningful professional development for educators should look like: it should be focused directly on student learning and achievement rather than on the hot topics of the day, be job embedded rather than centralized, and be ongoing rather than episodic. These characteristics are consistent with the systemic reform recommendations for building capacity for school improvement as well. With these characteristics in mind, we turn next to the description of professional development activities for principals in the four-state region of Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia.

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[4] Relying on Deming's (2000) research indicating that workers themselves account for only 6 to 15% of an organization's effectiveness, Achilles and Tienken point out that in order for professional development to improve student learning, it would have to be 100% successful to accomplish even a 6 to 15% gain: "Why continue to place large bets on a horse that has only a 15% chance, at most, of winning?" (p. 317).

**Professional Development Activities for Principals in
Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia**

This section summarizes the professional development opportunities currently provided in the four-state region of the Appalachia Educational Laboratory. At the state level, data were collected through seven semistructured interviews with representatives of the respective departments of education, professional development centers, state and/or local leadership academies, and principals' professional associations (i.e., state affiliates of the National Association of Elementary School Principals and National Association of Secondary School Principals). Representatives from state affiliates of national principals' associations in Kentucky and West Virginia were interviewed, as were state department or agency representatives in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. The interview guide is contained in the appendix.

Interviews focusing on policies and practices in the four states were conducted between May and July 2005, with document analyses and online research supplementing the interviews. Researchers interviewed selected individuals in each state who were most knowledgeable about the issues of professional development for school leaders. All data collection procedures were reviewed and approved by the Edvantia Institutional Review Board to ensure the protection of human subjects, per the appropriate federal regulations. Refer to the appendix for further details.

Rather than report the findings on a state-by-state basis,[5] the organizational framework employed for the interviews is used. That framework is consistent with the three categories identified in the literature on capacity building for systemic reform and in the professional development literature as well:

1. the extent to which professional development activities are *focused* on *specific* school improvement goals (i.e., on-task)
2. the extent to which they are *job embedded* (i.e., on-site or dealing with on-site issues and data)
3. the extent to which they feature cycles of *evaluation* and *revision* (i.e., ongoing) (see Introduction)

The interviews incorporated questions related to policy and content issues (i.e., those related to the specific focus of professional development activities), delivery issues (i.e., those related to whether activities are job embedded or offered in a centralized location, or some combination of the two), and evaluation and effectiveness issues (i.e., those related to how development activities are evaluated and how the evaluations are used). Funding issues were

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[5] As the Virginia Department of Education does not provide professional development activities, there is no discussion of Virginia in subsections dealing with delivery and funding. The recently appointed Specialist for School Leadership had been in his new position for only a month at the time of the interview and had had no time to thoroughly assess the effectiveness of the current system. Thus, there is no discussion of Virginia in the subsection on effectiveness. For the present, Virginia educators seek out their own professional development activities.

addressed as well, in the interest of discerning perceptions concerning the adequacy of resources for professional development.

Professional Development Policy

All four states in the region mandate some form of professional development activity for school principals, in both department of education policy and state law. The specific numbers of professional development hours that principals must acquire and the avenues through which they are obtained differ from state to state, but not dramatically.

For the most part, the states require roughly 18 to 21 hours of professional development activity per year for principals, and failure to acquire the necessary hours can result in penalties ranging from loss of certification to loss of employment. Typically, states offer some training through a principals' or leadership academy, while districts or regional service agencies provide other opportunities.

Kentucky. Kentucky principals are required to engage in 42 hours of professional development training every two years, 21 hours per year, in order to maintain certification.[6] In addition, principals in Kentucky schools that fail to meet the goals of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) must acquire an additional 12 hours. Each school district has a professional development coordinator who reports to the state department a list of all district administrators and the number of leadership hours they have acquired at the end of the year. The Kentucky Department of Education (KDE) is responsible only for tracking the names and hours completed by principals in each school district.

There is no single entity charged with professional development in the state. The Kentucky Department of Education conducts some statewide training and provides services to local districts that request assistance. The Kentucky Association of School Administrators directs the Kentucky Leadership Academy and offers a new principal/new administrator program where new school leaders can join a cadre of peers eligible to receive additional training to assist them in their new roles. Otherwise, the content and scope of professional development for principals are determined by local school districts.

Tennessee. In Tennessee, the Tennessee Academy of School Leaders (TASL) requires 72 hours of professional development activity for principals every five years; this requirement, however, is not part of the state code. TASL provides an annual training session through which principals may obtain some of the requisite 72 hours, although they may pursue their training outside the academy if they wish. Tennessee educators, both principals and teachers, are exempt from engaging in any professional development activity if they have performed in administrative or instructional supervisor roles for 15 years.[7]

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[6] "Effective Instructional Leadership Act," Kentucky Revised Statute (KRS) 156.101 and Kentucky Administrative Regulation (KAR) 3:325. Failure to complete the 21 hours per year leads to a one-year probationary period in which the 42 hours must be completed. Failure to complete the 42 hours leads to revocation of certification.

[7] Additional information may be found in Tennessee HB2487/SB2445.

Virginia. In Virginia, there is a state-mandated requirement for "high-quality professional development [for] teachers, principals, supervisors, division superintendents and other school staff."[8] Virginia also requires that all principals acquire a specified number of professional development "points" to maintain licensure, a policy detailed in the *Virginia Manual for Licensure Renewal*. Principals must acquire 180 professional development points every five years, and the *Manual* provides a menu of options through which professional development points may be earned (e.g., attendance at conferences, publications of books and articles, and activities such as attendance at district-provided professional development activities). Principals must show documentation of completed activities confirming the points they have earned.

Additionally, Virginia features a system in which persons seeking either initial licensure or renewal must be assigned advisors (typically the supervisors to whom they report) who work with them on personalized professional development plans and assist in verifying that an individual has in fact completed documented activities. Thus, no single entity oversees, provides, or monitors principals' professional development.

West Virginia. West Virginia has a form of shared authority concerning the provision of professional development activities for principals. The requirement that principals attend the Principals' Academy directed by the West Virginia Center for Professional Development (CPD) at least once every six years is embedded in state law (WV 126-147-6) and in Department of Education Policy 5500.03. The exception to the six-year rotation concerns principals who are entering their first year of administrative practice or those who are changing school levels (e.g., from elementary to secondary). These must attend the next regularly scheduled Academy, which is convened twice a year. While the CPD operates as an independently organized body, the West Virginia Department of Education (WVDE) must approve the curriculum/content planned by the CPD.

WVDE Policy 5500.03 details the "Qualities, Proficiencies and Leadership Skills for Principals," and establishes County Professional Staff Development Councils. In addition to the opportunities made available by the CPD, these local councils and the state's eight regional educational service agencies also provide professional development activities. West Virginia principals are required to participate in 18 hours of professional development each year.

Summary. In general, the statutory and regulatory requirements in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia are largely similar. A minimum of 18 hours of professional development per year seems to be the norm for principals, and those hours are typically gained through an academy format or through state, regional, or district/division agencies.

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[8] Virginia State Code, 22.1-253.13:5.

Professional Development Content

Virtually all seven interviewees observed that issues related to No Child Left Behind (NCLB) have recently dominated content decisions. Reading and mathematics were specifically mentioned, although concern was expressed for any subject or adequate yearly progress (AYP) cell in which a school may have been determined deficient (e.g., number of students tested, minority student performance, or special education student performance).

Association interviewees were particularly focused on NCLB concerns, noting the pressure that weighs on principals whose schools are found to be in need of improvement. They noted also that principals also seem to prefer content focused on the issues of school safety and legal matters, although they have no systematic process for gathering information related to principals' wishes.

State interviewees agreed that content of professional development offerings has been affected by NCLB expectations. They also referred to the need to design development activities aligned with professional standards, specifically those of the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC).

Kentucky. As noted previously, content for professional development activities for principals in Kentucky is primarily determined at the district level. School data, test scores, and performance under the state's accountability system are among the issues considered in defining the content of professional development offerings. Kentucky schools are required to complete a yearly comprehensive school improvement plan identifying the greatest needs of each school, which then leads to the creation of a district comprehensive improvement plan. Professional development content for principals is determined from these data and plans.[9]

Recent professional development activities in Kentucky have been related to No Child Left Behind, with emphasis on differentiated instruction, reading strategies, and mathematics strategies (e.g., what a principal might look for in an effective mathematics classroom). Additionally, drop-out prevention has been highlighted in recent professional development seminars. Aside from NCLB-related issues, Kentucky has focused professional development on the issues of school culture and leadership.

Tennessee. Content for professional development activities in Tennessee is determined primarily by the Tennessee Academy for School Leaders (TASL) in cooperation with the Department of Education's Office of Professional Development and its Board of Control.[10] Recent offerings have focused on differentiated instruction and family and community

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[9] All school and district improvement plans are available to the public and can be obtained by accessing the Kentucky Department of Education Web site at http://www.education.ky.gov/KDE/Default.htm. While this arrangement indicates that the focus of professional development could be specific to individual schools, there was no way to confirm that possibility, nor were we able to learn whether development activities were conducted in schools or at centralized locations.

[10] The membership of the Board of Control includes at least two superintendents, two principals, and two assistant principals.

engagement with schools. According to the interviewee, most professional development activity has some connection to NCLB.

Virginia. In Virginia, the content of professional development for principals varies as a function of how individuals choose to earn their professional development points. There are no regulations or guidelines governing how this may be accomplished; thus, principals have broad latitude in acquiring the requisite 180 points. The *Virginia Licensure Renewal Manual* indicates that they may choose to participate in conferences or district-provided activities, enroll in college or university courses, publish books or articles, or any combination of these (Virginia Department of Education, 1998). Virginia reported that much of the recent professional development provided by state and local principals' associations is directly related to NCLB.

West Virginia. WVDE Policy 5500.03 requires that all professional development activities for principals adhere to the six ISLLC standards (i.e., vision, scholarship, stewardship, collaboration, integrity, and context). However, since the county professional development councils determine the content of activities within the counties, WVDE officials acknowledge that the policy may not be strictly interpreted in every instance. (There appears to be no mechanism for discerning whether this is the case, as will be discussed in the section on evaluation.)

The state has implemented a recent requirement that counties develop five-year strategic plans for improving education in their schools, part of which includes the identification of professional development activities consistent with the goals and objectives detailed therein. WVDE is "hopeful" that the architects of the county-level strategic plans work closely with their respective professional development councils to ensure that development opportunities are congruent with the plans.

The CPD has an advisory council that makes recommendations regarding the content of professional development activities. Its board includes representatives from professional associations, principals, and a higher education faculty member who provide input and give approval to CPD offerings.

Summary. Given the emphasis on accountability that is the consequence of NCLB, it is no surprise that the content of most professional development offerings is related to the various elements of the law. Nor is it unusual for states to require that development providers adhere to one set of standards or another, either state or national.

It appears that, for the most part, providers determine professional development content with some guidance by advisory bodies and there is no direct input in the broad sense from principals themselves in determining the content of their development activities. It is possible that local or district providers are guided in their work by systematically surveying principals' needs. However, information concerning those local activities is not systematically collected and reported.

Professional Development Delivery

As noted in the preceding literature review, the traditional delivery model for professional development has involved short-term, expert-delivered types of in-service sessions held at a central location—what Viadero describes as "sit and git" workshops (2005, p.1). National Staff Development Council President Dennis Sparks (2001) has objected to these arrangements, arguing that it is critical that the "belief in 'experts' who 'deliver' knowledge" be replaced with "communities of educators who learn through ongoing collaboration and practice." That argument is consistent with the capacity-building recommendations described in the introduction to this document and in the literature review (O'Day et al., 1995).

Kentucky. It appears that the traditional method of delivery is still the rule in the region, despite the fact that Kentucky appears to feature broader diversity than the other states with its combination of conferences, cadre meetings, online meetings, and videoconferencing—although it is reported that the latter two are used least often. The state is attempting to make a transition to more job-embedded options by encouraging smaller and/or rural districts to combine their resources[11] to focus on issues of local interest. It does not appear that this presently involves moving professional development activities into the schools themselves, although as districts are free to construct their own development activities, it is possible that this will occur or is already happening.

Tennessee. Tennessee reports providing the vast majority of its professional development offerings at central locations and on consecutive days rather than in abbreviated one-day sessions. Principals have the opportunity each fall to participate in the Lead Conference sponsored by TASL, during which they may choose sessions in designated strands and earn up to 8 of their required 72 hours over five years. The interviewee noted that there has been no real push to change the delivery method, including little interest in online activities.

West Virginia. The pattern appears to hold true in West Virginia as well, where the majority of professional development activities is delivered by experts in central locations. It was noted by the state interviewee that online offerings are increasing but that videoconferencing does not appear to be an attractive option for technological reasons (e.g., lack of available bandwidth for transmission in schools). The CPD representative reported that principals have expressed reservations about both online development activities and videoconferencing, saying they prefer face-to-face meetings instead.

Virginia. Professional development in Virginia is left up to individual principals and so delivery is an individual choice. Individuals may choose to engage in unstructured as opposed to formal activities (e.g., writing a book or article as opposed to attending conferences or workshops); evaluation of activities as such is not required. No data are collected on the delivery of professional development for principals in Virginia.

Summary. These findings are consistent with the anecdotal evidence reported by *Education Week* (2005): "The district or school brings in an outside consultant or curriculum expert" to provide a "one-time training seminar on a garden-variety pedagogic or subject-area

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[11] See the next section on funding for allocation information.

topic." As noted in the literature review, this approach has been criticized as lacking in both continuity and coherence (Little, 1994; Miles, 1995). Recommendations that professional development activities be site based (i.e., in the schools themselves) and involve teams of administrators and educators in an environment in which school-specific issues are the focus of collaborative research and inquiry (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Little, 1994; O'Day et al., 1995; Smylie, Allensworth, Greenberg, Harris, & Luppescu, 2001; and Stigler [in Willis, 2002]) were mentioned by none of the interviewees.

Professional Development Evaluation Practices

Research-based evidence confirming that professional development has a discernible impact on either student achievement or school improvement is virtually nonexistent (Carpenter, 2000; Covert, 2003; Newmann, King, & Youngs, 2001; Tienken, 2003). A chief reason for this absence of evidence may be that designing evaluations to provide the kind of scientifically based data necessary for such confirmation is difficult and time-consuming, relying of necessity on establishing treatment and control groups of educators and subsequently tracking student performance for each group. The associated issues of whether it is appropriate to withhold training presumed to be helpful and effective from certain educators/schools and how those individuals or institutions would be chosen complicate matters.

The most common measure of the value of professional development activities is the determination of participant satisfaction concerning topic relevance, presentation skills of presenters, and locale and format of the presentation—what Guskey refers to as "happiness indicators" (1997). The information gathered from interviewees is consistent with that observation.

Professional association interviewees reported that paper evaluation forms are available to participants at both national and state association meetings and evaluations are requested for each general session and all break-out sessions. The national conferences typically send follow-up e-mail invitations to participants to complete an online survey after the conferences have concluded. Items in the surveys are consistent with those most common in the professional development environment (e.g., participant satisfaction, relevance, and overall quality of sessions or conferences).

Kentucky. Evaluation of professional development activities in Kentucky is left up to the providers, and while KDE recommends that districts conduct evaluations in order to receive feedback, it is reported that some districts do not do this. Evaluations are employed in district-specific fashion, with some favoring formative use and others summative. KDE does recommend that evaluations include at least one item that indicates whether the professional development activity or activities are linked to principals' individual growth plans or to schools' improvement plans. Results are shared primarily at the school and district levels.

Tennessee. Tennessee seems to have the most standardized process for evaluating professional development activities for principals. All participants evaluate all activities sponsored by TASL, and the results are entered into a centralized database. These results are

subsequently shared with the staff in the Office of Professional Development and with state department auditors. The evaluation focuses on items such as participants' perceptions of the quality and relevance of the activity, how well the presenters performed or the material was presented, and how it was received by participants.

Virginia. Because professional development in Virginia is left up to individual principals, and because individuals may choose to engage in unstructured as opposed to formal activities (e.g., writing a book or article as opposed to attending conferences or workshops), evaluation of activities as such is not required. It is possible that providers of formal activities may request evaluations, but there is no evaluation data on professional development kept at the state department.

West Virginia. Evaluations of professional development activities provided by WVDE tend to focus on perceived satisfaction with presenters and material, relevance of subject matter, and whether participants feel the sessions are generally helpful. Results of evaluations are subsequently shared with the West Virginia Board of Education. Development activities sponsored by the CPD through the Principals' Academy are designed to help principals meet the goals outlined in their individual action plans. As part of its evaluation process, the CPD randomly selects principals whose action plans will be reviewed in the year subsequent to their attendance at the Academy as a means of discerning whether their individual goals were met based on activities in which they participated.

Summary. The evaluation of professional development activities in the region appears to be consistent with that described in the literature. Participation rates and expressions of participants' satisfaction or perceptions of relevance are the primary measures for assessing the value of the experiences. Interviewees cited no attempt to determine a relationship between professional development activities and improved student achievement in the evaluations. However, it is possible that such attempts at the district level were unknown to the interviewees.

Professional Development Funding

The perception of the interviewees is that their states have sufficient funding to execute their statutory and regulatory professional development mandates. The way those funds are allocated and how much agencies or districts/divisions spend, however, varies from state to state.

Kentucky. State allocation of professional development funds to schools and districts in Kentucky is based on enrollment. The statute requires 65% of funds that go to each district to go to individual schools to use at their discretion. The remaining 35% is given to districts to use at their discretion for district-level leadership and professional leadership development activities. The state's topography and low enrollments in some rural districts make it difficult for some schools to afford the number of development activities they wish to make available. If a need is critical, however, KDE makes every effort to meet it. Increases in funding for

professional development would be welcome, and Title I and Title II monies are occasionally used to supplement the amounts districts receive from the state.

Tennessee. A line-item budget of $1.2 million has been earmarked for the Office of Professional Development in Tennessee for FY 2005-06. This amount, however, includes monies that must be allocated for salaries, reducing the amount available for professional development activities to approximately $500,000. The Office has recently received a one-time $5 million allocation from the governor to support the Governor's Institute for Leadership, the primary purposes of which are to enhance leadership, training, and pedagogy and to develop and coordinate projects with higher education. An emphasis on the use of technology is also a focus of the institute.

West Virginia. In West Virginia, more than a dozen entities are charged with planning and implementing professional development activities (e.g., WVDE, CPD, regional educational service agencies, county boards of education, county-level professional development councils, and institutions of higher education). This circumstance complicates any complete understanding of funding and expenditures, as fiscal mandates for professional development are not typically spelled out in allocations.

The approximate funding provided to the CPD is reported to be $395,000 annually to provide materials, registration fees, meals, lodging, and the like. WVDE does not have a line item in the budget to provide development opportunities for principals, but is reported to use some Title II monies for this purpose.

Virginia. Funding of professional development for Virginia principals is left up to individual principals, and because individuals may choose to engage in unstructured as opposed to formal activities (e.g., writing a book or article as opposed to attending conferences or workshops), funding of professional development may be accomplished at the school or district level. No information is collected at a central location.

Summary. The interviewees generally acknowledge that funding for professional development is adequate, but stress that additional funding would surely enhance opportunities. None felt the allocations received rose above the adequate, particularly in regard to principals' development. As noted previously, the vast majority of professional development activities focus on teachers, and the same appears to be the case with professional development funding.

Interview Summary

The interviewees were unanimous in their belief that effective professional development for principals is critical to the success of schools and to improved student learning. From rising to the expectations of NCLB, to complying with state mandates, to working with an increasingly diverse student population, to balancing the pressures of increasing test scores with enhancing meaningful student learning, the instructional leadership role continues to grow in complexity.

Despite references to anticipated changes in how professional development is provided for principals, the interviews indicate that the traditional model of inviting outside experts to address educators in a centralized location remains the norm. Professional development appears to be thought of in terms of formal activities, such as academies, conferences, or workshops. These activities may feature well-known experts or a number of concurrent sessions, or a combination of both, and participants may leave with some practical ideas or resources. Rarely, however, if ever, is there any follow-up to determine whether the activities have had any discernible effect on practice.

In general, for three of the four states, requirements for principals' professional development are specified in statute, in regulatory policy, or both; content is largely standards based or related to NCLB issues, as opposed to school-specific matters; delivery formats are dominated by the traditional centralized workshop, seminar, or conference, although some states are experimenting with online options or videoconferencing; funding comes primarily from state sources; and evaluation tends to be limited to questions of presenter or presentation quality and relevance and participant satisfaction. On the question of perceived effectiveness, interviewees typically characterized their states' efforts as positive while conceding that things can always improve.

Virginia is the exception, with its model of giving educators the latitude to amass their required number of professional development "points" as they wish. While the recently appointed Director for Professional Development indicated that Virginia may make the transition to the approaches modeled by neighboring states, Virginia's approach is actually quite close to the "market model" recently advocated by Achilles (2003):

> [Professional development] should follow the model set by fields such as medicine and law and rely on user (e.g., teacher) choice in a market model. . . . They [the states] will pay for PD directly to the provider. There will be minimum state or district payout for mandated [staff development] days, although there may be required in-service days to implement policy of legal mandates. (p. 115)

The small number of interviewees ($n = 7$) renders these findings more suggestive than conclusive. It is possible, even probable, that there are dimensions to professional development in the region that are unknown to the interviewees, as local districts/divisions in all four states may provide development activities of their own. The consistency of the information gathered across the five areas of investigation (i.e., policy, content, delivery, evaluation, and funding), however, is sufficient to permit the conclusions and recommendations that follow in the final section below.

Conclusions and Recommendations

When the Goals 2000: Educate America Act became law in 1994, it was described as a means to "improve student learning through a long-term, broad-based effort to promote coherent and coordinated improvements in the system of education throughout the nation at the state and local levels" (U.S. Department of Education, 1994b). As part of that initiative, former Secretary of Education Richard Riley convened a professional development team whose mission was "to examine the best available research and exemplary practices related to professional development, and to summarize the lessons learned from this knowledge base in the form of principles that might inform practitioners and policymakers across the country" and guide the Department's efforts in the area of professional development (U.S. Department of Education, 1994a).

Among those principles were the following:

- promotion of continuous inquiry and improvement embedded in the daily life of schools
- evaluation strategies that are grounded in the impact of development activities on teacher effectiveness and student learning
- use of these evaluations to guide subsequent professional development efforts

These principles are reiterated in Section 9101 of NCLB (2002):

> The term "professional development" includes activities that . . . are high quality, sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused in order to have a positive and lasting impact on classroom instruction and the teacher's performance in the classroom; . . . are not one-day or short-term workshops or conferences; . . . [and] are regularly evaluated for their impact on increased teacher effectiveness and improve student academic achievement (Title IX, Part A, section 9101[34]).

While the federal expectations may lack specifics, they track closely with an emerging consensus in the literature that for professional development activities to be effective, they should be on task, job embedded, and ongoing.

As the literature for systemic reform and professional development demonstrated, researchers have learned that development activities are most effective when they support site-based/school-embedded initiatives; when they are closely linked to educators' daily work—to school initiatives that focus on improved teaching and student learning; and when they provide for sufficient time to analyze, implement, evaluate, and re-implement strategies designed to support school improvement. A 2000 study conducted by the National Staff Development Council examined professional development programs at eight public schools that had posted measurable gains in student achievement. The study found that "the very nature of staff development [had] shifted from isolated learning and the occasional workshop to focused, ongoing organizational learning built on collaborative reflection and joint action" (WestEd, 2000).

There is also general agreement that traditional professional development activities tend to be top-down affairs that are too generic to have any significant impact on school-based needs and for which there is little if any empirical evidence of effectiveness.

Data from the in-depth interviews revealed nothing that would lead researchers to conclude that development practices in the region differ in any substantial way from the conventional understanding of such activities as structured events (e.g., academies, conferences, and seminars) that are offered intermittently and that typically fail to evaluate effectiveness other than gauging satisfaction with the events. The absence of data supporting a measurable impact on school improvement or student achievement suggests that the region's professional development practices are consistent with those prevailing nationally.

Implications for Policymakers

In every state, district, and school, the reforms mandated through NCLB have dramatically raised expectations for students, teachers, and principals. To meet these expectations, educators need ways to acquire the necessary knowledge and skills to execute their new responsibilities. States and districts are attempting to meet those needs through professional development activities.

Policymakers have rarely concerned themselves with the content, design, or quality of professional development, typically leaving those matters to the discretion of state or local education agencies. If, however, professional development is to adequately prepare educators to meet the challenges of the accountability environment, and to do so within the limits of scarce resources, it is critical that decisions regarding development activities be based on the best available research.

The best available research, however, is clearly lacking if use of the term denotes empirical evidence demonstrating conclusively a positive relationship between professional development practices and student learning. The absence of such evidence coupled with the investments states make in terms of both fiscal resources and time has some important implications for those involved with policymaking.

In terms of cost, most states and districts are uncertain of the exact amount spent on professional development. This is so because state accounting systems make it difficult to aggregate such expenditures when multiple agencies are involved. While individual agencies are aware of their own budgetary allocations, most are unable to even estimate an overall figure. Given this circumstance, it is likely that more is being spent on professional development than most policymakers realize.

The investment includes, among other things, staffing costs associated with the planning and delivery of professional development activities (e.g., state agencies, academies, and district coordinators); logistical expenses for meeting locations (e.g., conference center rental, refreshments, lodging, opening schools for extra days, and printing/copying costs); fees for speakers, consultants, or workshop facilitators; registration fees, meals, and lodging for

sending educators to conferences or workshops outside of the district or state; administrative costs for certification/recertification; and tuition reimbursements and/or salary increments if the development activity involves credit for graduate coursework or a graduate degree.

There is also the amount of time that principals are required to devote to accruing professional development credits consistent with state or agency mandates. To ensure that professional development is effective and congruent with the needs of principals, policymakers should have a clear understanding of the quality of development activities currently provided and the extent to which they focus on the central purpose of schools, student learning. Given the expense involved, in both fiscal and human resources, states can ill afford to devote resources to practices that have not been proven to work.

Recommendations

We conclude this report with two recommendations that can broaden understanding of the professional development of principals in the region and contribute to the research base:

1. Undertake a more thorough investigation of current practices in the region.
2. Develop and implement field tests predicated on recent research.

A better understanding of effective professional development components and the designs that support their implementation and sustainability can inform the important decisions that must be made by policymakers. Each recommendation is more fully described below.

Investigate current practices. Research in the area of professional development remains a fairly young field, and the vast majority of studies focus primarily, if not exclusively, on teachers. As teachers shoulder the primary responsibility for student learning, this focus is not surprising. However, the responsibility for providing effective instructional leadership, for creating the conditions in which learning thrives, rests squarely with principals. They must set direction, provide teachers with the necessary support and development to succeed, and nurture a positive school climate.

If communities of practice are to flourish in schools, it is principals who will create them—not only by marshalling the necessary resources and making the time, but by supporting teachers in data analysis, development of strategies to address problems, implementation of those strategies, and subsequent evaluation and re-implementation. Professional development initiatives for principals, thus, should focus on these issues.

In order to determine whether the professional development opportunities offered to principals actually assist them in meeting these demands and whether principals perceive their options as satisfactory, all principals in the four states should be surveyed. The survey should generate, from the principals' perspective, a better understanding of current professional development practices, principals' needs, and the intersections (or lack thereof) of the two. Following the survey, in-depth interviews and/or focus groups should be used to make further sense of the collected information.

Conduct field tests. If educators are to be adequately prepared to perform effectively in the schools envisioned by current reform measures, a more coherent view of professional development is necessary. The traditional view of professional development as an intermittent add-on must be replaced by a view that understands professional development as an essential and integral element in educators' daily work. Effective development for principals must rest on the fact that school improvement is situation-specific. Because each school is unique, the knowledge and skills required to effect genuine improvement cannot be prepackaged, nor can they be imparted by experts who are unfamiliar with the context of each school and delivered to educators who are isolated from one another.

Fullan's (1991) promotion of "cross-role participation" in professional development activities offers an appropriate model. Such an approach recognizes collegiality as a professional asset (Szabo, as cited in McLaughlin & Oberman, 1996) and conceives of development activities as a means of fostering shared understandings of school goals as opposed to activities viewing principals, teachers, and other professional staff as segregated groups for whom different goals and subjects are relevant.

The second recommendation is to design and implement field tests, of moderate size to hold down expenses and increase efficiency, which would pair teams of researchers with principals and other administrative staff. In a small number of individual schools, these partnerships would work on site-based projects focused on specific school improvement goals that emphasize accountability and student achievement. Researchers could assist principals in acquiring the fundamental skills of action research and in collaborating with teachers to clarify problems, identify data sources, engage in data analysis, develop problem-solving strategies, provide implementation support for those strategies, and choose and execute appropriate evaluative measures.

Because it is possible that existing practices do have some measurable impact on student achievement that has not yet been demonstrated, consideration should be given to Corcoran's advice that "all professional development strategies should be treated as hypotheses to be tested" (1995, p. 9). Those schools whose principals are participating in traditional professional development activities could serve as controls for the field test suggested above. An effort to investigate the strategies most often used in the region as they relate specifically to improvements in student learning could provide additional information to policymakers.

We do not underestimate the challenges of this project. Studies designed to track improvements in student learning take time, and it is possible that with the myriad reform initiatives under way in schools, it may be difficult to isolate those attributable to changes in professional development practices.

Such a project has two potential benefits, however. First, it is representative of the kind of sustained, intensive, and achievement-oriented development activity prescribed in NCLB. Second, it can contribute to the small but growing number of studies attempting to demonstrate a connection between professional development activities and student learning. The proposed

project embodies the dual constructs of empiricism and replicability, both of which are encouraged in the literature.

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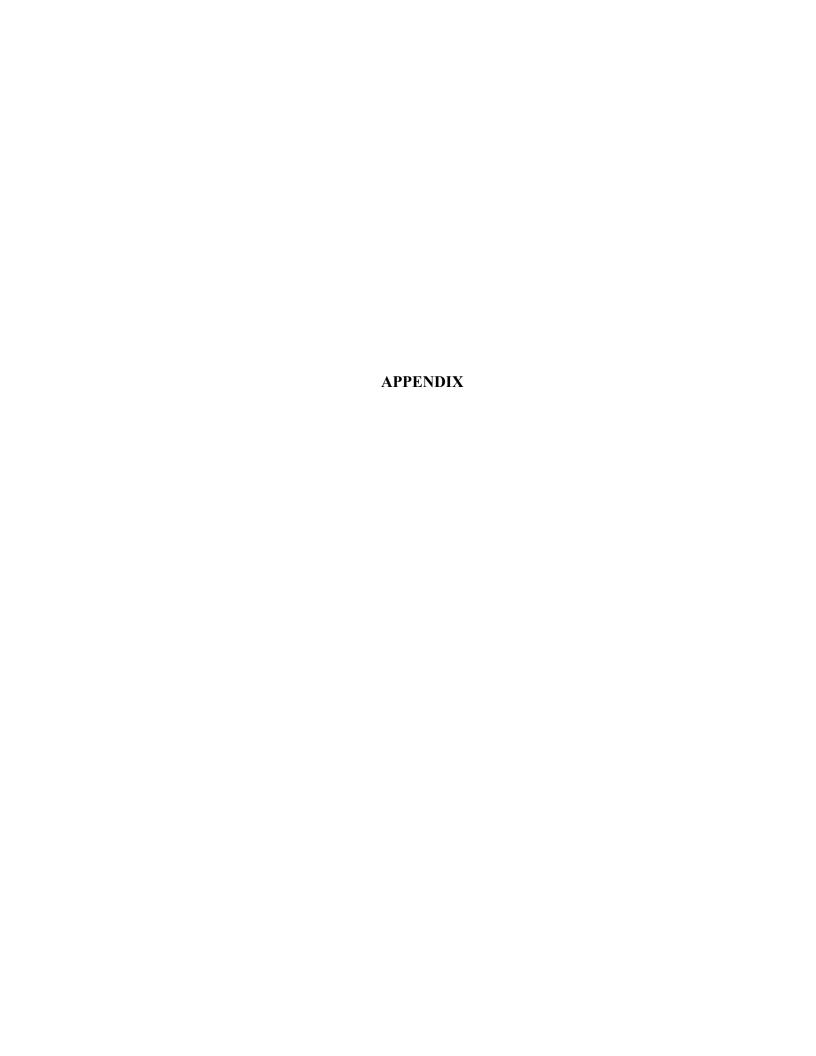
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APPENDIX

Interview Guide with Informed Consent Notice

Interview Introduction

As we discussed in our preliminary conversation, I'm calling today as part of my involvement in a research project to examine professional development policies and practices for K-12 principals. The project is funded by the US Department of Education through the Appalachian Educational Laboratory, and is focusing on the four states in AEL's service region: Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia.

Before I begin asking questions, I would like to thank you for the time you're taking to help in our effort to identify and document the professional development activities which are available for school principals in your state. Once all of the data for the region are collected and assembled into a report, we hope to share them with you.
In accordance with our IRB requirements, I will read to you our letter/statement of informed consent.

Informed Consent
April 2005

Dear Educator:

The Appalachia Educational Laboratory (AEL) in Charleston, West Virginia, is studying the extent to which professional development programs for principals in the AEL region reflect new accountability demands on principals.

As part of this research effort, AEL is conducting document analyses, online research, and telephone interviews with key individuals in Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia and West Virginia who are knowledgeable about professional development opportunities for principals such as, state departments of education, professional associations, institutions of higher education, and so on. During the interview, we will ask respondents to provide information about

- policy issues surrounding principal professional development
- knowledge and skills provided through professional development activities
- quality of professional development activities
- strategies for delivering professional development to principals
- funding sources for principal professional development
- perceived effectiveness of professional development

The interview will take no more than an hour to complete. While your response to each question is important to us, you are not required to address questions you do not wish to

answer. Please feel free to ask any questions or raise concerns about the nature of this research at any time during the interview.

The information we are seeking is generally public. Your answers to questions will be reported in combination with those of other respondents when possible. Responses that specifically identify you, your office, or your organization will not be reported without your permission. Information gathered during the interview will be available only to AEL investigators and authorized consultants.[12].

There is no compensation for participating in this interview; the benefit of participating in this research effort is the opportunity to provide critical input into our research efforts on understanding the professional development opportunities available to principals in the four-state region. Please note that participation is voluntary and you may cease participation at any time without reprisal or penalty. There are no known risks associated with this project that are greater than those ordinarily encountered in daily life. Your participation with us in the interview is considered an indication of your understanding and willingness to engage in this research effort.

If you have any questions about this education research effort, please contact Dr. Patricia Ceperley by phone (800-624-9120, ext. 5423) or e-mail (ceperlep@ael.org). For information on protection of interview participants' rights, contact Dr. Merrill Meehan, AEL IRB Chair, via phone at 800-624-9120, ext. 5432, or via email at meehanm@ael.org).

Investigators: Patricia Ceperley, Ed. D.; Barbara Nicholson, Ph. D.; Mary Harris-John, Ed. D.; Christine J. Schimmel, M.A.

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[12] Data collected for research purposes are stored in compliance with ISO 17799 requirements for access, security, and redundancy. Data are stored in an encrypted format in a centralized, electronically and physically secure server at AEL for a period not to exceed five years. All electronic data of a personal nature are safeguarded and available only to those project leaders, staff, and technologists having a need to know within the specific criteria as set forth in the approved project plan. The AEL Institutional Review Board has the authority to inspect consent records and data files only to assure compliance with approved procedures.

PRINCIPALS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES IN AEL REGION: KENTUCKY, TENNESSEE, VIRGINIA AND WEST VIRGINIA

Interview Script: With your permission, I'll be taping this interview to ensure that your comments are accurately represented. Do you have any questions before we begin?

Date:	Interviewer:
Interviewee(s):	Title:
Agency Name:	Phone:
Address:	Email:

POLICY ISSUES

1) Are principals in your state required to participate in professional development activities?

2) If there are policies related to professional development for principals in your state, are they primarily statutory (i.e., encoded in legislation) or regulatory (i.e., developed by the SEA or another entity)?

3) Is the policy specific re: amount of time principals must devote to their professional development (e.g., number of contact hours, number of workshops or seminars, etc.)?

4) Is there a single entity, which is charged with *overseeing* professional development activities? If so, is that entity
   a. the SEA or embedded within the SEA?
   b. a separate agency (e.g., a professional development center)?
   c. a professional association?
   d. something else?
   e. If there is no single entity charged with overseeing professional development activities, how is participation documented (if at all)?

5) Is there a single entity charged with *providing* professional development activities? If so, is that entity
   a. the SEA or embedded within the SEA?
   b. a separate agency (e.g., a professional development center)?
   c. a professional association?
   d. colleges or universities?
   e. a combination of the above, or something else?
   f. If there is no single entity charged with providing professional development activities, are principals free to choose among the PD offerings available?

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[13] The multiple-choice format of the interview guide was intended merely to assist the interviewer in documenting responses and was not presented to the interviewee as such. Questions to interviewees were posed in an open-ended manner.

CONTENT

6) Who determines the content of professional development activities?
    a. providing agency decides
    b. professional associations recommend
    c. LEAs request
    d. principals request
    e. other

7) How is the need for content identified?
    a. needs assessments
      If needs assessments are done, who conducts them? Would the results of those assessments be available for you to share with us? How are the results of needs assessments used?
    b. providing agency decides
    c. professional associations recommend
    d. LEAs request
    e. principals request
    f. other

8) Have recent professional development activities been geared to compliance with No Child Left Behind? If so, which elements of NCLB have received the most attention?

9) Have there been issues other than those raised by NCLB which have been featured in professional development activities? If so, what are they?

EVALUATION

10) Are all professional development activities evaluated upon completion? If so, how are those evaluations conducted?
    a. participants complete questionnaires
    b. providing agency conducts internal evaluation
    c. both participants and providing agency evaluate
    d. other

11) How are the results of those evaluations used?
    a. formatively, to improve subsequent offerings
    b. summatively, to determine congruence with objectives
    c. both formatively and summatively
    d. other

12) With whom are the results of evaluations shared?
    a. SEA, or embedded agency within SEA
    b. SEA and providing agency (if other than SEA)
    c. SEA, providing agency and LEA
    d. SEA, providing agency, LEA and principals
    e. other

If principals have completed evaluations related to the availability or content of professional development activities, would you be willing to share those with us?

DELIVERY

13) How are professional development activities delivered to participating principals?
   a. onsite conferences, seminars or workshops
   b. videoconferencing
   c. online
   d. combination of the above, or other

14) Have participants expressed a preference for one mode of delivery over others? If so, what is it?

FUNDING

15) What kind of financial support is available for professional development activities?
   a. federal allocation to SEA (distributed to providing agencies)
   b. state allocation to SEA (distributed to providing agencies)
   c. state allocation to LEAs
   d. grants
   e. principals pay for their own PD activities
   f. combination of above
   g. other

16) Is the amount of financial support available for professional development adequate, in your opinion?

EFFECTIVENESS

17) Do you consider the current professional development activities in your state adequate in terms of meeting principals' needs? If not, why?

18) What do you think would improve professional development opportunities for principals in your state?

CLOSING QUESTION

19) Is there anything that I did not ask you that I should know to better understand the kinds of things your state (or agency) has been doing to improve professional development opportunities for principals?