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Teacher Perceptions of Professional Development Required by the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34

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TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED BY

THE WISCONSIN QUALITY EDUCATOR INITIATIVE, PI 34

by

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A Dissertation Submitted in

Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Urban Education

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

May 2013

ABSTRACT
TEACHER PERCEPTIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIRED BY
THE WISCONSIN QUALITY EDUCATOR INITIATIVE, PI 34

by

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The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2013
Under the Supervision of Professor Leigh Wallace

Existing research has shown an association between teachers' professional growth

and student success. However, there is a lack of information on the mandated

professional development linked to Wisconsin teacher licensure requirements. The

purpose of this study was to examine the phenomenon of self-directed professional

development and its impact on classroom instruction and student learning. Professional

development plans are required by the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction as a

licensing requirement for all Wisconsin teachers to remain in the profession. This study

investigated the perspectives of initial educators on the required professional

development plan incorporated as part of The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, also

known as PI 34, and how that plan has impacted their classroom instruction and student

learning.

Using a qualitative approach, teacher perspectives were explored based on in-

depth interviews, annual reflection logs, and the professional development plan

documents. Semi-structured interview questions provided a means to explore and

uncover the answer to the basic research question: Does self-directed learning through

creation of a professional development plan provide teachers with the professional

growth needed to impact their instructional practice and, ultimately, student learning? The study explored teachers' perceptions of their professional development experience and the impact of change in instruction and effect on student learning.

Findings from the study showed that mandated professional development plans through the PI 34 process were not motivating factors to improve educators' learning. Professional educators' motivation to improve their craft and help their students succeed, combined with collaboration and time were perceived by educators as factors necessary to change classroom instruction and impact student learning.

This dissertation is dedicated in memory of my parents, Edward W. and Patricia A. MacPhetridge Hartmann. My parents instilled in me a strong work ethic and determination to succeed. They would be proud to see my latest accomplishments of completing the PhD program in Urban Education from UW Milwaukee. I also dedicate this work to my daughters, Katie and Nicole, and my husband, Todd. They understand the balance of family, work, and education. I valued their patience and support throughout the years of coursework and dissertation process.

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CHAPTER ONE
Introduction to the Study

Emphasis on educator accountability has created greater scrutiny of professional

learning and practice. The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, also known as PI 34,

has been implemented in Wisconsin since 2000 as a model to ensure highly qualified

teachers. Wisconsin's PI 34 Initiative has had significant impact on all aspects of teacher

education, licensing, and professional development. This study explored teachers'

perceptions of whether, and to what extent, their self-directed PI 34 mandated

professional learning program impacted their instructional practice and student learning.

Ensuring American schools have high quality professional educators has been a

much debated topic in education for decades. "Every proposal for educational reform

and every plan for school improvement emphasizes the need for high-quality professional

development" (Guskey, 2000, p. 3). Through national reforms such as President Lyndon

Johnson's Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 and its reauthorization in

2001, led by President George W. Bush under the title of No Child Left Behind, there

remains an emphasis on providing students with "high quality" teachers. The federal

Goals 2000: Educate America Act, signed into law March 1994, provided teachers access

to continuing professional development opportunities. This federal act paved the way for

further state reform. In 1994, the Wisconsin state superintendent of education created a

taskforce to restructure teacher education and teacher licensing. Specifically, the task

force was asked to "determine the skills and abilities necessary for education

professionals to be successful in the schools of the 21st century and to make

recommendations aimed at improving the quality of the work force" (WI DPI, 1995, p.

2). Recommendations focused on four interconnected areas: (a) standards for initial

teacher preparation in the performance-based structure; (b) career-long professional development; (c) licensing categories and levels; and (d) clarification of the roles of the Department of Public Instruction, institutions of higher education, and local school districts in the preparation and ongoing professional development of education professionals (WI DPI, 1995). Work then began on creating Wisconsin Standards for Teacher Development and Licensure and recommendations for career long professional development for all Wisconsin educators.

Ongoing professional development establishes a systematic method to bring about lasting change (DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker, 2010; Guskey, 2000; Reeves, 2010). The 1994 Wisconsin task force, with direction from the Goals 2000 national reform, focused on the need for teachers to have career-long professional development to promote improvement in schools. The vision and principles guiding the Wisconsin task force became the foundation to the PI 34 initiative. The task force gave strong consideration for career-long professional development to be revised in the existing Wisconsin administrative code. Not only was there an emphasis on teacher licensing and preparation for preservice teachers, there was also an emphasis on all teachers to continue learning and building skills and knowledge throughout their careers. Professional development would be aligned to the Wisconsin state teacher standards. This direction is supported by experts in the field, "The belief that once teachers have completed their preparation programs they are somehow set for their careers is hopelessly outmoded" (Danielson, 2009, p.3). The Wisconsin initiative would make teacher professional development a lifelong learning process.

As a result of the task force recommendations, the Wisconsin Administrative Code PI 34 was adopted in 2000. Known as The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, the core of the new system was based around ten educator standards that outline what educators should know and be able to do to improve student learning. The "old" system of taking six college credits every five years for recertification would no longer exist. Stages of professional development would take its place through the process of creating a self-directed learning plan known as a professional development plan (PDP). After August 31, 2004, new educators would be required to complete an approved higher education teacher certification program and would then be awarded an Initial Educator license by the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). Once a DPI teaching license has been awarded, the educator must advance through various career stages to remain a licensed educator. Initial educators advance to the professional educator stage after successfully completing a professional development plan along with three years of teaching experience. During this initial educator phase, the teacher's self-directed learning plan must address two or more of the Wisconsin Educator Standards and must demonstrate professional growth and the impact of that professional growth on student learning.

A team of individuals, selected by the educator and comprised of a licensed educator, administrator, and representative from an institution of higher education, is responsible for the review and approval of the educator's professional development plan goals. This team also verifies that the plan was completed after three to five years of implementation. The team does not evaluate the goal or plan; their sole task is to verify successful completion of the plan within the timelines established. Once the plan has

been verified and notification has been sent to the Department of Public Instruction, the educator pays a licensing fee and is awarded a 5-year professional educator license. The cycle continues as the professional educator completes this five-year professional development plan every five years. At this career stage, the professional educator's team for verification can now include three licensed classroom teachers with a majority of the three peers verifying successful completion of the plan. The teaching license continues to be renewable throughout an educator's career with the completion of a self-directed professional development plan.

The professional development plan must be evidence-based and document professional growth through a self-selected goal. It must explain how the educational growth impacts activities that the educator deems appropriate for his or her learning and must demonstrate impact on student learning. Educators are required to provide documentation and evidence to show growth throughout their 5-year cycle. In addition, the educator must document annual reviews that provide a description of the activities with their completed dates and reflections on those activities. An educator is said to have successfully completed the professional development plan when: (1) he or she has shown evidence of professional growth and student learning and (2) he or she has provided a summary of that growth and effect on student learning. The verification of this professional development plan is Wisconsin's effort to ensure high quality teachers in its educational system.

Verification of the plan by colleagues exists as the sole measure for re-licensure and designation as "highly qualified." It appears there may be some disparity between the Wisconsin licensing practice of verification and the national requirement to have

professional development activities evaluated for their effectiveness and improvement on student achievement. That disparity surfaces with the verification versus evaluation practice of the Wisconsin PI 34 Initiative. The No Child Left Behind Act mandates that all teachers receive high quality professional development and that the professional development activities are regularly evaluated for their impact on teacher effectiveness and improvement on student academic achievement. The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34, does not have an evaluation component for highly effective teachers. The following figure depicts the licensing and professional development plan process that initial educators in Wisconsin follow:

Year 1
- Reflection on first year of teaching
- Creation of a goal that will impact classroom instruction and student achievement
- Convene committee to review and approve goal-online

Years 2-4
- Write the PDP which includes : context, goal, rational, assessment criteria , objectives, activities, timeline, evidence of collabortion and documentation of goal assessment
- Begin implementation of the PDP
- Annual review of the plan and written reflections by the educator

Year 5
- 3-5 pieces of evidence that document professional growth and effect of that growth on instruction and student learning
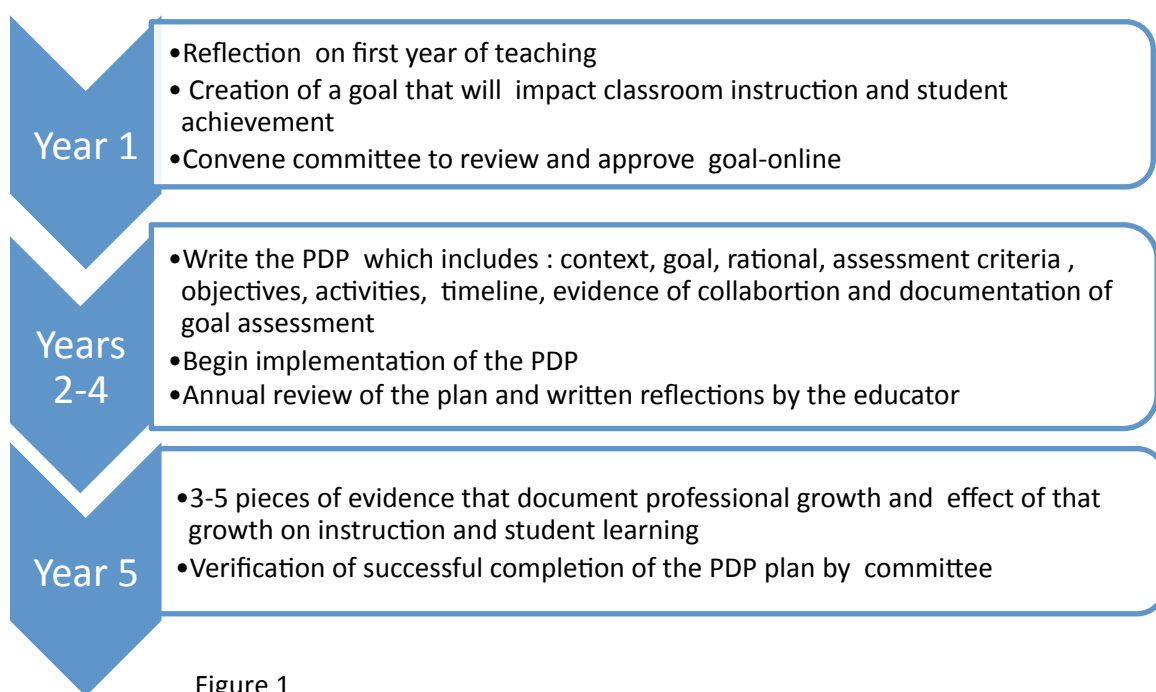- Verification of successful completion of the PDP plan by committee

Figure 1

An emphasis on accountability for highly qualified teachers has continued to be a passionate topic. In 2009, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) signed into law by President Obama made recommendations in four areas regarding teacher performance: (a) improving student achievement by increasing teacher and principal

effectiveness; (b) reforming teacher and principal compensation systems so educators are rewarded for increases in student achievement; (c) helping ensure an equitable distribution of effective educators; and (d) creating sustainable performance-based compensation systems (U.S. Department of Education Recovery Plan, 2010). In March of 2010, the U.S. Department of Education released a "blueprint for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act." That document stressed a need for highly effective teachers and principals:

> We will elevate the teaching profession to focus on recognizing, encouraging, and rewarding excellence. We are calling on states and districts to develop and implement systems of teacher and principal evaluation and support, and to identify effective and highly effective teachers and principals on the basis of student growth and other factors. These systems will inform professional development and help teachers and principals improve student learning. In addition a new program will support ambitious efforts to recruit, place, reward, retain, and promote effective teachers and principals and enhance the profession of teaching (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p. 4).

This reauthorization required states to put specific policies in place relating to highly effective teachers and principals, based significantly on student growth. In addition, state-level data systems linking information on teacher preparation programs to student growth are to be utilized. Likewise, evaluation systems that adhere to a state definition of highly effective teachers must be in place to provide feedback for educators to improve their practice and inform professional development (U.S. Dept. of Education, 2010). This evaluation requirement regarding student growth and feedback for educators

to improve their practice is what Wisconsin is required to have in place by the 2014-15 school year. The goal of The Wisconsin Educator Effectiveness Evaluation system is to "provide students with highly qualified and effective educators who positively affect student learning" (Wisconsin DPI, 2012). The purpose is to have a system of continuous improvement. This new system will link directly to the educator's professional development plan according to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (Wisconsin DPI, 2012).

DuFour, et al.. (2010) and Reeves (2010) reminded stakeholders that implementing high quality, ongoing professional learning is critical to teacher effectiveness in meeting the needs of today's students. The reform effort for high quality teachers continues. Clearly, this is a critical issue, not only in Wisconsin, but across the country.

Along with the federal reauthorization requirements effective in 2014, Wisconsin recently legislated laws that had a direct impact on public school educators. On June 29, 2011, Wisconsin Act 10, also known as the Wisconsin Budget Repair Bill, was approved and enacted into law by Wisconsin legislature in an effort to address a budget deficit. All Wisconsin public school employees would be required to pay toward pension contributions, pay more toward health insurance premiums, and have reduced collective bargaining rights. The law directly impacted teachers' ability to bargain for wages and certain working conditions. The power of teacher unions was restricted. The changes in collective bargaining sparked heated debate and controversy across the state in the summer of 2011. There were marches and protests in Madison, the state capitol, and in other cities across Wisconsin. The political impact and unrest was felt by participants in

the study; during the interviews, teachers in the study referred to the political climate in the state of Wisconsin. While employers were now empowered with more authority over employment contracts and conditions, teachers continued the process of re-licensure and professional development requirements to be considered highly qualified and employable.

Maintaining an educational system of highly qualified teachers is an ongoing effort to keep schools current and future-focused. Emphasis on 21st century skills for students requires teachers to have the knowledge, skill, and support to be effective 21st century teachers (Trilling and Fadel, 2009). Professional development keeps teachers current. According to Stronge (2002), "Commitment to student learning and personal learning is a characteristic found in effective teachers" (p. 19). Trilling and Fadel (2009) suggested professional development programs must meet the needs of the 21st century learner, which includes collaboration with other teachers and a connection to real practice. Professional development programs with those qualities can assist teachers to prepare for changes in instructional practice and student learning.

Along with an increase in professional development, the attitude a teacher brings to the profession is critical to change. Stonge (2002) stated that the teacher's "enthusiasm for teaching, learning, and for the subject matter has been a proven component for effective teaching and student achievement" (p. 18). This study gives voice to initial educators who have lived the change via Wisconsin's Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to describe how, and to what extent, teacher self-directed professional development. It was to determine how Wisconsin's PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative impacted professional learning and changes in classroom instruction and student achievement.

With federal mandates assessing the impact of professional development on quality educators and the impact teachers have on students' learning, there existed a need to investigate Wisconsin's PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative as it related to professional learning, instructional practice, and student achievement.

The No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) mandated that all teachers receive high quality professional development and that the professional development activities be regularly evaluated for their impact on teacher effectiveness and improvement on student academic achievement. The established mandate called for a new system of educator professional development based on teacher standards. The planning process for writing a professional development plan "ensures that Wisconsin educators remain deeply committed to professional growth and will keep Wisconsin schools places that motivate and engage all students" (Mahaffey, 2005, p. 1). Teachers were given the flexibility to create their own professional development; writing a plan allowed the educator to direct his or her own professional learning and determine how that growth would have an effect on student learning (Mahaffey, 2005). How that professional development was obtained was left to the educator's discretion when formulating the plan.

This study explored teachers' perspectives of their professional development within the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative to create a professional development

plan that guided learning and influenced instructional practice and ultimately the outcome on student achievement. The study answered the question: Did self-directed learning through creation of a professional development plan provide initial educators with the professional growth needed to impact instructional practice and ultimately student learning? The following research questions will be explored:

1. What motivates initial educators to change their instructional practice?

2. How do initial educators describe their experiences with the professional development plan process and to what extent does the PDP promote self-directed learning?

3. What types of professional learning opportunities do initial educators believe impacted their own professional growth and student learning?

4. How do initial educators perceive the implementation of the professional development plan on change in their classroom instruction and impact on student achievement?

Significance of the Study

The Quality Educator Initiative has been in effect for eight years. From implementation on July 1, 2005 to July 1, 2011, 35,752 educators have been licensed under the Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34 (Interview Kott, DPI, December 29, 2011). To date, no qualitative study has provided information regarding teachers' perceptions of Wisconsin's professional development requirement, and how that required plan impacts teacher learning, classroom instruction, and student achievement. This study gave voice to how educators perceived the mandate affected instruction and practice. Results from this study have the potential to inform policy-makers and stakeholders in the education

field on perspectives of teachers directly involved in the initiative. Potential changes in teacher licensure and professional growth could have implications both statewide and nationally.

If Wisconsin is to remain in compliance with national mandates and best practices to ensure high-quality professional learning for every educator, stakeholders must understand the impact current professional growth requirements have on Wisconsin teachers. Gathering data from teacher interviews and teacher reflection logs, and analyzing written professional development plans provided data to inform the study. This study contributed to existing literature about professional development and teacher motivation and change. In addition, the study has the potential to inform and impact beliefs and policies on professional learning.

Therefore, understanding how adults learn and how best to meet their professional needs was important for change. As Hirsch (2002) contended, "When schools become 'learning schools,' every student benefits from every educator's expertise, and every educator grows professionally with the support of his or her colleagues vast changes will occur" (p. 33). It was the intent of this study to understand how practitioners in the field of education perceived their self-directed professional learning and the impact of that learning on classroom practice, motivation, change, and student achievement.

Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study, the following definitions were used to provide background and information:

Professional development was defined as the processes and activities designed to enhance professional knowledge, skills, and attitudes to improve learning of students

(Guskey 2000). The term "professional development" means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving teachers and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement (NCLB, 2001). The terms *professional development* and *professional learning* may be exchanged while maintaining the same meaning in this study.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) *Act* is the common name for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorized in 1965 to close the achievement gap. A section of the act, known as Title IIA, pertains to professional development of educators and is entitled, "Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals." The purpose is to increase the number of highly qualified teachers and principals throughout schools in the United States.

The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, also known as PI 34, is the administrative ruling for program approval, licensing, and professional development for Wisconsin educators. The system is based on the Wisconsin educator standards demonstrating knowledge, skills, and dispositions. Initial licensing is based on an educator's successful performance as measure against these standards (WI DPI, 09/25/2011).

Initial Educator is defined as an educator who has completed preservice training from an accredited institution and is in his or her first year of teaching. Initial educators in Wisconsin are required to begin a professional development plan after their first year of teaching.

The Professional Development Plan is a job-embedded, sustained professional development endeavor that, upon successful completion, will lead to verifiable

professional growth and demonstrate the effect of the professional growth on student learning (WI DPI, 09/25/2011).

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study exist and must be considered. Gathering evidence from initial educators' perceptions was a limitation based on their preconceived beliefs about whether professional development in general is worthwhile. In addition, those in the study were professional educators who recently completed the initial educator cycle and volunteered to participate and may carry bias based on personal experience. Their insights may not be generalized to all educators working under the rules of PI 34.

CHAPTER TWO
Review of the Literature

Considerable research has been conducted on professional development of teachers. Gusky's (2003) investigation of effective professional development found conflicting results of what made professional learning effective; however, there is evidence that quality professional learning is directly linked to student learning (Reeves, 2010; Guskey, 2003; Fullan, 1993 and 2003; Hirsch and Killion, 2007; Danielson, 2009; Zepeda, 2008). Staff development can impact instructional effectiveness and student achievement. The challenge is finding the approach that is meaningful to teachers and parallels their beliefs regarding change in their instructional practice and change in student learning.

Researchers and practitioners are continually adding to the knowledge of teaching and learning as professionals. Guskey (2000) defined professional development as a process that is "intentional, ongoing, and systemic" (p. 16). He argued, "Educators at all levels must be continuous learners throughout the entire span of their professional careers" (p. 19). That is the intent of the Wisconsin PI 34 Initiative, to develop life-long learners through self-directed inquiry, which was evident from the 1995 task force recommendations for restructuring teacher education and licensing. The task force recommendations focused on four areas: (a) performance based standards for initial teacher preparation; (b) career-long professional development; (c) licensing categories; and (d) clarification of higher education and the local school district in preparation and ongoing professional development of educators. Professional learning changes as new practices and approaches are researched.

This review of the literature examined professional development and what motivated teachers to apply their professional learning to practice. To that end, the literature review examined the following: adult learning theory, change theory as it relates to beliefs and motivation, and professional development models.

Adult Learning

Teachers must be life-long learners. Understanding how adults learn improves professional development and honors the learner both professionally and personally (Zepeda, 2008). According to Malcolm Knowles' theory of andragogy (1970), adults learn differently than children. Unlike pedagogy, which is the study of how children learn, andragogy is defined as the "art and science of helping adults learn" (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). Different approaches are used to match adult learning.

Knowles (1980) cites five assumptions of andragogy or adult learning: One is self-concept. As a person matures his or her self-concept moves from being a dependent personality toward one of being self-directed. The rate at which this occurs varies for each individual. Adults have a psychological need to be more self-directing, although at times may need direction when a new concept is presented. The implementation of professional learning communities in schools where teachers are directing their own learning follows this concept.

Knowles' second assumption is experience. As a person ages, he or she accumulates experience that becomes a resource for learning. When learning is experienced, it is more meaningful to people. Teachers have a wealth of experience to draw from and want to apply that experience to new learning.

Third is readiness to learn. As a person matures his readiness to learn becomes oriented to developmental tasks of his social roles. The learner feels ready to learn when he or she understands the need of the new learning and can understand how that learning will fit with real-life problems.

A fourth assumption is orientation to learning. As a person matures, his or her time perspectives change from one of delayed application of knowledge to a need for urgency of application. Teachers want to know the relevancy of professional learning and how it can be applied to their situations. Joyce and Calhoun's (2010) research pointed to inquiry and self-development as key components to high quality staff development programs. Their research would substantiate Knowles' theory of preferable adult learning.

Knowles' fifth assumption is motivation to learn. As a person matures the motivation to learn is internal. Learners want to develop increased competence to achieve their full potential. They want to be able to apply knowledge and skills gained and are more performance-centered in their learning. Adults are more receptive to learning when it is geared toward these five assumptions. Understanding adult learning and how it relates to professional development has implications for practice in schools. In addition, the culture and environment of a school also influences adult's professional development.

The environment for learning is important to adult success. Knowles (1970) believed "psychological climate should be upheld where adults feel accepted, respected, and supported in a trusting environment" (p. 41). When teachers understand they are in a learning environment, they can take risks, experiment, learn from mistakes, and try new

methods to improve; they are more willing to engage in professional learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many, 2010). Understanding how adults learn provides insight to further professional growth.

Adult learners must understand their own needs. Understanding their individual need for learning can create motivation. Similarly, a desire to fill gaps in knowledge can create the motivation for improvement and change. According to Knowles (1970), "Teachers of adults who do all the planning, who impose preplanned activities, typically experience apathy and resentment from the learners" (p. 42). When learners are involved in planning their own learning, they are motivated and invested in the learning, which is congruent with Knowles' assumptions of adults as self-directed learners.

With the concept of andragogy, there is a mutual responsibility for learning. The instructor is a resource and can help the learner, but cannot really "teach" in the sense of "make a person learn" (Knowles, p. 48). The adult learner is responsible for his or her own learning. This includes evaluation. The learner ultimately is involved in self-evaluation about the progress he is making toward his educational goals. According to Knowles (1970) in the evaluation component of the andragogy theory, the instructor assists the learner in understanding how to gather evidence of her progress. Evaluation involves adults as a learners and assists them in their own self-directed learning.

Since teachers are adult learners, knowing how teachers learn is important. As stated by Darling-Hammond (2009), "Active learning opportunities allow teachers to transform their teaching" (p. 48). The PI 34 professional development plan puts the adult learner in charge of his or her own learning. Teachers are self-directed learners who create their own professional goals to show impact on their own learning and the

connection of that learning to student learning. Following Knowles' (1970) theory of

adult learning, practical application and experience help define the need for learning.

Teachers are able to create a goal that has practical application for their environment and

for their students, which is motivating for adult learners. Semandeni (2009) shared from

his work how teachers form self-selected study groups which met weekly throughout the

school year to study strategies and improve practice. Within Semandeni's Fusion model,

teachers take turns being the expert. Each teacher has the opportunity to share his or her

knowledge. When all teachers become experts, a positive self-concept and a

psychological need for self-direction is fulfilled. Teachers see themselves as self-directed

learners.

According to Joyce and Calhoun (2010), teachers bring with them their own

perceptions, experience, and background, which interplays with the professional learning

that they are engaged. This affects their capacity to learn. Joyce and Calhoun (2010)

shared that there are many differences between teachers as there are with students, so

there is no one best approach to fit every learner. Just like students, whose needs are met

by the method of differentiation, teachers need differentiated professional learning that

meets their needs as well. People's needs must be met. Zepeda (2008) demonstrated

how the teacher career stages correlated to Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of basic needs

(Fig. 2). In the chart, the beginning, middle, and advanced career stages of teachers are

aligned with Maslow's hierarchy of needs. As one's basic needs are met, he or she grows

as an individual to the level of self-actualization. A beginning teacher's basic survival in

the teaching profession also continues to grow and develop until he or she comes to the

realization that teaching is more than just a job, it's a professional career. Understanding

the stages of development help teachers grow in their profession.

Maslow's Hierarchy Compared to Teacher Career Stages

Maslow's Stages	Teaching Stages
Self-actualization	Realizes that teaching is not just a job -- teaching is a profession.
Aesthetic appreciation	Enjoys teaching. Seeks additional knowledge and derives satisfaction from the seeking.
Intellectual achievement	Learns things that are applicable. Shares with others.
Self-esteem	Is recognized by coworkers for efforts. Feels appreciated by students and parents.
Belonging and love needs	Getting to know coworkers. Feels comfortable about asking questions.
Emotional and physical safety	Classroom routines established. Keeping up with the workload.
Basic survival	Beginning career. Getting through each day

Fig. 2 (Zepeda, 2008, p.135)

Teacher Motivation and Self-Efficacy Relating to Professional Learning

The most important factor affecting individual student success in schools is the

classroom teacher (Marzano, Pickering, and Pollock, 2001; Marzano 2007; Reeves,

2010). It is therefore important that teachers see themselves as the driving force of

student success. Teachers must believe that they are the conduits from their own

professional learning to students' successful learning.

There is evidence that self-efficacy has a strong influence on performance and

achievement in classroom environments (Bandura, 2007). Self-efficacy and

implementation from learning during professional development endeavors has

significance to research. According to Woolfolk and Hoy (1991), teachers with high

teaching efficacy and high personal efficacy correlated to teachers who were more

effective in helping their students achieve. To Bandura (1997), "Self-efficacy is concerned with judgments of personal capability" (p.11). Many factors may play into a teacher's feeling of self-efficacy; "Beliefs of personal capabilities affect the goals people select and their commitment to them" (Bandura, 1995, p. 219). A teacher's beliefs in his abilities, along with his motivation, impact student learning.

According to Deci (1995), people's success at changing behavior begins when they identify their own motivation. Hoy and Miskel (2008) stated "Job satisfaction is more likely to come from autonomy, responsibility, and the challenge of the job itself" (p.143) . Additionally, Hoy and Miskel (2008) explained understanding behavior is best attained through exploring teachers' needs, beliefs, goals, and motivation.

If teachers are to implement professional learning in their everyday practice, they need to be self-motivated (Beltman, 2009). Teachers are the vital link to change. According to Pink (2009), the 21st century requires people who are self-motivated and who approach work and life with the desire to do a good job intrinsically, not because of rewards and consequences. Deci's (1995) research supports Pink's contemporary work and substantiates that people's success at changing behavior begins when they identify their own motivation.

To make lasting change it is best for teachers to understand their own motivation. According to Deci (1995), "human behavior is purposive, and motivated behavior is directed toward outcomes" (p. 152). Deci (1995) believed self-determination calls for providing choice without control. "It is the controlling intent of rewards that sabotages their attempts to motivate others, destroying the very motivation they had been intended to promote" (p. 38). Deci (1995) further suggested people are goal oriented and work

best when they are involved in the goal setting and monitoring of the achievement without punishment or rewards for true intrinsic motivation to occur. Goal setting is practiced as part of the Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34.

Goal Theory and Self-determination Theory play a part in motivation. Initially developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, Self-determination Theory is concerned with how motivation can support a person's natural or intrinsic tendencies to behave in effective and healthy ways. The outcomes of Self-determination Theory in education includes interest in learning, valuing education, and confidence in one's own capacities and attributes (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, and Ryan, 1991). These outcomes result from being intrinsically motivated. "Self-determination Theory distinguishes itself between self-determined and controlled types of intentional regulation" (p. 326). There is a difference between controlled and self-initiated motivation. A behavior that is "self-determined is regulated through choice; but when it is controlled, it is regulated through compliance" (p. 326). According to Deci, et al. (1991), both behaviors might include motivation, but vary greatly in how one responds or perceives the control. Deci et al.. contended, "Motivation, performance, and development will be maximized within social contexts that provide people the opportunity to satisfy their basic psychological needs for competence, relatedness, and autonomy" (pp. 327-328).

According to Deci et al.. (1991), the best way to motivate people is to support their sense of autonomy by allowing them choice and flexibility to perform tasks which lend to a more effective approach than traditional rewards and punishments. These basic needs support Knowles' (1970) adult learning theory along with Maslow's (1954) hierarchy of basic needs. As stated by Hoy and Miskel (2008), "People seek to be in

charge of their own behavior" (p. 145) and "resist and struggle against pressure from external forces such as rules, regulations, orders, and deadlines imposed by others because it interferes with their need for autonomy" (p. 145).

Similarly, Expectancy Theory also tries to explain what motivates people to work. Vroom (1964) is credited for the Expectancy Theory. Hoy and Miskel (2008) summarized this theory as having two main components. One, people's cognitive abilities drive their behavior. Second, motivation is a "conscious and cognitive process" (p. 154). Thus, Expectancy Theory according to Hoy and Miskel (2008) is based on three parts working together: (a) expectancy, the belief that the person can accomplish a task; (b) instrumentality, the belief that good performance will be noticed and rewarded; and (c) valence, the gain is worthwhile from the individual's perspective. If all three components work together, motivation will be high.

Goal Theory is another motivational theory based on the need to make a change for the better. According to Goal Theory researchers Latham and Locke (2006), goal setting can have a motivating effect if there is a capacity to meet the goal, there is commitment to the goal, and the goal is specific enough to self-monitor progress. Goal Theory interrelates with self-efficacy. According to Bandura (1995), "Beliefs of personal capabilities affect the goals people select and their commitment to them" (p. 219). The goals people set may be influenced by their sense of capability to live up to the goals they have created. Latham and Locke (2006) stated "People with high self-efficacy set their goals high, because they are not satisfied with less" (p. 332). Goals help set the direction for change. Latham and Locke (2006) defined a goal as "a level of performance proficiency that we wish to attain, usually within a specified time period" (p. 332).

Wisconsin educators are required to create a goal that will impact their professional

growth and impact student learning.

Change in Attitudes, Beliefs, Assumptions

Exploring the concept of change is important to understand the underpinnings of

attitudes and beliefs relating to professional development. The work of change theorists

such as Kurt Lewin (1935) has built the foundation for self-directed adult learning.

Lewin is generally credited as the person who coined the term "action research." Action

research is a form of self-reflective inquiry to understand practices or situations. Self-

directed learning can have many different looks, but all involve teachers designing their

own learning to fulfill a need or interest. According to Beavers (2009), those who direct

professional development must "respect individuality and allow for self-direction" (p.

29). Teachers who design their own professional learning must be open to change in

order to learn and grow as a professional and use their new learning to make a difference

in their classroom instruction and student learning.

Lewin's work was further expanded in the 1960's by Malcolm Knowles, who

explored how adults learned and what impacted their learning. Knowles explained that

learning is an internal process and the methods or techniques of learning which involve

the individual most deeply are self-directed inquiry, which produces the greatest learning

(Knowles, 1980). When beliefs are in alignment, change in behavior accelerates; when

beliefs underlying a professional development program challenge long-standing beliefs

and practices, change can come much slower if at all (Hirsh, 2002). Logic models by

Yoon, Duncan, Lee, and Shapely (2008) explain how professional development impacts

teachers' knowledge, skills, motivation, and thus classroom teaching and student learning

(See Figure 3). The model makes clear the belief that the result of training impacts

change.

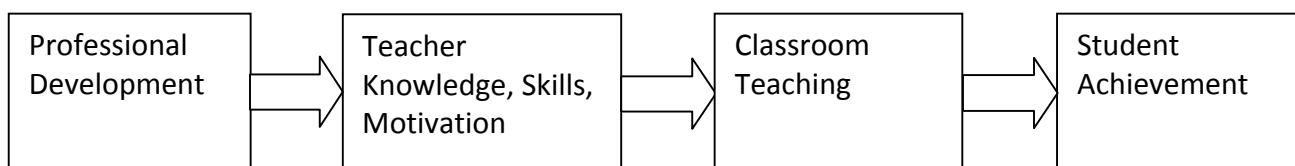| Professional Development	→	Teacher Knowledge, Skills, Motivation	→	Classroom Teaching	→	Student Achievement

Figure 3: Logic Model (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Shapley, 2008)

Others suggest alternative change models in which teachers change attitudes,

beliefs, and assumptions as a result of student learning (Guskey, 2002). By actually

seeing something in action, teachers can believe in the importance of that work. It is

"seeing is believing" that make teachers change their practices. Professional

development experiences and the relationship for sustainable change in teachers' beliefs,

attitudes, and practices guide this study.

In his work, Guskey emphasized that the new Model of Teacher Change (Figure

3) may appear to conflict with traditional perceptions of sequence for learning. The new

model implies that "change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs are primarily a result, rather

than a cause, of change in outcome of students" (Guskey, 2002, p. 386). Once teachers

have observed students' success, they are more readily accepting of the new practice.

Notably, it is because of actually seeing something in action the person now believes in

the importance of that work. This is a different perspective from Yoon, Duncan, Lee, and

Shapley (2008), who use the logic model (Figure 3) to explain their research correlation

on professional development. In Model of Teacher Change, the stages of development

are enhancing teacher knowledge, skills, and motivation, which in turn leads to better

skills, and improved teaching, which results in increased student learning. The variation

is evident when comparing the two models.
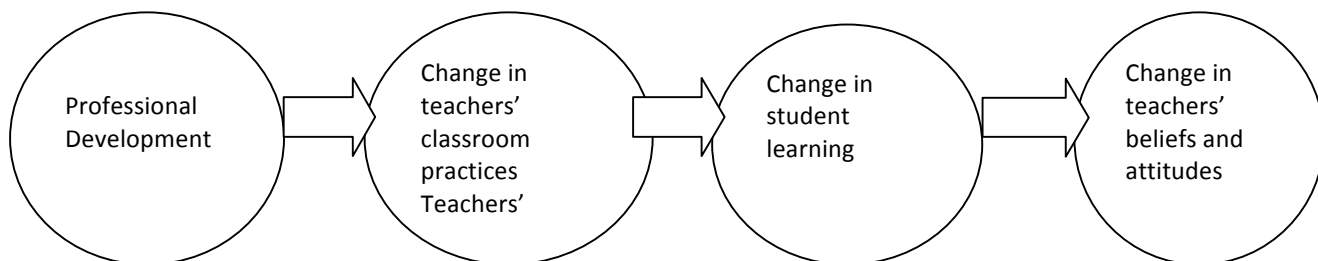
Figure 4: Alternative Change Model (Guskey, 2002)

Guskey claimed it is the result of student learning that changes teachers' beliefs to bring

about lasting change. According to his model, "significant change in teachers' attitudes

and beliefs occur primarily after they gain evidence of improvements in learning"

(Guskey, 2002 p. 383). While the two models have the same components, the sequence

makes the difference.

Professional development programs are systematic efforts to bring about change

in classroom practices of teachers, in their attitudes and beliefs, and in the learning

outcomes of students, according to Guskey (2002). Significantly, not all teachers have

the same beliefs and attitudes about professional development and its impact on student

learning. Professional development leaders often attempt to change teachers' beliefs

about certain aspects of teaching or instructional practice (Guskey, 2002).

Hoy and Miskel (2008) defined beliefs as "general understandings or

generalizations about the world; they are what individuals hold to be true" (p.146). When

beliefs are in alignment, change in behavior grows; however, when beliefs contradict

long-held traditional beliefs, change can be slow or not at all (Hirsh, 2002). It is imperative that teachers be involved in change as it relates to their learning and to access choices in their professional learning. Additional research by Morewood (2009) demonstrated that when teachers are given professional development choices, they are more likely to align student learning needs with their professional learning needs; thus influencing student achievement. Teachers' beliefs influence their decisions and attitudes.

Further support for change as choice, autonomy, and belief is Beckum's (2010) qualitative study of 25 high school teachers' perceptions of implementing change in their classroom. His research showed that teachers successfully implemented change when they had ownership of the change and believed they were treated as trusted adults. Other important findings from this recent study included time to learn the new skill and time to implement the new skill. Teacher time and skill were likewise seen as impacting lasting change.

Professional Development

According to Sparks (2003), effective professional development will deepen participants' understanding, transform beliefs and assumptions, and create a stream of continuous actions that change habits and affect practice. Yet, there is a gap between what we know works and implementation of that knowledge. Reeves (2010) declared, "We know what effective professional learning looks like; it is intensive and sustained, it is directly relevant to the needs of teachers and students, and it provides opportunities for application, practice, reflection, and reinforcement" (p. 23). Professional learning and its application to practice can be a complex system. Effective professional development has

been difficult to evaluate due to the complexity of factors influencing student learning. What is known is that change doesn't happen without professional development.

"Policymakers and supervisors strive to find the "right" professional development approach to ensure that all teachers have the knowledge and skills essential to produce high levels of learning and performance for students" (Hirsh, 2002, p. 38). The type of professional development, the quality, and the lasting impact, all make a difference. There are many models that schools or districts could employ; consequently, various types of professional development models are in place across the United States, from independent learning to more collaborative models. Joyce and Calhoun (2010) defined the following formal professional learning models: inquiry models by individuals who are supported with time and money for their study; personal/professional services by peers, where more experienced teachers share improvement ideas to their colleagues who are usually new teachers; action research as a more disciplined inquiry by teachers who study an aspect in their classroom or school; and workshop models bringing people together for a one day training or choosing from a menu of topics that are presented by teachers within or outside experts.

Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) shared what they have researched as five effective staff development models. Individually-guided staff development is one model in which teachers learn on their own through professional publications, discussions with colleagues, and experimenting with new instructional strategies. This may occur within or outside a formal program. The main characteristic is that the teacher is designing the learning by choosing his or her own goals and activities. Some schools incorporate this model as a professional development focus, a personal action plan, or, as now required in

many states for re-licensure, a professional development plan. While this model has many positive aspects, it assumes teachers can best judge their own strengths and weaknesses when it comes to learning needs and are capable of initiating their own learning. Research has shown that when adults are in charge of their own learning, they are more motivated and more ready to put their learning into practice (Knowles, 1970; Hirsch, 2007; Zepeda, 2008). Individual professional learning allows teachers to find answers to their own professional issues using their preferred method of learning.

A second model defined by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) is that of observation/assessment. In the past, this model was seen more as something a supervisor did periodically to provide teachers with feedback on a lesson or practice. Often it was seen as evaluation and not a true opportunity for professional development. This practice is taking on new forms such as peer coaching and mentoring. The observation and assessment model provides the teacher with data they can reflect upon and look into for the purpose of increasing student learning. It provides the teacher with a different perspective from an outside observer, often another teacher. There is an assumption that this practice helps both the observer and the teacher being observed since teachers have an opportunity to discuss and collaborate. Once teachers begin to see the impact of changes in their practice, they are more likely to continue and make the practice a regular part of their instruction, according to Guskey (2002). When this type of professional development is embedded in current practice, teachers are applying new techniques and can see change in their own behavior and their students' behavior. Seeing that change often validates the professional learning experience.

A third form of professional learning explored by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) is that of involvement in an improvement or development process. The professional learning comes from being involved in developing a product or a process that a group of teachers or school team identifies as needing improvement. The model incorporates learning that may occur from reading, observation, trainings, trial and error, or a combination of approaches. The professional learning comes from a result of being involved in the process. The underlying assumption on this model is based on adults learning most effectively when they have a desire for knowledge and will apply that learning to a problem. This form of learning is supported by Knowles' (1970) theory of adult learning.

A fourth general form of professional development shared by Sparks and Loucks-Horsley (1989) is known simply as training, which often takes place in the form of workshops or sessions. Training is used to convey knowledge, skills, and practices. To be most effective the training should provide follow-up with assistance, such as peer observation and coaching to transfer more complex teaching skills (Joyce and Showers, 1988). Training can be an effective form of professional development. Under appropriate conditions, training has the potential to significantly change teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and behavior, and the performance of their students (Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, 1989). Training has been the most widely implemented form of professional development; however, it has not always been the best method of professional learning. Training has had negative connotation and is sometimes nicknamed "drive-bys" or "one-shot" learning when follow-up is not provided.

A fifth model of professional development that includes collaboration is inquiry according to Sparks and Loucks-Horsley's research (1989). Inquiry may occur individually, but most often occurs within small groups of teachers or as an entire faculty. Within the inquiry model, teachers are questioning and researching their own practice. Adults are inquiring individuals with experience that can help them answer their questions and keep them motivated with practical real-life application (Knowles, 1970). With an inquiry model, teachers are involved in formulating questions and collecting data to help them answer the questions that pose a problem. Reflecting on the results and changes that need to be made are part of the inquiry model. Closely following this model of inquiry, DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker (2002) discuss professional learning communities, which are characterized by collaborative learning using data and goal setting to impact student learning. This model of professional learning is most often done collaboratively with colleagues who have a sense of trust with one another.

Within this collaborative model, DuFour et al.. (2010) encouraged "learning by doing." Teachers strengthen their practice by applying and being "hands-on." DuFour et al.. (2010) argued that professional learning communities foster an "ongoing process in which educators work collaboratively in recurring cycles of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve" (p. 11). The work from Learning Forward (2011) stressed the importance of learning communities to communicate, collaborate, and develop to support all students. According to Fullan (1993), when teachers work as a community of learners they feel supported and they know that they are not alone. Guskey's work (2003) is a reminder that keeping the focus on learning and the learners is an important principle for effective professional

development. In Guskey's (2003) research on characteristics of effective professional development, he found one consistent characteristic is collegiality and collaborative discussions. However, he emphasized that for this collaboration to be beneficial, it needs to be "structured and purposeful, with efforts guided by clear goals for improving student learning" (Guskey, 2003, p. 749). This research supports collaborative, hands-on learning to be successful in positively affecting student achievement.

According to research, high-impact professional learning has three essential characteristics: (a) focus on student learning; (b) rigorous measurement of adult decisions; and (c) focus on people and practices, not programs (Reeves, 2010, p. 21). Professional development must be linked to student learning and must be observable in each child to be considered effective. High-impact learning is related to student results, and student results must be analyzed one student and one classroom at a time (Reeves, 2010). Additionally, researchers (Reeves, 2010; Joyce and Showers, 1988; Zepeda, 2008; DuFour et al.., 2010) have concluded from their research that effective professional development is intensive and sustained. "It directly relates to the needs of the teachers and students, and it provides opportunities for application, practice, reflection, and reinforcement" (Reeves, 2010 p. 23). Many scholars cite professional development as the means to affect change and influence student learning. Guskey (1997) suggested four common professional development elements that have had proven evidence of increased student learning: (a) focus on learners and learning; (b) concentrate on organizational and individual change; (c) stay directed by the larger vision when making small changes; (d) embed ongoing professional development in daily practices and procedures.

According to developers of Wisconsin's PI 34 Initiative, the professional development plan is an attempt to make professional learning meaningful and relevant to the needs of the teachers and their students (Benzine, DPI interview, Sept. 16, 2011). The teacher creates a goal that will impact their professional growth and identifies how that growth will have an effect on student learning. This form of self-directed professional development requires that the teacher include methods to assess his or her professional growth and methods to assess the effect of that growth on student learning.

According to Reeves (2010), frustration occurs when there is a gap between what people know they should do and what they actually do. "Quality professional learning is intensive and sustained and is relevant to the needs of students and teachers providing opportunities for application, practice, reflection, and reinforcement" (Reeves, 2010, p. 23). Self-directed learning must be carefully planned and implemented to best meet teacher and student needs. According to Charlton (2009), continual professional development by writing a professional development plan can prevent the "autopilot syndrome" that "leads to stress and burnout and so increases morale and empowers an individual organizationally and to evolve their job and career goals" (p. 337). Charlton studied those in the medical profession to find that self-directed professional development motivated individuals and provided a sense of purpose and accomplishment. Educators as well as those in other professional careers, engage in self-directed professional learning.

Even with the number of professional development models, there is little agreement on which method truly provides the best outcome. There has been no agreed upon perfect professional development model endorsed by research. Guskey (2000)

made clear that "professional development is an ongoing activity woven into the fabric of every educator's professional life" (p. 38). Professional development must be meaningful to the educator and believed to be important to deserve their time and effort.

Research on teacher leaders by Reeves (2008) stated "teachers not only exert significant influence on the performance of students, but they also influence the performance of other teachers and school leaders" (p. 2). The source of influence comes from observation of teaching practices on student achievement and then sharing those observations with colleagues (Reeves, 2010). Rather than basing staff development solely upon the perceptions of educators regarding what they need, staff development planning processes are more often begun by determining what students need to know and be able to do and working backwards to the knowledge, skills, and attitudes educators must have if those students outcomes are to be realized (Sparks and Hirsh, 1997). Models of effective professional development realize that the emphasis needs to be on student learning. Guskey (2003) and Yoon (2009) emphasize professional development must provide structured time and a clear purpose to be meaningful. Teachers involved in designing their own program of professional development must understand what would best help them to grow and develop. One method that has gained popularity is professional development communities, which put students at the center.

Professional learning communities require adults in the organization to be continually learning with job-embedded, structured time, and a clear purpose through group goal setting. Professional learning communities are composed of collaborative teams whose members work together to achieve common goals for which all members are accountable (DuFour et al., 2010). The culture is created with an emphasis that

learning is for everyone involved. "The professional learning community is a systematic process in which teachers work together in order to impact their classroom practice in ways that will lead to better results for their students, their team and their school" (DuFour et al., 2010, p. 11). Professional learning communities embrace a professional growth model, which addresses the adult learners' needs utilizing self-concept, readiness, orientation to learn, experience, and motivation.

   As stated by Reeves (2010), "People and practices endure; programs rarely do" (p. 21). Therefore, school improvement efforts need to concentrate on teachers and instructional practices. Teachers need to be well-versed in the types of professional development programs or opportunities that will be effective on student learning. A research presentation at the March 2008 Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association in New York cited research conducted on the effects of teachers' professional development on student achievement. In those findings, the researchers' state:

>   Practitioners need to be vigilant of professional development programs that do not
>   have research evidence to base their claims of effectiveness. Practitioners must
>   demand evidence based strategies and practices from their professional
>   development providers. As of yet, though, much valuable evidence is in short
>   supply. Standards-based school reform efforts including the implementation of
>   NCLB may not reap students' gains without teachers' enhanced knowledge,
>   skills, and instruction in the classrooms. Researchers and practitioners alike
>   should strive to strengthen the evidence base of the very core of their school
>   reform efforts by doing more rigorous studies on professional development,

teachers' learning and practice, and students' achievement. (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Shapley, 2008, p.)

Research shows it is critical that teachers identify quality, research-based professional development and seek it out for their own professional development. There is a link between teacher effectiveness and professional development. As stated by Boykin and Noguera (2011), "Teacher effectiveness can be enhanced through improved professional development" (p. 190). Professional learning has its place in teacher effectiveness in the United States and abroad.

Darling-Hammond, Wei, Andree, Richardson, and Orphanos (2009) reported countries recognized as high achieving have four professional development practices that help them be successful:

1. Time for professional learning within the teachers' workday. In most European countries it is reported that "15 to 20 hours per week are spent on tasks such as meeting with students, preparation, and meeting with colleagues; however, U.S. teachers typically have 3 to 5 hours a week for these tasks" (p. 15).

2. Beginning teachers receive extensive mentoring and induction supports. While most American schools do incorporate mentoring programs, it is unclear as to how many have strong programs with extensive peer observation and lesson planning review as seen in high achieving countries.

3. Teachers' involvement in school decision-making processes was seen as important for teacher learning and growth.

4. Countries that provide resources for professional development through additional time, paid courses, or national training programs were also reported to show high student gains.

Studying professional learning in other countries may assist the United States in establishing a process that best impacts student achievement. Guskey (2000) emphasized that professional development is most effective when it is embedded into day-to-day teaching. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) stated it can take "50 or more hours of sustained professional learning to realize results for students" (p. 14). Teachers must be given time within the school day to learn and apply their new learning. In most educational institutions in the United States, this does not happen. According to the National Center for Education Statistics School and Staffing Survey (SASS), professional development was reported by 35.5% of teachers involved in university courses, 22.4% through observational visits to other schools, 91.5% involved in workshops, conferences, or training sessions, and 25.1% presented at workshops, conferences, or training sessions (p.19). Much less job-embedded, ongoing professional development is occurring in American schools than research recommends. In contrast, countries like the Netherlands, Singapore, and others mandate 100 hours of professional learning each year in addition to time for collaboration, according to Darling-Hammond et al. (2009).

Studies comparing professional development of teachers in the United States with teachers in other countries show large differences. Professional development in the United States still engages teachers in one or two day workshops or conferences, according to research by Darling-Hammond et al. (2009). Research shows that professional training with 30 to 100 hours has a positive effect on student learning while

professional training with less than 14 hours has little effect on student achievement

(Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). Time is an important element that affects professional

development. Time during the workday is needed in schools across the country.

"Teaching today has a work schedule that is disconnected from the reality of what

teachers actually do and what students actually need," according to Silva (2010, p. 62).

Time and collaboration are factors seen within most successful European and Asian

countries, but rarely in the United States. Time during the workday for embedded

professional development is a common element of valuable professional learning.

According to DuFour et al. (2010), if schools are to move teachers from being isolated

learners, planners, and educators, administrators must develop a collaborative culture

within their schools and provide time within the structured day for teachers to develop

goals around student learning and to grow professionally.

Professional organizations are assisting educators with direction for professional

development. The professional learning organization, Learning Forward, has placed

great emphasis on outlining what educators need for effective professional learning. The

standards for professional learning released in 2011 provide a means for districts to

improve professional growth of their staff. The organization stated, "Professional

learning is at the core of every effort to increase educator effectiveness and results for all

students, its quality and effectiveness cannot be left to chance" (Learning Forward, 2011,

p. 4). Seven standards provide the foundation for professional learning: learning

communities, leadership, resources, data, learning designs, implementation, and

outcomes. Within the standards are basic underlying characteristics of learning that are

essential to growth and effectiveness. Effective teachers view themselves responsible for

their students' success (Stronge, 2002). Professional development and motivation could be the vehicle for change in an educator's professional career.

Summary

Professional growth and teachers' motivation toward change provided an in-depth understanding from the teacher perspective. Teachers must believe in their ability to make a difference, be motivated and open to new learning, and be willing to change their practice if needed to increase student achievement.

There was support of an alternative change model showing that student outcomes compelled a change in teacher perceptions of a new practice, strategy, or concept. This was important when developing professional programs or choosing a model to implement. Motivation and change come under a sense of autonomy (Knowles, 1970; Deci et al., 1991 and 1995; Pink, 2009). According to the literature, when teachers feel that they are in control of what they were hired to do, and that their employers trust them to be professionals and self-directed, change is more likely to occur. Teachers need to believe that they are the agent of change and have effect on student learning through their professional learning.

Various models of professional learning have been in formal practice in education. The main models of professional growth include: training, workshops, observation, study groups, inquiry/action research, individually guided activities, and mentoring (Guskey, 2000; Zepeda, 2008; Joyce and Calhoun, 2010; Sparks and Loucks-Horsley, 1989). A variety of teaching and learning practices have been suggested as vehicles to achieve professional growth. A number of professional development models may be used to assist in that autonomy of self-directed learning. It is critical to have an

understanding of the behavioral and psychological perspectives to make implementation of professional learning endure.

The model of self-directed inquiry is the focus for Wisconsin educators through the licensing process of PI 34. Using the Wisconsin Educator Standards, teachers create a plan to show professional growth over time. Teachers direct their own growth by writing a professional development plan aligned to the standards. The use of a professional development plan creates the path for self-directed learning and is common in many workplaces, not just educational organizations. The plans are a means to achieving life-long learning and focused professional growth.

Many models of professional development exist to help teachers develop their craft and are based on the need for collaboration. The belief of teachers as life-long learners is even more apparent when called to work in professional learning communities or to write professional development plans showing growth over time. There are many examples of the benefits of collaborative work and providing time within the workday to achieve professional development goals depicted by the literature. It is not the professional development model per se that needs to change, but rather the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors of the people instrumental in transforming education: the teacher. Exploring professional development abroad may lead American educators to new practices in professional learning.

CHAPTER THREE
RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to describe how, and to what extent, teacher self-directed professional development, anchored in Wisconsin's PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative, impacted professional learning, changes in classroom instruction and student achievement. The study informed readers about teachers' attitudes and beliefs regarding self-directed professional learning through the development of an individualized professional development plan (PDP). The research may also inform supervisors, policy makers, teachers and other stakeholders about the value of self-directed learning through completion of the PI 34 professional development requirements. The study provided recommendations and insights on possible improvements for educators' professional learning. Finally, the study provided future consideration for change in teacher licensing requirements.

This study involved qualitative research in an educational setting. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis and builds an understanding of a subject's lived experience through an inductive process (Merriam, 2009; Creswell, 2009; Patton, 1990). Qualitative research was used to document the experiences of initial educators in the field and share their stories through in-depth, personal interviews.

Research Question

The study explored teachers' perceptions on the basic question: Does self-directed learning, through creation of a professional development plan, provide teachers with the professional growth needed to impact their instructional practice and, ultimately, student learning? The following research questions were investigated during the study:

1. What motivates initial educators to change their instructional practice?

2. How do initial educators describe their experiences with the professional development plan process and to what extent does the PDP promote self-directed learning?

3. What types of professional learning opportunities do initial educators believe impacted their professional growth and ability to impact student learning?

4. How do initial educators perceive the implementation of the PDP process on change in classroom instruction and impact on student achievement?

Study Design

This qualitative study utilized phenomenological interviews of initial educators. The work of Seidman was used to guide the interview process, using a method called "phenomenological-based interviewing," which combines narrative, life experiences and in-depth interviews to draw out the phenomenon being explored (Seidman, 2006). This approach fit into the study of the phenomenon of professional development and explored participants' responses to that central topic based on their life experiences. A descriptive analysis was conducted of initial educators' experiences and perceptions. This information was based upon the educators' self-directed professional learning, created through the professional development plan in fulfillment of the requirements for Wisconsin's Quality Educator Initiative. The goal of a phenomenological descriptive approach, according to Seidman (2006), is to "have the participant reconstruct his or her experience within the topic under study" (p. 15). This approach occurred through multiple, in-depth interviews using semi-structured and open-ended questions. Qualitative research allowed the researcher to be the "tool" to obtain data. As reminded

by Hatch (2007), "Qualitative research seeks to understand the world from the perspectives of those living in it" (p. 7). This study obtained information first-hand through multiple, in-depth interviews, direct documents, artifacts, and field notes. Interviews served as the focal point to obtain the narrative stories of educator's experiences. The experiences and stories of Wisconsin's initial educators were best served through qualitative research seeking to explore the experiences of those who have lived them, the teachers.

The goal of this qualitative research was to provide in-depth details, rich description, and clear documentation of the initial educators' experiences and perceptions about their PI 34 experience of creating a self-directed professional development plan as mandated by the state of Wisconsin. Phenomenologically-based interviewing was the best method to explore the complex issue of initial educators self-directed professional development experience. These in-depth interviews provided research from participants involved and were used to further understanding via teachers' perspectives. According to Creswell (2007), a phenomenological study describes the meaning of the phenomenon for a small number of individuals who have experienced it. A phenomenological study was appropriate to this study of self-directed professional learning from the first-hand view of participants. Interview data was an important component of the qualitative research because the participants spoke from their lived experience. First-hand information was shared and documented by the researcher. According to Lester (1999), phenomenological research is best used to understand subjectivity and gaining insights into people's motivations and actions.

Participants were open to sharing their professional development plans and annual reflective journals. Documents were used for review and analysis through coding and theme development. Creswell (2008) explains that these types of documents "provide valuable information helping researchers understand phenomena in qualitative studies" (p. 230). These documents provided a rich source of information, including personal thoughts of the participants while they were involved in their professional learning throughout their initial licensing cycle. Multiple, in-depth interviews and primary document reviews provided the core data collection for the study.

Participants

Participants were teachers from a large school district located in northeast Wisconsin. The Unity School District supported teachers in Wisconsin's PI 34 Initiative through a formal mentoring program and had trained PDP readers within the district. The district also had their own requirements for professional development that all educators new to the district were to complete within the first three years of employment. Teachers participating in the study were professional educators who recently completed their initial educator cycle. Participants were certified educators from elementary, middle, and high school who completed the initial educator stage. The sampling strategy consisted of homogeneous sampling. In homogeneous sampling "the researcher purposefully samples individuals or sites based on membership in a subgroup that has defining characteristics" (Creswell, 2008, p. 216).

Purposeful selection was utilized in this study because the study warranted the need for individuals who had completed the initial educator cycle within the same district. This subgroup of initial educators provided the pool of participants. It was

preferred to use participants from one district. One reason was for consistency. If district professional development programs, PDP support, or in-district requirements were described in the interview, all participants would have adhered to the same district requirements. The study was about participants' perceptions of the process and their learning; not about comparing districts and their involvement in the PI 34 process. If district procedures appeared to have a large impact, additional research into the particular district could be explored in another study.

A list of educators from the Unity School District who had received their initial educator license within the past three years was obtained from the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The list contained 49 potential participants with their contact information. Randomization occurred by selecting every fifth name on the list. Names and contact information were highlighted. Participants were contacted via email or phone calls. This contact method was used because it was seen as more personal than a letter.

Original contact was made in May of 2012 and produced only one participant. Due to the busy time at the end of the school year, further calls and emails were made again in early June. This second attempt produced four additional participants. The total five participants fit within Creswell's recommended number for a qualitative study. Those five participants were interviewed throughout the summer from June to September. The in-depth summer interviews produced information that showed saturation and provided meaningful perspectives by the educators involved. Research questions were answered in multiple interviews and confirmed with corroborating data supplied by the participants, who were willing to share all data components, including their reflection

logs and professional development plans. Using triangulation of those three data pieces was important for the study and provided supporting evidence.

According to Creswell (2007) the process of collecting information involves primarily in-depth interviews with typically 4 to 25 individuals. Therefore, the process for purposefully selecting participants followed by random selection was employed to arrive at a number suitable for a qualitative study. Hatch (2002) shares that no direct relationship exists between the number of participants and the quality of the study. The criteria and participant number and selection grew out of the in-depth interviews and analysis of the data. Time, the number of interviews, and the need for sharing the professional development plan and the reflection log reduced the potential number of available participants to five. Initially, there were six participants; however one participant was unable to locate her professional development plan. Her first interview data was not used and interviews ceased. The number of participants who were willing and able to be involved in the study and share all documents remained in the study.

Qualitative studies aim to deeply understand the participant's lived experience and must be done through multiple in-depth interviews. This occurred with meaningful information shared and enough written data to share findings from the educators. A small number of participants enabled the researcher to examine the topic, delve deep into the experience, and conduct substantial research using interviews, documents, and artifacts. Experiences and information gathered reached the point of saturation and significant stories were obtained to share with readers.

All of the participants were currently professional educators who had been through the process as initial educators. The participants lived the experience of the re-

licensure process to retain employment and now would be classified as professional educators. The following short vitas provide the reader with background on each of the five participants:

Participant #1, Jane Thomas

Jane was a professional educator in a high school alternative education program. Jane began her education with an associate's degree for the deaf and hard of hearing. She was employed as an interpreter for 12 years; however, due to medical issues, Jane left her job, which required repeated hand signals, for an education degree. Jane earned a double major in secondary education in the of broad field social studies and also completed a master's degree in educational leadership for a K-12 principal's license. Jane was in her fourth year of teaching in an alternative program at the time of establishing her professional development plan. The next year, Jane was transferred to a different alternative education program whose mission was for students to obtain their high school equivalency degree. Jane's self-directed professional learning for the professional development plan centered on her ability to research, implement, and evaluate a project-based curriculum and meet the district's benchmarks and state standards while providing students with a curriculum that was meaningful and relevant. Her work focused on creating a project-based learning curriculum. Jane's professional development goal was to gain a better understanding of project-based learning and Understanding by Design®.

Participant #2, Shawn Sippel

Shawn was a high school English teacher with five years of experience. At the time of the study, Shawn was beginning his fifth year of teaching and his first year in the Unity School District. His degree was in secondary English. Shawn moved from a

small, rural district, which was his first teaching experience after graduating from college, to his current, urban location. Shawn taught high school Freshman, Sophomore, and Senior English classes. When he began his professional development plan, Shawn knew he would be taking on a new class of Junior English, a subject he had not previously taught. Shawn's focus for self-directed learning was to identify and incorporate specific reading and literacy strategies and assessments into the Junior English class so the levels of student reading comprehension as measured by formal and informal assessments would be raised.

Participant #3, Laura Bangart

The third participant was Laura, an elementary teacher, who entered the teaching profession later in life. While watching her own children learn and grow, at age 38 Laura felt compelled to complete her education and become a licensed teacher. She earned an elementary education degree with an interest in technology and literacy. Previous to this, she ran a daycare business out of her home. The goal of Laura's self-directed professional development was to learn and implement a variety of instructional technology practices into her classroom instruction. When asked about her goal, Laura stated, "Our district talked about digital natives and digital immigrants. I'm one of the immigrants. I never had a computer class until I was in college."

Participant #4, Colleen Holden

The fourth participant for the study was Colleen, a high school English and journalism teacher. Colleen, a traditional college graduate, had been teaching English for four years at Unity School District. Colleen accelerated her professional development process to complete the program in three years. Colleen was working toward a

journalism certificate and planned to enter a Master's degree program; her interests carried over into her teaching, where she oversaw the school newspaper. Colleen's professional development related to her goal to help students become better journalists and expand their understanding of media. In addition, she sought to become educated in differentiated learning, classroom management, and effective strategies that impacted student achievement.

Participant #5, Dan Mertz

The final participant was Dan, a middle school math teacher. Dan graduated with a Bachelor's degree in 1-8 education with a minor in mathematics, had been teaching for five years, and was enrolled in a master's degree program in mathematics. His middle school math classes included a section of special needs students who were in the regular education class. That inclusion class had 31% of special education students in the areas of English as a Second Language, learning disabilities, and emotional and behavioral disabilities. Dan's self-directed learning for the initial educator license was to learn more about students' differing abilities and preferences, and how to use techniques to help each individual student succeed in the regular education setting.

Research Context

Initial contact was made with the district superintendent of Unity School District requesting support to conduct the study in that district (See Appendix A). Support was granted by the superintendent, but was not compulsory to the study. The contact was a courtesy request since research was being conducted with current district employees. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and were held off site of the work environment.

After the participants agreed to participate, meeting arrangements were made in the public library, a mutual location. This provided a location that was away from the school environment, yet still convenient for participants. A private interview room was scheduled for each meeting. This conference room was the primary location to conduct the three interviews for each participant. Participants were informed that their voluntary participation was being requested in order to gain further information on teachers' perceptions on self-directed professional learning through a professional development plan, and insight into how that plan impacted change in their instructional practice and student learning. Confidentiality issues were discussed and participants signed a letter of consent at the start of the first meeting (See Appendix E). The researcher then discussed interview dates and times with the volunteers and a schedule of interviews was constructed based on convenience of participants. Participants then received confirmation through email.

A series of interviews from one participant was completed prior to starting a subsequent set of sessions with a new participant. This approach was most effective for the researcher to fully understand the teacher's experience and perspective while being able to transcribe the recorded conversation prior to moving on to another teacher's story.

According to Hatch (2002) and Creswell (2008), considerable time must be spent in the field to obtain information that reflects participants' points of view. Therefore, the research for this study was conducted through a series of three interviews with each participating educator. Four participants participated in the full series of three 30-60 minute interviews and one participated in two interviews. See Figure 4 below.

Name	Location	Dates/Times
Jane	United Public Library	6-7-2012 @ 1:00-2:50pm 6-14-2012 @ 1:30-2:40pm 6-15-2012 @ 3:30-4:10pm
Shawn	United Public Library	7-11-2012 @ 4:00-5:15pm 7-14-2012 @ 1:00-2:20pm 7-20-2012 @ 10:30-11:15am
Laura	United Public Library	7-26-2012 @ 1:00-2:00pm 8-3-2012 @ 1:00-3:15 pm
Colleen	United Public Library	8-10-2012 @ 1:15-2:30pm 8-17-2012 @ 1:15-3:00pm 8-22-2012 @ 1:00-1:45pm
Dan	United Public Library	8-13-2012 @ 1:00-2:45pm 8-31-2012 @ 3:00-3:45pm 9-8-2012 @ 2:00-3:15pm

Figure 5: Schedule of Participants Interviews

Data Collection

Semi-structured individual interviews were the primary data collection method used in the qualitative research study along with the exploration and analysis of primary documents to support the study. "One-on-one interviewing is a data-collection process in which the researcher asks questions to and records answers from only one participant in the study at a time" (Creswell, 2008 p. 226). Individual interview methods were well-suited to the purpose of this study because the study lends itself to understanding teachers' perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions. Seidman (2006) stated, "Interviewing provides access to the context of people's behavior and thereby provides a way for researchers to understand the meaning of that behavior" (p. 10). To understand what the self-directed professional learning process was like for initial educators, inquiry through multiple interviews provided the most useful information.

A semi-structured interview protocol helped elicit worthy information to answer the research questions. In addition, interview questions followed up with open-ended questions, which allowed the participant to be flexible and open with his or her responses. Using follow-up probes helped obtain deeper information. Creswell (2008) described probes as "sub questions under each question that the researcher asks to gain more information or to expand or clarify information" (p. 229). The process for data collection was a three-step phenomenological interviewing process. This process was used to dig deep into the understanding, emotions, and perceptions of initial educators who recently completed their professional development. As explained by Seidman (2006), there were three sets of interviews. The first interview generally focused on getting to know the participants, along with the initial educator's experience with professional development, change, and beliefs in the context of their professional growth over the past five years. Understanding what motivated the participant to learn and their preferred method of professional development was part of the initial interview.

The second interview was more structured to obtain details about participants' experiences with PI 34 and the process of directing their own professional development. Understanding details of how participants arrived at their professional goal, what student needs they were dealing with, how the professional development plan had been implemented, changes in the participant's learning, changes in the participant's instructional practice, and possible changes in the students' learning were drawn out of the conversation using open-ended questions. Using the structured and open-ended questions helped participants to build upon their experiences and allowed the researcher to probe deeper. This second interview also involved questions that related to the actual

professional development plan, the goal selected, details about why and how that goal and activities for professional learning were selected, and whether the teacher saw connections from their professional learning to students' learning.

The third interview involved reflection questions. These questions transpired from the previous interviews and from comments made in the educator's reflection journal and were used to get deeper perspectives. Having developed rapport with the participants, combined with utilizing open questions, was helpful to dig deeper into the thoughts of these initial educators. The teacher's reflection log was used to gain more perspectives and to see if the reflection log still held their same views.

The use of probes was put into place during the second and third interviews. At that time, the actual professional development document was used as a focal point for the conversation. The interviewer asked the teacher what they were able to witness in the classroom as a result of implementing the goal. Specific activities listed in the plan were discussed as to their value to professional learning and how that new learning transcended to student learning. What was done differently and how the teacher could correlate that new practice to student learning was a topic of discussion. These types of probing questions helped to deepen the discussion. According to Hatch (2002), Creswell (2008), and Seidman (2006), interviews can be the primary form of data in a qualitative study. This study focused primarily on interview data, but also on the professional development document, the instructor's reflection journal, and student work samples. Using a variety of sources helped to substantiate the interview data.

According to Creswell (2008), triangulation of data helps validate the findings. Using multiple sources of data achieved this purpose of triangulation. According to

Seidman (2006), allowing time between the series of interviews provides time for the participant to think about the interview yet not lose connection between interviews, and permits a relationship to develop. Interviews were structured with enough time to transcribe and work with one participant at a time. Interview data were collected via a Livescribe pen with audio recording and note recording. This electronic pen provided for more transparency between the researcher and participants.

After the interview sessions, interview audio recordings and notes were transcribed. Interviews were transcribed directly after the meeting so the information was fresh and the researcher would not confuse previous interviews. Time management and practicality were also reasons as to why the transcriptions occurred directly after the interviews. Likewise, field notes used for description, observations, and thoughts were typed as field note data after each session. This was done to gain observations and meaning from gestures, cues, tone and emotion shared during the interview. Self-transcription by the researcher was done to become more familiar with the data.

Additional data were collected to support the interview process. After the first interview, a copy of the professional development plan (PDP) was requested, which participants brought to the second interview. The PDPs supported the interviews and were used for documentation and clarification. Likewise, a copy of the teacher reflection log was requested and used to substantiate the interviews. The reflection log provided further in-depth data of the participants' goals, thoughts, and any changes in their instructional method or behavior. The interviews, professional development plan, and reflection journal triangulated the data for each participant.

The data were transcribed by the researcher and stored in electronic folders allowing the researcher to read, highlight, and organize the data for further analysis. Features of Microsoft Word were employed throughout the process to manage the data. As stated by Seidman (2006), "Interviewers who transcribe their own tapes come to know their interviews better" (p. 115). With the researcher as the tool and primary transcriber, understanding, internalizing, and coming to understand the participants' experiences was the achieved goal. Such in-depth interviews were necessary to achieve validity in the participants' responses. In addition, credibility was gained from the in-depth interviews seeking to understand the individual's story through his or her experience.

The next step involved what Seidman (2006) called "reducing the text." Reducing the text occurred through multiple reads and bracketing of informational passages that contained useful information for quotes and vignettes. The purpose of this step narrowed the information into manageable segments that could be reviewed and placed in appropriate categories and so the information could be broken down, analyzed, and coded for patterns. "The researcher must come to the transcripts with an open attitude, seeking what emerges as important and of interest" according to Seidman, (2006, p. 117). The in-depth interviews provided a means to find commonalities among participants' experiences.

Data Analysis

Data analysis looked for specific recurring themes and common responses, which formed a pattern in the participants' responses. Transcribed interviews from each personal interview were read, reviewed, and analyzed to become familiar with the data. Next, common ideas, words, or statements were highlighted. Creswell (2008)

emphasized the need for "preliminary exploratory analysis" (p. 250), which consists of getting a general sense of the data, making memos, and deciding if there is enough data. Multiple reads, transcription of the data, and field notes found that the five interviews did provide enough data to accomplish a sense of saturation of the research. The next step was an inductive process of coding the information.

Qualitative coding practices described by Seidman (2006) and Creswell (2008) were employed. Transcripts from individual interviews, teachers' reflection journals, and professional development plans, along with researcher field notes, provided the raw data for analysis. Interview transcripts were carefully reviewed once more and the bracketed verbatim quotes were reread. Entries from all of the teacher reflection journals were read and reread and then manually highlighted with various markers to depict possible themes. This analytic coding was conducted to develop coded categories based on emerging themes and topics that showed a pattern. Data analysis also looked for conflicting evidence.

Seidman (2006) explained how profiles or vignettes of a participant's experience can be powerful for sharing interview data. For this reason, stories from the interviews were created by highlighting vivid descriptions and experiences shared by the participants. Understanding participants through their stories and in-depth responses to the interview questions strengthens qualitative research. Seidman (2006) stated, "Telling stories is a compelling way to make sense of interview data" (p. 210). Creating a vivid picture in the readers' mind by sharing details and stories of experience supports this qualitative study. Readers gained a deeper understanding of educators' perspectives by reading their stories.

Along with coding raw data and creating a matrix of themes based on emerging trends and patterns identified through the interviews, the literature review assisted in guiding potential categories and relationships between topics and identifying a connection between questions and categories. Concepts in the study's literature review were useful for exploring comparisons and explaining findings that emerged during the data analysis process. Consistent with personal, narrative interview research, the data analysis involved compilation and comparison of data among all five participants. Once compiled and coded, the information was sorted according to emerging themes: (a) teacher motivation; (b) professional development plan and process; (c) change in teaching and learning.

Use of the computer during data analysis included searches across multiple data entries along manual researcher analysis through multiple reads and reviews, copying of documents and manually highlighting the data and then typing that data into the theme categories. Cutting and pasting of all electronically highlighted data into the creation of a thematic matrix was also done to make sense of the data. Sorting and categorizing developed from multiple readings of the transcribed records and primary documents. Electronic and manual folders were used to store each participant's data, which helped to manage the data and provide a means to find, sort, and compare information.

Ethical Considerations

Credibility and reliability were established through the means of triangulation and researcher field notes, which created validity in the process of qualitative research. According to Creswell (2008), "triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence" (p. 266) from multiple sources.

Data collection respected individual's confidentiality through pseudonyms for locations and participants. Participants were informed of their right to refuse, leave the study at any time, and confidentiality. Consent was documented through a signed agreement and consent form.

Reciprocity was provided through professional conversations and the understanding that the study would contribute to knowledge about professional development of teachers in Wisconsin. This study provided a means for teachers to discuss their professional growth, classroom practices, fears, reservations, and successes. Teachers had an opportunity to reflect on their practice. Understanding perspectives of initial educators through their stories and experiences may help others in the education field learn and grow as professionals.

CHAPTER FOUR
FINDINGS

This study examined the perspectives of Wisconsin professional teachers as they participated in the PI 34 self-directed learning through the creation of a professional development plan. The purpose of the study was to describe how, and to what extent, teacher self-directed professional development, anchored in Wisconsin's PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative, impacts professional learning, changes in classroom instruction and student achievement. The study explored teachers' perceptions on the basic question: Does self-directed learning through creation of a professional development plan provide teachers with the professional growth needed to impact their instructional practice and ultimately student learning? The research questions explored the study include:

1. What motivates initial educators to change their instructional practice?

2. How do initial educators describe their experiences with the professional development plan process and to what extent does the PDP promote self-directed learning?

3. What types of professional learning opportunities do initial educators believe impacted their own professional growth and student learning?

4. How do initial educators perceive the implementation of the professional development plan on change in their classroom instruction and impact on student achievement?

The researcher conducted a thorough data analysis of interview transcripts based on the above guiding questions, interview protocols, and supporting documentation of reflection logs and professional development plans. The data analysis brought forth three significant themes: (a) teacher motivation; (b) professional development plan and process; (c) change in teaching and learning

This chapter is organized with respect to the three emerging themes. Evidence supporting the themes was provided through direct quotes and interview stories along with documentation gathered from participants' reflection logs and professional development plans. The participants interviewed for this study were teachers currently under the professional educator's license and had previously completed their initial educator licensing cycle through the Wisconsin PI 34 requirements.

Theme One: Teacher Motivation

A primary theme emerging from the data was motivation in relation to professional development. Self-motivation comes from within an individual rather than from outside sources of reward. The teachers in the study were found to be motivated to seek out their own professional development. Inherent in teachers' professional growth was the ability to engage in self-directed learning. The study examined how teachers viewed the process of self-directed learning in conjunction with their own internal motivation to undertake such a process to change their instructional practice, which in turn would have an effect on students' achievement. According to Knowles (1975), self-directed learning is a "process in which individuals take the initiative, with or without the help of others, to diagnose their learning needs, formulate learning goals, identify resources for learning, select and implement learning strategies, and evaluate learning outcomes" (p. 18). This was the type of learning that the study participants conducted. Participants sought self-directed learning without being required to do so by administration or state requirements via the professional development plan. Teachers saw a need within their instruction and set out to fill that void. Participants shared their experiences in self-directed professional learning and motivations for doing so. They

described what sparked an interest in their own learning and how they went about gaining new knowledge. The teachers also reflected on the benefits of their professional growth on themselves and their students.

All five participants described motivation as a determining factor in their professional growth. Success of their students was viewed as a large reason for their motivation to undertake professional learning. To the teachers in this study, successful professional development was defined as having met the needs of their students. When Jane, an educator of at-risk students, shared her insights regarding starting in the district as an initial educator, motivation was a primary factor of her learning. Jane was working with at-risk students and felt the need to tailor her instruction to help students be prepared for life outside of school. When asked about how she chose her goal and professional development, Jane shared her thoughts:

> I wanted to learn about anything that helped my kids. You know, it's not about what the state or the district says. It's about what I saw that my kids needed that I needed to learn about. Anything that would help my kids. (Interview 6-14-12)

Jane was a committed teacher who has had to reinvent herself from a licensed broad field social studies teacher to a teacher of at-risk students in an alternative education program. Jane entered the profession with a degree ready to teach high school social studies to the general education population and is currently working in an alternative at-risk program. By the nature of circumstances, Jane had to continually seek professional development to keep current in her position to meet the needs of her students. For Jane, self-directed professional development was inspired by motivation based on her students' needs. Reflecting on her initial educator experience Jane shared

her purpose: "Getting them out of high school, getting them through the class and out of here."

Jane realized that she could help open new doors for her students and help prepare her students for life outside of the school environment. She incorporated money management, financial skills, and lessons that would be beneficial for life post-high school. She was motivated to change her curriculum to include resume writing, completing a job application, and how to complete the FASFA form, for example. Jane felt motivated by what her students needed to know for real life: "That's my professional growth, learning – what I need to do as a teacher to help my kids." Jane also talked about learning whatever was needed to help her students in the classroom. Sometimes, that might be from resources she and another teacher researched online, books she purchased and read to implement ideas such as project-based learning, or taking classes to supplement her training. Getting students the knowledge they needed was Jane's intrinsic motivation.

Like Jane, Shawn also described being motivated based on the needs of his students. In Shawn's PDP he stated his rational to increase students literacy levels because "our WKCE scores show that students are struggling with reading comprehension." He also cited formative assessment through classroom observation where he "sees their struggles in the classroom."

Shawn talked about his motivation for change as something that stemmed from new information that he wanted to try in his classroom. For example, Shawn specifically cited Kelly Gallagher's widely read book, *Readicide* (2009). *Readicide* is Gallagher's account of adolescents' decline in reading achievement due to ineffective and uninspiring

teaching practices. Motivated by Gallagher's work with high school students, Shawn wanted to emulate Gallagher's strategies in his own classroom to meet the needs of his students. In addition to reading the book, Shawn had the opportunity to attend a local professional conference featuring Gallagher himself. This learning opportunity helped Shawn to further his understanding of reluctant readers and provided strategies on how to set forth changes in his instruction to make a difference for his students.

Shawn expressed that his motivation related directly to helping students. His reflection journal provided evidence of this excitement and motivation for learning after taking a reading course:

I had some really great ideas such as how much silent reading to set aside in the classroom with balancing time for book discussion clubs and how to assess both of those activities. I used an Article of the Week (AoW) technique in which students read for comprehension and provided written reflections which included commenting with questions, connections, criticisms, and confusion. This helped me to understand where kids were at with their comprehension. (Reflection Journal, September 2009)

Other participants in the study were equally motivated to learn based on their students' needs. Laura, an elementary teacher interested in learning more about technology, also felt her motivation came from the needs of her students. In her reflection journal, Laura stated that she felt inadequate in her knowledge of technology and that she saw other teachers and their students using technology and her students were missing out on those opportunities. Other classes were creating multimodal presentations and her students wanted to do the same. During the interview, Laura stated, "My

students asked me, are we going to make those movies too? I knew I needed to do something." Laura had no background on how to integrate multimodality into her teaching, so she sought out help through a PhotoStory class being offered after school by a colleague, which could also be taken for credit from a local university.

Laura reached out to learn more so she could share that knowledge with her students. Laura, like other teachers, felt the best professional learning came through formal learning. Therefore, Laura attended technology workshops on specific skills such as file management, multimedia, and Microsoft Office, rather than using online tutorials or help manuals. Laura found these formal learning opportunities within her own district through after school workshops and outside of her school district from the Cooperative Educational Service Agency (CESA). Laura's journal entry exemplified her excitement in meeting the needs of her students:

> Teaching was a passion for me. I found new ways to excite my students'
> learning. Technology was right in the middle of learning. Any time the students
> got the opportunity to use technology they were engaged in the activity.
> Technology was advancing quickly and many of my students were better working
> the computer than I was. (Reflection Journal, June 2010)

Colleen, a high school English and journalism teacher, shared many examples of how her motivation for formal learning helped her students in the classroom. For instance, her PDP stated, "I want my students to feel more confident in the role of becoming a journalist." She explained in the interview that she attended classes on journalism to learn how to help her students. Colleen stated in her reflection journal, "Going back to school to get my journalism certificate gave me the central concepts and

tools of inquiry necessary to teach journalism." She discussed her journalism classes and how the professional learning she acquired helped her students gain information on the First Amendment rights, how to create and design layouts, and how to effectively write for journal publication. In addition, Colleen wrote in her reflection journal, "My ability to have better control of my classroom, differentiate, and incorporate strategies to help my students learn made me a better teacher and my students better students."

Dan, a middle school math teacher, had taken classes to learn about differentiation for his inclusive classroom. Some of the classes were part of Dan's mathematics master's program while others were from workshops he had attended at the state mathematics conference in Green Lake. Dan found that his students were responding differently to lessons when differentiated techniques were used. "Students responded to the changes in the classroom and seemed to be enjoying the class more. They had activities at their level." These changes came about because Dan saw a need to meet the needs of all learners in his classroom and didn't feel equipped to teach in the new inclusive environment. Seeking out professional development to meet his students' needs was important as cited in his annual reflection journal:

> In order to help my students in math, I needed to know more about them as people and how they learned best. I had students take a survey to get to know them better. I also used learning cards which included the interests the students had and their four different learning types. I had taken a class on Multiple Intelligences and Modality Preferences and used this to help get to know my students. (Reflection Journal, June 2010)

All of the educators interviewed for this study showed motivation for professional learning to benefit student achievement. Four of the five participants additionally shared beliefs and experiences that confirmed their motivation for professional or personal gains.

Shawn felt he was also self-motivated based on his own need to learn so he could be a better teacher. He shared that his own learning resulted best from taking formal classes or workshops and then implementing what he had learned into his classroom instruction. Shawn documented specific classes such as "Improving Reading Comprehension: Research and Its Practical Implications" as an "amazing class." Shawn's reflection journal shared:

> The graduate class I attended explained how students at the high school level learn. It gave me strategies to use as a teacher to get my students to read critically, analyze, make connections, and write reflectively about their reading. I implemented strategies in which students learned grammar rules and how to use them in their writing. (Reflection Journal, September 2009)

In addition to the Gallagher conference, Shawn cited another beneficial conference, "Improving Adolescent Writers." Shawn stated, "It was a conference that focused on how students would use their writing and connections to improve their joy for reading." Shawn continued, adding, "It was really helpful for me as a teacher." Shawn was focused on ways he himself could be better prepared as a teacher so he would increase students' reading comprehension and gain valuable tools to make reading more meaningful and help him become a better teacher.

During the interviews, Shawn spoke about formal learning and interactions with his professor and other teachers as motivating factors necessary for professional learning. Shawn shared how contagious professional leaning can be by explaining:

> When I was in my master's class, my professor had us write an essay about our goals and how we achieved them through the class. I went from having the ability to identify reading strategies to really understanding and applying them in my classroom. Because of my professional growth in reading strategies, my students have seen me get excited about reading. The more education I got, it overflowed into my classroom. That was exciting. (Interview, 7-14-12)

Shawn sought out professional learning from workshops and graduate classes as ways to help him grow as a teacher. Shawn also shared his disappointment in dropping out of the master's degree program in what he referred to as "the state of affairs in Wisconsin." Shawn continued:

> With the governor's new plan, I had to quit the program. I wouldn't be getting compensated for my classes, and getting a master's degree didn't seem like something that would really pay off in the long run. It stinks. (Interview, 7-20-12)

> Like Shawn, Laura also felt motivated to improve her professional learning to be a better teacher. Laura cited her inadequacy in the area of technology. She knew that as a returning adult student to complete her bachelor's degree, technology was an area that other classmates had much more proficiency than she did. This became apparent not only during her own education, but also in her classroom. She observed that other teachers were incorporating technology and that she had little knowledge in this area.

She looked to what was missing in her instruction, identified it as technology, and set out to learn more to help her own learning and ultimately her students'.

Laura acknowledged graduate classes and district classes for her new skills. She explained:

I've grown professionally by taking a variety of technology classes. Information I have learned from these classes has been put into different multimedia projects in my lessons plans. I've learned so much and come so far with technology. This wouldn't have happened if I didn't take classes. It wasn't something that I could have learned online by watching videos or reading help documents. I needed someone to show me, to be there to show and explain. That's how I teach in my classroom too. I model for the kids so they have an example. We walk through the process together. Once we do it together, and sometimes they do a project collaboratively, then they're able to do it again on their own. That's what's exciting. (Interview, 8-3-12)

Keeping up with and ahead of her students was part of Laura's internal motivation for self-directed professional learning. Laura continued:

I knew students were attracted to technology. They talked about it in class. Some spoke of programs they used at home, so I had to do something. The students are the digital natives and I was one of the immigrants. The more I could learn, the better I could be. (Interview, 8-3-12)

It was evident from the interviews that Laura was proud and excited about her newly acquired technology skills and her ability to further integrate technology into her curriculum. This was evidenced in her journal:

This year has been a learning year. Not only for my students but for me as well. I hope to enhance my lessons for next year because now I have a real feel for technology in the curriculum. I will continue to take a variety of classes to stay current with teaching practices and enhance my lessons. (Reflection Journal, June 2010)

Laura's self-directed learning goal was to increase her understanding of multimedia technology by attending classes so she would have the ability to assist students in the creation of technology projects. Her ability to choose a goal that reflected her own learning needs was critical to her change in classroom instruction. As Knowles (1970) pointed out in his research on adult learning, adults need autonomy and the ability to be self-directed learners who can apply their new learning and experiences immediately.

Colleen also recognized her motivation to make improvements in her own learning to become the best teacher she could be. After entering the profession as a new college graduate certified to teach high school English, Colleen assessed her progress after the first few months of teaching. Colleen was a self-reflective teacher who wanted to be a better teacher and to continually grow. She felt the need to strengthen her content area as well as management techniques, use of differentiation, and use of teaching strategies in her content area of English. This need stemmed from her personal quest to become better at her craft. Colleen felt the best way to do this was through formal graduate classes. She sought out a certificate in journalism and attended district training and outside conferences to learn classroom management techniques. Colleen shared her perspective on attending classes:

I felt my students gained a greater understanding of the English content due to my ability to differentiate, something I was learning. My classroom became more calm and orderly with my increased classroom management. I was able to use strategies and ideas to assist my students on their educational journey. My two Bill Banks seminars gave me the most hands on activities to add into my classroom. (Interview 8-17-12)

Like the other participants in the study, Dan wanted to learn strategies that would help him become a better teacher and help all of the students in his diverse classroom be successful in mathematics. Dan wrote in his reflection journal:

I've made considerable progress toward my goals in the first year. I attended the state math conference and networked with others in the field. Another teacher and I also presented a session on differentiation that we're starting to use in our classroom. (Reflection Journal, June 2011)

Dan was a motivated professional who, along with taking graduate credits for master's degree in mathematics, contributed to the profession by sharing with other teachers in the field. He found value with keeping up professionally and expanding his content knowledge. This was evident in his reflection journal, which had supporting artifacts such as a copy of the PowerPoint he and another math teacher presented at the state mathematic teachers' convention on challenging gifted students in middle school math. Shawn, Laura, Colleen, and Dan demonstrated that professional development helped them to stay current as professionals and that their expanded knowledge brought new learning into their classrooms. The teachers interviewed at Unity School District were motivated to become skilled professionals at their craft and find meaningful ways to help

their students learn. They cited examples and stories of how motivation played a part in

their professional development. Professional learning, which stemmed from authentic

classroom needs, was seen as motivating and filled a real need in the classroom.

Teachers had a connection between their own self-directed learning and the learning of

their students. Beckum's (2010) research supports the notion that teachers who had

ownership of change and were seen as trusted and respected professionals were

successful in their professional development and instructional practices to bring about

changes in student learning.

Theme Two: The Professional Development Plan and Process

Fullan and Hargreaves (1996, p. 3) reported that teaching has "changed

immensely" and that "teaching is not what it was." They expounded: "expectations have

intensified…. Teachers and principals are dangerously overloaded" (p. 4). Fullan and

Hargreaves (1996) cited social and behavioral problems in the classroom, special

education legislation, curriculum expansion, and increased accountability to parents and

administrators as some of the issues facing teachers. That was almost 20 years ago. It

appears the frustrations from the past two decades have remained and continue to expand:

Within this study, new educators cited frustrations over demands on their time and

demands of district and state mandates.

A common finding among participants was the consensus on overall lack of time

to complete the many demands placed on new teachers: The amount of time needed to

complete the required mandates by the state, the time needed to do an exemplary job

teaching their students, time to become familiar with their new curriculum, and time to

find professional balance as a new educator. This overarching concern became apparent

throughout the interview process and was captured during passionate stories demonstrating overwhelming frustration about the profession these new teachers had recently entered. The following educators' stories document their frustration.

Jane was required to take many of the same classes that she already had in undergraduate and the graduate work from her master's degree in educational leadership. When she talked with district leaders about the courses she had already taken, Jane became exempt from two of the required classes because she could show documentation of comparable coursework. It was Jane's perspective that while the classes were helpful, they were also time consuming. Jane explained, "As a new teacher you're involved in learning the curriculum, doing a PDP plan, taking these district classes, and just trying to survive."

Jane was not alone in her feelings, as other participants had comments during the interview that related to a lack of time and a feeling of being overwhelmed with responsibilities. Those responsibilities included district-required classes, learning the curriculum, procedures to follow in the district, and the professional development plan. While the first year was one of reflection, teachers still felt overwhelmed within the year in which they had to begin the plan development. Jane candidly shared her perspective:

> It was an obstacle to overcome. It was time-consuming, just plain time – all the reflections, write-up and stuff, it's not worth the effort. As I was paging through my PDP, it was so repetitive, even I felt that I was repetitive and wondered why this was even accepted. It was bad. So much repetition in the plan. No one really wants to read this stuff. (Interview, 7-15-12)

Shawn felt the same anxiety of stress for time. Taking the required district classes within the first five years of teaching and working on the professional development plan required by DPI in the first five years of teaching was seen as something that should be combined. Shawn stated, "District people and building principals did suggest trying to blend the two whenever possible." He further explained that the professional learning goal could be the same as the building goal so both could be accomplished together. As Shawn stated, "Hit two birds with one stone."

Shawn, a new teacher who had taught in a previous district, stated that he was "overwhelmed and overloaded." He shared, "It was almost enough to push me out of teaching altogether." He wasn't sure if it was just the district's requirements because his former district had similar requirements. Shawn felt the pressure of time multiplied with all the requirements from the district and the state to show accountability. The reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act had been in the media for quite some time. Wisconsin was required to make changes in teacher accountability and student test scores. Shawn agonized:

> While I understand what they're trying to do, it's too much; the day-to-day teaching is getting left behind because there's no time to do all of this paperwork. Teachers are getting stressed out. Everyone works at home on this already and takes classes outside of the teaching day, so it's hard to find a balance. (Interview, 7-20-12)

Laura similarly shared her perspective on time:

> At the beginning, I just felt overwhelmed! I was in a new teaching position, new students, new curriculum, mentor meetings, and just getting to know the staff and

procedures. With the PDP, I always questioned what I was doing and if it was right. It took a lot of time. (Interview, 8-17-12)

Colleen gave her perspective on time as a new teacher:

College didn't really prepare me for all the extra stuff involved with teaching. Besides my classes, I did the yearbook. And then there's all the other things that came with teaching like grading papers, taking classes, faculty meetings, new teacher meetings. All the time spent on the PDP and reflections. (Interview, 8-10-12)

Time was the main element lacking for new teachers. They were aware of demands such as balancing time for classroom tasks versus that of taking required district coursework within the first three years of employment and the PDP requirements. As shared from the participants' stories, these requirements were often frustrating and left teachers feeling "stressed" and "overwhelmed."

Professional development is not always self-directed. In the case of the teachers in this study who taught at Unity School District, they were also required to complete courses deemed necessary by the district. Teachers within the Unity School District were required to take five classes within their first three years as part of new teacher training. Those required classes were free of charge and taught by certified district adjunct faculty. For an additional college credit fee, teachers could obtain graduate credit for the classes from a local university. The required five classes were determined by the district and included such topics as Understanding by Design, classroom management, differentiation, and others deemed important by the school district. According to Jane,

Shawn, and Laura, the district believed core classes provided continuity among staff and built a solid background on which the district vision and mission stood.

Three of the five participants shared their frustration with taking the mandated district classes while simultaneously crafting a goal and plan for the state-required PI 34 professional development process. Those educators felt the mandated professional learning by both the state and now the district diminished their professionalism to seek classes they felt were meaningful to their area, and felt a general sense of frustration when they were already inundated with new procedures, new curriculum, and an overall lack of time to put quality instruction in place. Jane shared her views in an interview:

> I wouldn't have taken the district classes, but I had no choice. I just had a lot of this in my graduate classes, so it was redundant. It was something I just had to do to keep my job. During the middle of it, the district stopped. I don't know why. I heard they ran out of money. (Interview 6-14-12)

While Colleen felt the classes were helpful, she still had to struggle to balance her time. She felt the classroom management and differentiation district were topics that helped her, but that the instruction was provided more for elementary teachers than those at her level. Colleen also felt it was yet another thing that the district had put in place, disregarding what new teachers already had going on. She lamented:

> It might have been part of their mentoring program or something, but it was just too much. They should have made it voluntary, not requiring all of the classes, just those we felt we needed. Not everyone needed the same classes. I thought it was ironic that they taught differentiation, but didn't differentiate for us. Yet, I learned some things that helped me in the classroom. (Interview, 8-17-12)

Dan's experience was much the same. He explained:

> I didn't feel the topics really applied. I would have rather spent more time in my content area or talking to colleagues to learn what they're doing. It was just a mix of us, so it was kind of hard to really meet our needs. It took a lot of time on top of everything else we had to do our first few years. It didn't last. I don't think teachers are doing it any more. I guess they had to pay people to teach so it just was one more thing to cut. (Interview, 8-31-12)

While teachers found professional learning helpful, time and choice were key elements in forming their perceptions about district mandated professional learning.

Those same sentiments about time and choice were part of the frustrations of teachers completing the state professional development plan required for re-licensure. The PI 34 mandated professional development plan process involves a series of deliberate steps that the initial educator must complete. Upon the first year of employment, the educator begins with a year of reflection. This reflection year can be used to determine what goal the educator feels will best meet his or her learning needs and bring about an effect on student learning. An educator could begin the actual plan the first year without taking a year to reflect. Once the educator determines a goal and objectives, professional development activities are chosen that will meet the objectives and span throughout the five-year timeline. Educators also have the option to complete the plan within three years. Another requirement of the plan is to document collaboration with others.

Once the initial goal and plan are developed, it is submitted for approval by a committee comprised of a representative of higher education, an administrator, and a colleague. Ideally, the committee reviews the plan to ensure that the educator has

completed all goal, objective, activity, and collaboration components and has written a goal that correlates to the Wisconsin Educator Standards, and the educator has established rationale for the goal with a plan to assess that goal. Once committee members feel that all criteria have been met, they verify by signing and dating a signature sheet approving the educator's plan. Once approved, the educator may begin implementing his or her plan.

The educator completes annual reviews of the plan in years two through five and submits these reflections as part of the completion plan in the last year. In addition, the educator must provide evidence in the final year of professional growth and student learning. That evidence is to be reviewed by the committee. Committee members then determine if the professional development plan has met all of the requirements. It is approved by signing and dating a verification form that is sent to the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.

As of September 1, 2013, the PDP process must be completed online through secure portals found on the WECAN website or the Quality Educator Initiative (QEI) website. The educator posts his or her goal with the same requirements as listed above. Committee members then log in to an account that houses the document and completes a series of questions to verify that the educator has the goal planning sheet completed. The same process is used at the end of the five-year plan to verify completion of the professional development plan.

The intent of the professional development plan was to bring about professional learning, change in classroom practice, and ultimately, student learning. It was envisioned that educators would be vested in the plan because of their self-creation of a

plan based on their own professional learning needs. The final DPI task force reports that they:

> Envisioned teacher skills and abilities to be taught, assessed, valued, and recognized not solely by the number of clock hours of instruction teachers may receive but by their capacity to develop the knowledge and skills of the students in their charge, and to adjust the knowledge bases to be taught to the changing demands and diversity of our community, nation, and world. (DPI, 1995, p.5).

Compounding the demands for more accountability, teachers in this study were also dealing with changes in collective bargaining laws. Changes that had previously been negotiated such as seniority, lay-off procedures, working conditions, and work rules were now in the hands of administrators and school boards with the authorization of Act 10, a new state law on collective bargaining for public employees. Unrest on how districts would proceed with their new rights made many teachers uneasy. With the political climate of Wisconsin and the climate of education changing, many educators were uncertain and some teachers interviewed felt a lack of job security. Those frustrations entered into the dialogue during interviews on this study of professional learning.

Jane noted, "My plan was probably null and void because my goal changed so often. I'm not working on the same goal for 5 years of this plan." Jane explained that new teachers were most apt to be moved around in a district or lose their job altogether and need to relocate to another district. Jane vented:

> That's another frustration with the whole process. The administration was always moving us around. Sometimes we're not even in the same curricular area. I

started with social studies and now I'm in an alternative GED program. It was

that or being laid off. It's not a fair system. We had to keep making changes to

our plan and get those changes approved. It's really hard to get your team

together to make the changes. Most people were doing it by sending papers

around for signatures. No one's really talking about professional learning and

student outcomes. As a new teacher we had other things to worry about. It

wasn't fair to do this to new teachers. We had new lesson plans, new curriculum,

getting ready and then because goddamn it, the state says you had to do this

paperwork by Oct. 1st we had that on our plate too! (Interview, 7-15-12)

When asked if the PDP was beneficial at all, Jane simply and emphatically stated,

"NO." When asked about advice she would give to new teachers, Jane vehemently

stated, "Don't!" After a pause and nervous laugh, Jane went on to say more quietly,

"Really, don't." When asked for more details, Jane paused, and then began to share her

feelings by revealing:

I guess it's just because of the political climate. Maybe if you asked me two years

ago, I would have said, yeah, come on in, try it out, and jump through the hoops

that the state makes you do. You'll find out you might still love it. But now, just

don't. I had a friend who I mentored and he had been looking for a job for five

years. I told him, stop, you just have to stop! When I checked in, no job yet, I

told him to just stop and move on to something else. I told him he needed to

move to Kentucky or Tennessee, or somewhere other than Wisconsin. He only

had sub experience with his initial license, so he was stuck. He can't move on.

He got screwed. He felt he was not getting looked at because he's not qualified.

He still had his initial educator license 'cause he didn't get a job yet. He went

back to his college, and was thinking of getting another certification. It's just bad.

With districts letting people go left and right and with increases of class sizes like

45 in an AP class, I don't care what the governor said; you can't tell me we don't

have too many kids in a class. The quality of education is going down. If we

break the law and go on a general strike, I think then people would look around

and say, oh, hey, we should have valued teachers. That's the only way to get

noticed! I know it's mean to say it, but I think that's the only way for things to

change. When there's a shortage, maybe then it would stop – when there aren't

enough teachers out there, then someone might notice! I think we'll eventually

have a shortage, and I say, GOOD, then maybe people in Wisconsin will wake

up! (Interview, 7-15-12)

Jane's example was one that captured frustrations with demands on new educators, but

others from the study shared their frustrations with the PDP process as well.

Colleen's perspectives also had a political focus regarding the PDP process. She

remarked:

I got the impression that the PDP is taking a back seat considering the political

climate. I'll be curious to see what happens in the future. I fast-tracked mine

because I'm efficient. There's an option to finish in three years and that's what I

did. I couldn't move up if I hadn't finished the PDP first, and I wanted to move

on to our next lane in the salary schedule. (Interview, 8-22-12)

The frustration of committee members not responding in a timely fashion or not

providing feedback was also evidenced by participants. Laura had predetermined that her

goal would be learning and integrating technology into her instruction, so once she

formulated her goal, she needed approval prior to starting the plan. She stated, "Getting

the signatures was hard. It took a long time. I had to call our HR department to see if

they got it, and I had to track down the people."

Dan had this to say about the PDP process for his next license renewal as a

professional educator:

> This next time, I'll be using my master's degree program as my goal for the PDP.
>
> Since we have to do this plan, I may as well use something that I'm already doing.
>
> I can write down the courses and share what I've learned, so this next time it
>
> should be a faster process. Plus, we only need other teachers' signatures so
>
> maybe it won't get bogged down on people's desks. (Interview, 9-8-12)

Listening to the stories of educators going through the PI 34 process for

recertification, combined with the demands of documentation of professional learning,

wonderment about the amount of genuine investment into the process, and validity of

creating a meaningful plan entered into the conversation. Participants' perceptions

revealed the professional development process and writing the plan itself were

insignificant, time consuming, and lacked valid commitment by educators themselves and

committee members. Personal investment in the process was found to be lacking in all

participants studied.

Jane became tense and agitated, raising her voice at times as she heatedly

expressed her views about the overall PI 34 professional development plan document and

process that was intended to bring about professional change:

I didn't even call it a process, there's not a process! I called it filling out forms! I filled out forms, and then didn't look at it again until year five or when I had to fill it out again and get signatures. I magically found all my paperwork and filled it out. It's not a growth process, I found my own way to learn and grow. This wasn't it. It's just jumping through the hoops. I knew what I had to do, I submitted it to the right people, and they signed off. I put it all together and just got it done. (Interview, 6-15-12)

Jane saw the process as paper shuffling. She didn't feel vested in the process and she felt others weren't either. She stated that one committee member gave her back her PDP signed in the same day:

I doubt it was read. The administrators just wanted it in their hands by the deadlines signed, and a copy of it. They just threw it in a folder. The district created their own God-awful matrix for teacher evaluation which was going to be realigned to a portfolio. Then we had this PDP. It's really a waste. I was doing professional learning already. I didn't need this plan to make me do something to help my kids. That comes from within. I know there might have been teachers who were taking basket weaving 101, but then deal with them, don't change the whole system because of a few. (Interview, 6-15-12)

Findings from the study showed a lack of personal investment by educators in the process of creating and implementing the professional development plan. Teachers in the study felt that they didn't follow the PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative process as it was intended. Jane, for example, shared that she typed up her reflection journal and did the entire plan documentation in about two days. Jane openly admitted:

I spent a ton of time typing it up and throwing it in a binder. When you're up and teaching, you don't have time for this. During the summer, I taught summer school and got ready for the next year. So, I didn't really see the point. It's not much of a plan for me. DPI doesn't even see the plan or any documents; they just got the sign-off sheet. My team doesn't really care, and I wasn't so sure they really read it. Only one person asked me a question and that was because he had an interest in project-based learning too. (Interview 6-15-12)

That appeared to be the sentiment with other educators in this study. Educators wanted to feel invested in something that made a difference to their instruction and to their students' learning. Four of the five educators in this study did not feel as if the state-required professional development plan made a difference in their classroom instruction or student learning.

Shawn shared his perspective:

The plan was really a paper chase. I wish I could have just taken the 6 credits required for every five years. That's what I had intended to do. I wanted to earn my master's degree, but stopped. I couldn't afford it and didn't know where things were headed in the state. The plan didn't mean that much, but the professional learning did. I still had some valuable learning that I could document in my plan. It wasn't the plan that drove my professional learning, I guess that was just me wanting to be a better teacher, to learn new things and bring them to my classroom. The plan didn't do that, but it gave me a way to put down what I was doing. My master's degree would have been my documentation. (Interview, 7-20-12)

Shawn, recently accepted into a master's degree program, had completed one course

within the program when he chose to put a hold on his plans due to financial constraints

and uncertainly if his district would provide financial support. While finding the actual

professional learning valuable, the documentation process was not seen as valid.

When asked to speak about the actual process and his investment, Shawn told his

story:

Really, I think it sat on some desks for a while. I got worried and made some

calls to be sure it wasn't lost. I just circulated mine around to people on my

committee. We didn't meet face to face. No one had time for that. I kept some

artifacts and made some reflection comments, but didn't do anything formal. It's

just too much of a pain, plus, really, who was going to look at this stuff? My

committee certainly wasn't, DPI doesn't have the time or money, what do they

care, the IHE rep could care less, it's not like I was taking a class by someone

who was going to grade the stuff. I'm not really sure why reflections and

documenting artifacts was part of the process. I guess they just wanted to scare

people into thinking someone was going to check up on them. It's really

ridiculous. I don't think there was any more accountability if that's what they

wanted. I think it should have stayed the same, or at least given us a choice.

With budget cuts, I wondered what this costs districts. (Interview, 7-20-12)

Colleen stated:

I just wanted it done. I would be curious to know what others have said. Please

don't think I don't care about teaching and don't care about kids, I do. I just

wanted to get this [PDP] done. (Interview, 8-22-12)

The process was found to be cumbersome and time-consuming which led to short-cutting the intended process, as evidenced by Dan, who recalled the overall PI 34 process as something that could have been simpler:

In our district, everyone still had to do the required classes from the district so it was like a double hit. The intent of the plan may have been good, but with so many requirements, everyone was looking for a short-cut; so was I. I just did it to get done and get my signatures and hand it in before the deadline. There were just so many requirements in our district. If DPI made this requirement, I don't know why they didn't streamline the process and require districts to drop their requirements or make them part of the plan. That would have made more sense. It just felt like busy work. (Interview, 9-8-12)

Colleen, like Dan, felt the process was not clear or streamlined, "After I got my signatures, I didn't know what to do," adding, "like, how do I actually get my license? I didn't think that part was made clear." Colleen spoke about searching the web to find answers on the DPI webpage. "I thought it was ironic that I had spent hours and hours documenting all of this work and then all that the DPI really needed was a signature sheet." She further explained, "I did learn a lot, but not because of the plan. I would have continued learning anyway for my journalism certificate."

Jane, Shawn, Colleen, and Dan were not invested in the process, nor did they see a direct correlation between their PI 34 mandated professional development plans and their own professional learning. The theme of "hoop-jumping" and "being a paper chase" was loud and strong among the majority of the interviews. The participants

shared that they felt a benefit of professional learning, but felt the creation of a

professional development plan put up more boundaries and hurdles than it was worth.

Jane stated, "When I realized I had to do this PDP stuff, I said, oh, shit, now we

have to do this too." Jane was already doing professional learning with a colleague to

make the curriculum more meaningful to students by implementing project-based

learning. "I didn't think of a goal and create a plan. I just ended up putting down on

paper what I had already done. It was a scramble at the end to write up everything that I

had been doing."

When Colleen was asked how invested she was in writing the plan based on her

professional learning, she laughed and commented, "I wasn't." After a pause and some

apparent reflection, Colleen continued:

As a professional you continue to grow in your field. That's what a teacher does.

You learn in your area to improve your skills and find new research and ways of

doing things. I don't need someone to tell me what to do. Maybe some people

do. I'm self-motivated and go out there on my own, so, the PDP was just a hoop.

I was filling out paperwork and just "BS-ing" my way through something to get it

done. It's not hard to put down coursework when you're doing it anyway. There

are people who aren't doing anything, I can tell you that. Some people are just

changing dates and doing the same thing. It's a joke. (Interview, 8-22-12)

The participants agreed that professional development was important and valuable

for their profession and their own intrinsic motivation to grow; however, views on the

significance of creating a professional development plan to document that learning was

overwhelmingly negative. The teachers questioned the validity of the plan to measure

teachers as highly qualified. Colleen's story of a friend in another district further supported this point:

> I just had a friend call me the other day and say, hey, my license is about to expire. My PDP is due and I didn't get signatures and now some people don't work here. Can you sign off? I told her, no, sorry, I wasn't trained. [PDP reviewers must be trained and registered with DPI.] That's what it had all come down to. This whole thing was silly; she did her plan, but now had to track people down for their signatures just to get licensed. (Interview, 8-22-12)

When asked about self-directed learning through the actual PDP, responses were open and candid. Jane responded that she was already doing the project-based learning and changing curriculum, so her self-directed learning came before putting the plan together. She stated, "The PDP plan had no purpose for me." Interestingly enough, Jane's reflection log spoke to her intended audience of PDP verifiers. She wrote about the benefit of completing a PDP:

> Things have gone so well this year in my PDP plan that I was able to continue with the original timeline. Student survey responses helped me at the end of the first year make some of the necessary changes to curriculum to better meet the needs of my students. (Reflection Journal, June 2009)

Upon sharing her actual PDP and reflection journal at the second interview, Jane revealed, "It sounded better than it actually was." When asked about this in the interview, Jane commented, "No one wants to look bad, especially being a new teacher." She repeated, "I didn't want to be negative or make it look bad, it was my first year, no one wants to look bad, so I made everything sound rosey."

Teachers valued their professional learning, but not because of the required plan. When asked specifically if he grew professionally because of the professional development plan, Shawn affirmed his professional development, but was unsure about the true impact the actual plan had in his change in practice:

> Yeah, I developed a lot. But, it was because of my activities and how much I put into what I got out of the workshops and things. I felt that there were lazy teachers and this was something that could have easily been put together in the last minute. The teachers who were looking for professional development would do so professionally with or without the PDP plan. I'm not sure the plan really did it, more that I took classes that meant something to me, and then I could add them to the plan. I was already interested in learning more about reading comprehension and keeping my eyes open for anything that related, so my learning started before the plan. I already had a plan in my head of what I was doing based on my own need to learn more about reading at the high school level. (Interview, 7-20-12)

The learning coincided with what was needed for the program requirements. While participants did not find value in the plan as stated in the interviews above, the reflection logs often point in another direction. As stated in Dan's reflection summary:

> It [PDP] gave me a chance to focus on the areas I wanted to work on while teaching successfully. It allowed me to really look at what I did in the classroom and how that influenced the learning of my students. As a result of my plan, I know that it was very valuable for my students as I learned about their differing

abilities and preferences and observed their success in the classroom. (Reflection

Journal, August 2010)

Like Jane, Dan wrote positively about the PDP to his reviewers, yet during the personal

interviews shared many beliefs that the plan was unimportant to his professional learning

and that of his students.

One participant, Laura, explained that she wasn't sure if it was the PDP or just her

own professional learning which directed her change:

My PDP helped me focus on improving student learning. I found resources like

iPads and now try to stay current in technology. I was able to collaborate with

our media technology department more than I did before, but I don't know if

that's really because of the plan or because it's what I set out to do anyway.

(Interview, 8-3-12)

The chart below depicted the type of learning activity selected by each participant

in her or his search for self-directed professional growth. The chart identified one goal,

one objective, and related activities for each teacher as an example of the type of

professional learning designed by the participants. These activities, while intended for

the professional development plan, were created based on teachers' self-motivation to

improve their own learning outside of the plan requirement. Some participants were

already engaged in the activities before determining a PDP goal and plan. They chose to

use their established professional learning and activities to document in the plan. Each

participant's goal was one that conveyed what the educator would do to gain professional

learning and how that learning impacted student achievement. Two participants used the

district-required classes as activities within the creation of their plans. All participants

wrote their goal with student learning as the outcome.

Professional Development Goals

Name	Goal	Objective	Activity	Activity	Activity
Jane	I will research, implement, and evaluate the layered curriculum to create a project-based learning environment so each student has the opportunity to learn the benchmarks to the best of their ability.	I will gain a better understanding of layered curriculum and understanding by design and try to combine the units of layered curriculum and understanding by design in my classes.	Attend the District's Understanding by Design Class.	Read various professional materials that discuss the benefits of layered curriculum in the classroom.	Meet with and discuss the curriculum with other teachers in my department.
Shawn	I will incorporate literacy strategies and assessments into my English classes so students will increase reading comprehension.	I will understand and learn about different types of reading comprehension strategies and assessments.	Attend and participate in classes and conferences offered at local universities on reading strategies to improve literacy.	Critically read and understand different reading strategies from a number of books that focus on improving literacy.	Meet with colleagues and discuss strategies
Laura	I will learn and implement a variety of technology into my lesson plans to connect students' interests.	I will increase my understanding of multimedia technology by attending technology classes.	Digital cameras	Photo Story 3	File Management
Colleen	I will research and study journalism so I can apply new knowledge and	I will take classes and study journalism and techniques in	Take university classes to obtain a journalism certificate.	Incorporate new strategies and techniques into writing for	Take a more hands-on role in In-Design editing and layouts

	information in my classes and the yearbook.	teaching it		publication and my yearbook classes.	through a new understanding of the program.
Dan	I will learn more about students differing abilities and preferences so I can help students succeed in the regular education classroom.	I will implement a variety of differentiation techniques into math lessons to help all students.	Form a stronger relationship with paraprofessionals and special education teachers.	Attend conferences and read books about differentiation.	Investigate the resources that accompany my math series to create differentiated lessons.

Figure 6: Professional Development Plan Data

All of the participants had a component of collaboration in their professional

development plan. Collaboration is seen as a critical element for impacting professional

growth (Darling-Hammond, 2009; Danielson, 2009; Zepeda, 1999; Smoker, 1996). The

professional development plan required that educators document collaboration with

colleagues or other professionals on their goals. Jane shared how collaboration was

important for her professional growth. Together with a colleague in her department, Jane

discussed how to increase student achievement and make their course more engaging.

They made decisions based on what they saw in their classrooms and how they

determined students worked best. It was felt that students needed choice, deadlines, and

flexibility. Based on that information and the belief that students needed to be more

involved, the idea of project-based learning began.

Jane explained how collaboration was important to her learning:

We bounced ideas off of each other and sat with district benchmarks in front of us

to ensure that we were also meeting the district requirements. These discussions

helped to focus the scope and sequence for the overall class and what I wanted the

students to learn. I worked together with the other teacher who taught the same class. It was helpful to do this with another person. (Reflection journal, June 2009)

Jane also felt that her confidence as a teacher increased as she became more comfortable implementing the project-based curriculum in the classroom and talking with a colleague. Jane's reflection journal documented:

As a teacher, I learned that many times you need another individual to bounce ideas off of to create new and innovative curriculum. I valued the collaboration I experienced. This collaboration allowed us to develop projects and assessments that best meet the needs of our students over the upcoming years. Without this, it would have been more difficult to complete this professional development plan. (Reflection Journal, June 2009)

Hirsh and Killion (2007) explained that students benefit when teachers collaborate and join in their expertise: "Collaboration is the hallmark of high-quality professional learning" (p. 99).

Shawn talked about his excitement for new learning and growing as a professional through his graduate work and networking with colleagues. In addition, Shawn worked with members of his department to discuss new strategies and felt value in working together with other teachers and sharing ideas. He explained:

The reading strategy class I took was amazing because I had the opportunity to collaborate on all of my ideas and practices in the classroom. I was online with other English teachers and we made projects and shared them through the use of Google Docs. (Interview, June 2010)

Formal classes, conferences, workshops, and peer interactions were seen as opportunities to practice collaboration and teamwork necessary to deepen thinking and bring about change.

Laura attributed learning gains to those she collaborated with in her growth of technology integration. She wrote in her reflection journal:

I have collaborated with the technology department, my grade team, and many other teachers who were more technology savvy. Throughout my five years of teaching, I've had a great support system of co-workers. My mentors for the first two years of teaching were invaluable. They shared useful teaching information and guided me through difficult situations. They taught me small tricks and gave me helpful hints to make my teaching career a success. (Reflection Journal, June 2010)

Networking in education was viewed as important. Educators are in a profession where they rarely have the opportunity to see others teaching or have common time to talk about teaching practices. Participants saw opportunities for collaboration and networking with others outside of their district as important for growth. Colleen believed that traditional classes helped her to make connections with people in her field. She also valued the opinions of coworkers in her district. Colleen felt the benefits of collaborating with other journalism teachers and yearbook advisors to come up with new strategies and themes. She commented, "Some of the best professional learning came from my classes where I could share ideas with other journalism teachers."

Dan also credited conversations and formal meeting times with colleagues as beneficial to his growth as an educator. While interviewing, Dan commented about

working with colleagues in his department. Dan explained, "The 6th grade teachers and I are looking at assessments and resources, and what each student's progress is to make sure they're ready for 7th grade."

According to Hord and Tobia (2012), those involved in education need to establish a "mindset that is centered on continuous improvement" and that begins when teachers have the opportunity for "regular conversations about what matters" (p. 16). Professional conversations centered on student learning are believed to make a difference in not only student achievement, but also in teacher professional growth. Collaboration was a requirement of the professional development plan. As evidenced in the interviews and journals, professional conversations in which educators shared and learned from one another were viewed as beneficial for professional growth.

Summary

Overall, the participants defined themselves as self-motivated and self-directed learners who would continue to grow and develop in the profession based on their own identified needs. They would seek out resources from formal classes and graduate programs or workshops and conferences, whatever met their self-determined goal. Collaboration with colleagues or networking with other professionals at conferences or through coursework was believed to be beneficial to professional learning. Four of the five participants did not believe the PDP process was useful in helping them to reach their goal. Overwhelmingly, participants saw the process as simply something that must be endured. The process was viewed by participants in this study as a "hoop," "barrier," and "paper chase." Participants did not find value in the creation of a professional development plan and were not vested in the process.

Theme Three: Change in Teaching and Learning

It was the perceptions of participants in this study that changes in classroom instruction and student learning did not happen because of the PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative mandated through a professional development plan, but resulted due to teacher motivation to make changes that would improve their own learning and meet their students' needs.

For instance, Jane gave credit to more personal relationships with her students that were not there before she used the project-based approach. "I was able to sit with all of the students at different times and discuss what they liked to do and what they were having difficulty with." Jane attributed that personal approach and one-on-one conversations toward developing a bond between her and the students. Jane learned that at-risk students do not like being told what to do all of the time. "I noticed right away that when I gave them choices, they became more engaged in completing the assigned work. It wasn't a battle to get the work in."

An important element of teaching success is building rapport with students. Making an impact on students is mostly done through relationship-building. Glasser (2000) found that positive relationships are at the core of successful schools. Developing a strong relationship created an atmosphere of trust. As Glasser (2000) noted, "Successful teaching is based on strong relationships" (p.1). Establishing a safe and comfortable climate is important. Providing choices and opportunities to be successful helped scaffold the learning in Jane's classroom and built a successful environment of trust and rapport. Jane observed, "Because of the changing dynamics in the class with

myself and the students, and with the independence of the project-based learning, there seemed to be a more positive atmosphere."

Others in the study also shared their stories of how professional development changed their classroom practices. During one of many interviews, Shawn commented:

I learned a lot of techniques that changed my practice. I started to use new assessments in my class. I learned how informal assessments could change instruction so that was something I added. I would use a couple of quick formative evaluations to see where students were at, something like quick writes or exit slips. That's the type of thing that really changed what I did in the classroom. (Interview, 7-11-12)

According to Moss and Brookhart (2009), the use of formative and summative assessments are critical to student achievement. They provide the benchmark for student learning and can be used not only for monitoring student progress, but also for teacher reflection on his or her teaching. If students aren't doing well on a formative assessment, the teacher can use that opportunity to reflect on the lesson to make changes.

As professionals, teachers self-reflected on their teaching practice and considered what would enhance that practice to have the most impact on student learning. Laura shared thoughts from her reflection journal to support this:

I really felt that I grew because I had to learn about technology and show proof of it in my evidence. I'm not so sure I would have done as much if I didn't have this requirement. But, I would have learned about technology anyway, because I had to keep up. I think I changed too because I was required to reflect on enhancing my own teaching skills and knowledge. (Reflection Journal, July 2010)

Teachers often reflected informally on how a lesson went and whether students understood what was taught. The professional development plan required that teachers reflect on their goal and student learning. While Laura gave credit to the plan as an impetus for change in classroom instruction, others, such as Colleen, credited practice rather than results coming from putting a PDP together.

It was at times hard to separate the impact of the actual PDP and what was being done already in the classroom. When asked if her self-directed learning changed classroom instruction, Colleen paused to think and then shared:

> Yes, I think it had. Originally, I had to incorporate those different ideas into my daily life and daily classroom. I think it had, yet I haven't looked at it [the PDP] in a while, I'm sure many of those techniques I still use without even thinking of it. I use my new techniques, but not because of the plan but because I tried them out and they worked. (Interview 8-17-12)

Guskey (2002) shared that student learning changes teachers' perspectives. His alternative change model appeared to apply to Colleen's beliefs on professional development and change. When she saw that her students were responding and saw the success of implementing her new strategies and behavior management techniques, Colleen believed in the practice. This type of professional learning correlated to the alternative change model by Guskey (2002). Colleen commented:

> Because I could actually see some of the strategies impact my classroom, I was motivated to learn more and keep trying. I hate to say it, but as a new high school teacher, I didn't think I was prepared for classroom management in my undergraduate program. Classes helped. Some were put on by our district and

some I took on my own, but they really helped. I felt more in control to actually teach. It was just a different feel in my room. I could tell it, and I think the kids could too. (Interview, 8-17-13)

Colleen's attitude and beliefs correlated to Guskey's (2002) alternative change theory in which a teacher's change in practice and attitude results from a change in student outcome. When the teacher can see the results of his or her instructional change, belief in the new practice is accepted. Colleen accredited her own self-motivation and desire to grow as a professional, not the professional development plan as her motivator. She shared, "I wanted to work on my master's and journalism certificate, so those were my real goals. They had nothing to do with the PDP. I used them on the plan because I had to."

Dan believed that starting his master's program in mathematics had helped him to change instruction. He commented:

I've learned more ways to teach by differentiating the math concepts. I learned new techniques and how to teach in groups, partners, teacher-to-student, rather than just whole group. I believed the students enjoyed the changes in the classroom, and maybe they even saw that everyone learns differently. It just seemed to be working. (Interview, 9-8-12)

Teachers participating in the study described the importance of participating in professional development in order to make a difference in their classroom impact and student learning. The importance of teachers' intrinsic motivation to be the change in a students' learning was viewed as important for success.

While student learning may be impacted by many factors, participants identified changes in their classroom instruction and practices that affected student learning. Educators in the study believed there was a gain in student achievement based on their professional development as teachers. This was evident in their shared stories. They did not credit the requirement of putting together PDP for that achievement, but rather their actual learning and the direct activities that they were involved with that brought about that change. The study obtained documentation and evidence of student learning from reflection logs and the actual professional development document.

The evidence found regarding student learning was not correlated to test scores, but rather teacher documentation and anecdotal evidence obtained from students in their classes. For example, Jane had already begun implementing her project-based learning goal prior to starting her PDP. Jane wrote the following comments in her reflection log:

> By developing a project-based curriculum in one of my classes, I believed that there was an increased success rate of learning in that classroom. I observed more students engaged and more students did pass the class. As I reflect back on the use of project-based learning, I saw a general improvement in student achievement overall. Completion of assignments was one area that definitely rose. At-risk learners did the work when they were given choices of things to do and a flexible time in which to complete them. The expectations for the project-based learning allowed students to complete the work on their own schedule. (Interview 6-14-12)

Jane's reflection log and evidence through artifacts documented that students were more engaged in the learning process. Jane also noted that students were willing to try more difficult projects after they saw success with less difficult projects.

Jane shared in her final reflection journal that there was a decrease in failure rates in the project-based class compared to the traditional classes. Jane also conducted student surveys and shared those results in her artifacts. The survey results showed that students liked the new approach for the following reasons: (a) flexibility to work at their own pace; (b) choice in projects; (c) enjoyment in a class that was previously seen as boring. The quality of the work was also noted by Jane to have improved. In her reflection journal Jane commented, "Before implementing project-based learning, I could not get my students to write long papers, but now I had students completing long papers and showing success." Jane felt that through her efforts, students were successful. She cited student completion rates and increased graduation rates as her evidence of student learning. Knowing that students could do real-world tasks such as creating a resume and completing a job application form demonstrated to Jane her students' learning and her success as a teacher in giving them some of the life skills they would need in the future.

Other participants shared anecdotal observations of student growth. Shawn's perceptions of student learning were based on formative assessments of reading and the additional exposure to text sets provided in class. Using Shawn's reflection journal to capture evidence of student achievement, the following data documented his impact on student growth:

- I have observed improvement in my students' reading levels based on formative observation.

- The reading comprehension test that I gave at the beginning of the

  semester had 19.3 average points; at the end of the semester, the average

  score was 20.7 points out of 40 points.

- I was able to assess student learning through verbal questions as well as

  reading journals.

- I have observed students reread dense texts; something not done before.

- Using journals, I learned that some students had changed their attitudes

  about reading for the better.

- 85% of the students improved reading comprehension from the beginning

  of the year to the end of the year based on administration of a retired ACT

  comprehension test.

From the above data logged in his reflection journal (7-14-12), Shawn believed he had

made gains in student achievement by successfully implementing reading comprehension

strategies.

Laura cited many examples of student learning that were connected to her new

knowledge. She spoke of students using laptops in her classroom for word processing,

creating a Photo Story project, creating a slide show and burning it to a CD. Laura also

referenced artifacts from her professional development plan such as digital camera

projects, and PowerPoint presentations. Laura provided many student examples and

artifacts in her reflection journal to substantiate her perceptions of professional growth

and the impact on student learning. Those examples depicted student achievement such

as (a) how to create a PowerPoint presentation; (b) burn a CD; (c) use basic features of

Microsoft Word; (d) create a multimedia presentation including pictures, songs, and text

using Photo Story 3 software. Students were responsible for hands-on, individual

creation of projects that demonstrated their learning.

Laura wrote in her reflection journal:

These artifacts represent my growth over the past four years in technology. When

I started teaching I struggled and feared technology. I'm now learning more and

willing to take on new challenges and incorporate technology into my daily

lessons. The more I learned about technology, the more I was able to use in my

classroom and teach to my students. I realized there are more uses of technology

out there for me to learn and incorporate in my classroom instruction for my

students next year. (Reflection Journal, June 2010)

The participants clearly felt that their self-directed professional learning had an impact on

their students' achievement. Participants put their learning into practice and applied their

knowledge to benefit students.

In her professional development plan, Colleen listed evidence of student

achievement through portfolio based work samples to document student growth. She

also recorded student learning assessments through formative and summative

assessments including observation and self-reflection for that evaluation. Colleen wrote:

My students have definitely achieved more than if I hadn't incorporated the new

strategies learned from the journalism class. I could see them using the tools as

they created the yearbook. Students were using new software programs and could

really manipulate the program tools and do creative layout. I think they had a

better understanding of the program than I had. (Reflection Journal, June 2011)

Dan shared artifacts that he believed demonstrated student achievement. In his reflection journal, Dan provided evidence of a pre- and post- chapter math test on fractions and a sample of a student questionnaire. Dan believed his students had shown growth based on the pre and post assessment results. Likewise, student surveys showed self-reported growth and understanding by the students themselves. These results were noted in the reflection journal; however data of the actual scores or survey results were not included in any of the documents.

Teacher Recommendations

Professional growth has the potential to impact not only an educator's improvement and students' learning but also the school's success and the success of the Wisconsin school system. According to Learning Forward (2011), professional learning is a key element of a quality educational system. With more emphasis on educator and school accountability, professional learning is very important. Learning Forward (2011) reminds educators that professional learning is the one critical aspect we need in order to develop new knowledge, skills, and practices that will affect students' learning.

Teachers had recommendations for stakeholders and policy makers about the process of self-directed professional learning required through PI 34's professional development plan. Jane's suggestions involved providing options for teachers to use the current system or the previous re-licensure cycle of obtaining graduate credits through coursework at a university. "Let me do classes, or let me choose. I don't know, just give me something to show what I learned. Something other than this template filled out with a bunch of reflections." Jane strongly felt that when this current system was created, people had no idea "what it's like in the trenches." Therefore, Jane suggested that the

Department of Public Instruction ask for feedback from initial and professional educators

on the current process. She believed there has been no communication to educators or

administrators since the re-certification plan was implemented in 2004. Jane

recommended, "Come and ask us, ask us what we want. Give options! I felt like no one

up there cares about what's going on down here as long as they had their forms in on

time."

When asked if the DPI was on the right track when they created this requirement,

responses were mixed. Shawn responded,

> Not really. I felt that they jumped in so quickly without enough resources and
>
> without mandating that schools must help their teachers. I was happy our district
>
> had support in place like committee members and a scheduled meeting to explain
>
> the process. I've talked to friends who didn't have this in their district. Some
>
> people even had to pay their committee members. (Interview, 7-20-12)

Shawn explained that he gained most of his professional learning from graduate classes

and conferences and didn't find the PDP to be "an appropriate substitute." He shared that

some people were just reading books or joining committees and that was intended be

their professional development. While Shawn felt professional reading was necessary

and beneficial to teachers' growth, he was uncertain that it should be "counted" as

professional development for recertification. Regarding recommendations to

policymakers regarding the plan, Shawn explained, "It was a nice idea on paper, but it

seemed like busy work. For a new teacher there were a lot of things to learn and keep

track of and this was just one more thing to do."

Shawn suggested:

Let us submit the PDP to DPI and not have to find readers. Let us do everything

online. Scrap all of the writings of the plan and work on getting teachers into

professional development. Some just read books and I'm not so sure they do a lot

with it. Another suggestion would be to offer tuition discounts for teachers. With

districts not offering incentives, it would be helpful to make getting a graduate

degree possible. (Interview, 7-20-12)

To initial educators, Shawn gave this advice:

Talk to someone who has been through the process, don't reinvent the wheel.

Look at other goals and choose something that you are highly passionate about.

Don't choose something extra that you're going to do. Align it with a building

goal or other initiative in your district. (Interview, 7-20-12)

Laura felt the process could be improved upon, but otherwise, she did not have a

lot of recommendations:

I felt there was a lack of communication from the state to the PDP writers as to

what the next step of the process was. Our district helped us, but the form and the

process were a bit confusing. Other than that, I'm not sure if a lot of changes

were needed. (Interview, 8-3-12)

Colleen shared her comments on the process of self-directed learning through the

PI 34 required professional development plan as an evaluation tool. It was suggested by

previous teacher unions that teachers not include administrators responsible for their

direct supervision and evaluation to be on their PDP committee. Colleen provided this

perspective:

I'm not sure how this was really going to be an evaluation component. Our administrators have even less time than DPI. I feel bad for the administrators just to get into our classrooms; they just don't have time to do it. So they're not going to look at these [PDP plans] too. DPI doesn't have time to evaluate this. I saw the budget continually getting cut, they don't have money. The best thing DPI could do is get back to credits and districts would be happy because they wouldn't have to put resources toward this either. I was jealous of my colleagues who just have to get 6 credits every five years. Doing that forces you to do some updating of your coursework in a far better way than this PDP does. Now, you never have to take a course. I think it's better to take a course than spend hours to create a plan and get signatures. At least then you have someone evaluating you, the instructor or professor. That doesn't happen now. (Interview, 8-17-2012)

Dan had some of the same suggestions as Colleen and other educators in the study. He advised:

Allow teachers to either complete the plan or take college credits. I was already in a master's degree program and then I had to do this plan on top of it. Sure, I can add my master's activities and courses into the plan, but it's time consuming to do all the documentation, reflections, gathering student data, and getting a committee on top of keeping up with course work. I felt the course work was more relevant to what I was actually doing and that made me grow, not being required to complete the paperwork to show what I was doing. (Interview, 9-8-12)

As told in their stories and recommendations, four of the five participants felt that documentation through course work or an advanced degree had more credibility to their

learning than completing the paper work to document their professional learning. This perception was substantiated through journal and interviews previously stated. Recommendations were provided to stakeholders and policymakers from professional level educators currently in the field who had recently completed the PDP process as initial educators.

Participants' explanations and accounts shared in this study demonstrated different experiences and perceptions regarding the intent of the actual process in which they were involved. Participants found their self-directed learning, not the PDP process, to be meaningful. Adults want to be engaged in purposeful activities as Knowles (1970) shared in his research on adult learning. This was substantiated in teacher interviews and preference toward graduate credit courses, master degree programs, or professional conferences. The participants were self-directed and sought out professional development that they believed would impact their classroom practice and student learning.

Conclusion

This chapter described the key findings that emerged during the course of interviews and document reviews depicting three key themes: (a) teacher motivation; (b) professional development plan and process; (c) change in teaching and learning. The first theme, teacher motivation, revealed teachers' perspectives about their desire to help students be successful and their own motivation to learn as professionals. The second theme, professional development plan and process, revealed how teachers felt about requirements that encroach on their primary duty to teach. This theme explored time commitments and validity to the process by teachers and committee members. The third

theme, change in teaching and learning, revealed teacher perspectives on how their classroom instructional practice had changed based on their self-directed professional development and how that change impacted student learning. The five educators provided unique perspectives, insights, and candid responses relating to their experiences with self-directed learning through the professional development plan at Unity School District.

The fifth and final chapter will provide phenomenological analysis and discussion of the experiences of the research participants along with implications and considerations for future research.

CHAPTER FIVE
DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The purpose of this chapter is to analyze and discuss the findings of this study as well as provide implications of the research and consider suggestions for future research. The purpose of this study was to describe how, and to what extent, teacher self-directed professional development, anchored in Wisconsin's PI 34 Quality Educator Initiative, impacted professional learning, changed classroom instruction, and increased student achievement. Self-directed professional development anchored in Wisconsin's re-licensure requirement is a complex phenomenon that elicits emotion and reaction on the very idea of what professional development was meant to do.

Summary of the Study

This study was a narrative phenomenological study of Wisconsin educators who had completed their initial educator licensing cycle under the PI 34 requirements of creating a self-directed professional development plan. This research used qualitative methods to discern the meaning from educators who had recently completed the professional growth process. Data collection was conducted over a period of four months and included five initial educators from an urban school district. Methodology involving in-depth interviews was based on suggestions of Glatthorn and Joyner (2005) and Seidman (2006). Participating educators met individually for three interview sessions. Transcripts for each participant were analyzed and compared across other participant transcripts. Data analysis uncovered specific and recurring themes in participants' descriptions of motivation, types of professional learning attributed to growth,

collaboration, implementation of their professional development plan and their

perceptions of change in classroom practice and student learning.

The qualitative study predominately utilized interviews and primary documents.

The researcher interviewed five initial educators for three in-depth interviews of 30-60

minutes each. These semi-structured interviews provided rich, deep details, belief

statements, and vignettes by the educators who had recently completed their first cycle of

self-directed professional growth. Additional data in the use of teacher reflection logs

and the actual professional development plan created by the educator were included to

triangulate the data. Field notes were used to document nonverbal indicators during the

interviews. The analysis of these findings was based on interpretations of the data as

presented by the participants and mixed with thoughtful examination of existing research

and literature on the phenomenon of professional development.

The principle question used to frame this study: Does self-directed learning

through creation of a professional development plan provide initial educators with the

professional growth needed to impact instructional practice and ultimately student

learning?

The findings from the study indicated three overarching themes: (a) teacher

motivation; (b) professional development plan and process; (c) change in teaching and

learning. This discussion section will provide an interpretation of the findings from

Chapter 4 and answer the basic question, "What does this study tell us?"

The discussion provides answers to the research questions that drove this study:

1. What motivates initial educators to change their instructional practice?

2. How do initial educators describe their experiences with the professional

   development plan process and to what extent does the PDP promote self-directed

   learning?

3. What types of professional learning opportunities do initial educators believe

   impacted their own professional growth and student learning?

4. How do initial educators perceive the implementation of the professional

   development plan on change in their classroom instruction and impact on student

   achievement?

The discussion section, based on the above research questions, will draw connections

between the study outcomes and prior research and literature in the field. Next,

discussion and implications for practice will be shared. Finally, the study will provide

recommendations for practice and future research.

<div align="center">**Discussion and Analysis of Findings**</div>

Question #1: What motivates initial educators to change their instructional

practice?"

According to the No Child Left Behind policy (2001), the term "professional

development" means a comprehensive, sustained, and intensive approach to improving

teachers' and principals' effectiveness in raising student achievement. This study found a

link to intrinsic motivation and professional development. Participants in the study felt

that they had learned and grew as professionals from involvement in their self-directed

professional learning. However, that involvement was not viewed as resulting from the

professional development plan required by PI 34. The educators felt that they benefited

from their learning; however, they attributed their desire to seek out professional learning

from their own intrinsic motivation as professionals.

Teachers attributed their quest for learning as a means to help their own students

be successful. Participants valued professional development and felt teacher choice

based on student needs was important for motivation to seek out professional learning.

All participants were involved in learning activities that helped them grow professionally

based on their own intrinsic motivation to help their students. Deci and Ryan (1991) held

that motivation includes a person's intrinsic values, which impacts self-motivation and

desire. All teachers in the study were motivated by the need to do what was best for their

students.

Teachers in the study articulated that they were motivated to find new ideas or

instruction based on their students' needs. Petrie and Govern (2013), shared support for

that idea by stating, "Motivation can be activated by changes in the external

environment" (p. 8). Teachers identified a need of their students and then set out to make

changes in curriculum or classroom instruction based on those needs. For some, that

change came about by exploring new curriculum and applying new instructional

approaches.

With all of the participants, one theme ran strong: Teachers were motivated and

committed to improving instruction and student learning based on their students' needs.

According to Wlodkowski (2008), before adults can learn anything, they must be

motivated to learn. The participants in this study had a strong belief that it was their job

to learn so their students could learn and be successful. The participants were also

inspired and motivated to learn and grow when they observed and had affirmation that

what they were doing was making a positive effect on their students learning. This is critical to professional development and is supported by Wlodkowski's beliefs as he stated, "Motivation is important not only because it apparently improves learning but also because it mediates learning and is a consequence of learning as well" (2008, p. 6).

Participants had the autonomy to choose any class, workshop, conference, professional reading, video-based learning, Internet research, or virtually any activity that they felt would provide them with knowledge, insight, and learning to meet their self-determined professional growth goal. However, participants in this study had a preference toward traditional classes, workshops, or coursework to advance their degree. This method of learning contradicts current professional development research (Joyce and Calhoun, 2010; Reeves, 2010; DuFour, et al., 2010; Danielson, 2009) on practices that are embedded in daily practice, systematic, ongoing, and collaborative. Perhaps because these were recent initial educators, they were not yet exposed to job-embedded professional development or collaborative professional learning. As initial educators, the participants in the study were familiar with what they had previously been exposed to, that being formal courses, workshops, or conferences. Having completed the re-licensure process, they were just recently labeled as professional educators. Three of those four were in the process of pursuing a graduate level master's degree while one already had a master's degree. Coursework and traditional classes were a large part of their experience.

Participants were less motivated to attend required district professional development classes for new teachers. Teachers provided reasons including lack of time, redundancy of courses already taken, pressure to learn existing district procedures and curriculum, and overall demands of new teachers as rationale for the less than

enthusiastic attitudes to participate in the district required classes along with creating a professional development plan. There is a need for choice and autonomy over professional development in order to have an impact on change (Beltman 2009; Pink 2009; and Semandeni; 2009).

While the classes may have been helpful for some, choice and autonomy to self-identify based on need was believed to be important in finding the mandated classes valuable. Teachers wanted to spend time learning and applying what they felt was meaningful for their students' success. Learning Forward (2011) contended that teachers learn in different ways, have different needs, and have different rates of time for learning; therefore, professional learning must be structured to engage educators in learning that is timely and meets each one's needs. Teachers in this study found flexibility and choice a positive component of the required professional learning. Teachers could determine their own goal, activities, and how to determine success. The drawback to that learning was the lengthy documentation and verification process.

Question #2: "How do initial educators describe their experiences with the professional development plan process and to what extent does the PDP promote self-directed learning?"

Throughout the study, participants shared their strong convictions for professional development; however, the mandated professional development plan process was not believed to be an impetus toward self-improvement. According to Dearman and Alber (2005), "Change rarely occurs merely as a reaction to a mandate" (p. 634). Educators must find the change meaningful and of value. Overwhelmingly, participants felt the PDP process was something to endure, not to help with their teaching and learning, and

was a means only to gain re-licensure. Some felt the licensure process was a sham. Evidence pointing to that finding included readers not reading the PDPs, committee members simply signing off, school officials just checking off names on a list. No one asked to view evidence of student learning artifacts, no one asked for student data beyond what was reported on the educator's own plan. Teachers struggled with the verification versus evaluation concept of the licensure process: they did not need anyone to evaluate their work. Committee members only needed to verify that the educator has correctly completed the form.

Negative perceptions appeared to have an impact on the legitimacy of the process itself. Throughout the study analysis, teacher investment in the process and authenticity of product and process was explored. Participants candidly shared that the process was compromised. Lack of investment in the process due to feelings of irrelevance and lack of time were found to be two factors standing in the way of a legitimate process.

It appeared that when teachers were stressed and overloaded with the job of teaching, being held accountable for taking district classes, and creating a mandated learning plan, something got lost in the shuffle. That something appeared to have been full investment in creating and maintaining the professional development plan. With no true monitoring in place, short cuts had been taken to "survive." While this district did have trained PDP readers on staff and a mentoring program, participants in the study still had difficulty securing signatures and engaging members who were perceived to be truly invested in the process. Likewise, time was an element that teachers lacked.

Question #3: "What types of professional learning opportunities do initial educators believe impacted their own professional growth and student learning?

All participants found collaboration to be an important element of professional growth. Participants cited many examples of how collaborative opportunities improved their learning. Jane, together with a teammate, rewrote curriculum and changed instructional methods. Shawn valued weekly meetings with colleagues and created common assessments while Laura lauded collaboration with more tech-savvy colleagues in her district and attending formal courses to help her gain new knowledge and technology skills. Colleen and Dan valued networking with peers in traditional courses or at conferences as a benefit of collaboration. Networking during workshops and conferences might be seen as beneficial, but research showed that form of professional development to be short-term. According to research, the passive role in workshops, conferences, and presentations is seen as ineffective for improving teacher thinking or changing practice (Danielson, 2009; Shulman, 2004; Hirsh and Killion, 2007; Zepeda, 1999; Darling-Hammond and Richardson, 2009; Hirsh, 1997; Joyce and Showers, 1995; Eaker, DuFour, and DuFour, 2002). Ongoing collaboration was believed to provide more gains for change in educational practice. Research by Showers and Joyce (1996) explained that only minimal gains are attained when using traditional staff development because teachers do not have enough time to study together.

Collaborative cultures empower teachers and raise student achievement (Fullan and Hargreaves, 1996). In the last decade teaching has become less isolated and more collaborative. That collaboration has been structured through common planning time and early release time of students so teachers can meet in professional learning communities. Teachers collaborate on curriculum writing, lesson design and delivery, assessments, and analyzing student data in an attempt to improve student performance.

Fullan (2000) and DuFour et al. (2010) have stated that in quality schools, teams of teachers meet on a regular basis to focus on student assessment and learning to best change their instructional practice. Teachers working collaboratively for the benefit of improved instruction and increase in student achievement is an improved method of professional learning. Much of the work in the field of professional learning continues to examine educator collaboration and data on student achievement. Learning Forward (2011) stated that current research is focused on professional learning communities for continuous improvement and how teachers as a collective group impact student achievement. While there are multiple factors that relate to a student's level of success, the teacher is still seen as the main entity attributed to student learning gains (Marzano, 2007; Darling-Hammond et al., 2009; Reeves, 2010; Yoon et al., 2008).

Participants in the study provided descriptions of their own involvement with professional learning and collaboration. They provided explanations of their interactions with colleagues, types of new learning integrated into the classroom, and evidence of student learning attributed to their self-directed learning goal.

Question #4: "How do initial educators perceive the implementation of the professional development plan on change in their classroom instruction and impact on student achievement?"

Teachers overwhelmingly did not perceive that implementation of the professional development plan changed their classroom practice or student learning. However, they did feel that their self-directed learning brought about change. All teachers in the study were inspired to change their classroom practice based on newfound knowledge from their learning or from positive results observed in their students after

implementing their new knowledge and skills. Some teachers in the study were already involved in making changes in their instruction to benefit students prior to starting their PDP. Those teachers saw a need in their classroom and set out to make changes.

According to Fullan (2000), change rarely occurs merely as a reaction to a mandate. For change to actually occur, teachers must experience a paradigm shift in philosophy. Participants in the study felt that their professional learning made a difference in their instruction and student learning. However, they did not feel their new learning was attributed to the requirement to create a professional development plan. Findings demonstrated that teachers valued choice in professional development.

Choice is seen as a motivating factor for adult learners (Knowles, 1970; Deci et al., 1991; Zepeda, 2008). Teachers want to spend time learning and applying what they feel will be meaningful for their students' success. As researchers in adult learning have shown, adult learners must understand their own needs. Understanding their own need for learning can create motivation according to Knowles (1970). He acknowledged the adult learner's internal motivation as a key element to growth. Adult learners want to develop increased competence to achieve their full potential. They want to be able to apply knowledge and skills gained. Findings from the study showed that participants in this study were all motivated to apply what they had learned when the learning was self-directed. Participants self-selected their learning path based on their own desire to learn. In all cases, professional practice and having been in the classroom was critical to identify what areas of growth were needed. Participants were able to cite examples of what they changed in their instructional practice based on professional growth and were able to provide evidence of student growth.

Two of the five participants aligned with the Logic Model of Change (Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Shapley, 2008) in which the professional development brings about a change in teacher knowledge, and skills, which in turn changes classroom teaching and impacts student learning. The other three participants experienced Guskey's Alternative Change Model (2002) in which significant change in teachers' attitudes and beliefs occur as a result of evidence of student gains. Teachers who had observed students' achievements were more likely to accept the new professional learning concepts. While crediting their self-directed professional learning experiences as productive and useful in practice, the teachers provided their perceptions and beliefs as to why the professional development plan and process were viewed as barriers.

Lack of time was commonly found as a barrier. Remembering that these were new, initial educators, there were many teaching responsibilities in addition to professional learning responsibilities that the educators were balancing. Teachers in the study felt stressed and anxious. The task of creating a professional development plan after one year of reflection was often described as "overwhelming" and "stressful." This involved formulating the plan, gaining goal approval, conducting the actual activities, maintaining a reflection journal, gathering student evidence and artifacts and then sharing the plan to obtain signatures.

Recommendations for Practice

Change in teacher practice included many factors, but ultimately the change must come from teachers themselves. It is not enough to create a state mandated requirement for educators to document their professional growth. Educators need to be given the autonomy and choice to take on professional learning because they see value in the

changes that will help their students grow. To change practice and policy within education, it is imperative to listen to perspectives from teachers on their professional development and suggestions for change that educators envision. Teachers from Unity School District recommended that districts like theirs that required mandated professional development eliminate the practice. It was viewed as overwhelming for new teachers who already are inundated with new teacher expectations as well at the state professional development plan.

From this study, participants recommended formal learning from workshops and conferences or traditional classes such as graduate courses that could be applied toward a higher degree. Participants felt formal classes would be a more credible practice that could be evaluated rather than just verified by a committee. Overwhelmingly, participants viewed the professional development plan and process as flawed. Participants did not feel the PDP process was credible and felt it should be eliminated as a requirement for re-licensure.

If elimination of the program is not viable, educators saw modifications that needed to be made at the very least. Those modifications included streamlining the process to include building or district goals into the professional development plan of initial educators. Allow for flexibility and options for new educators as they try to manage the PDP process with day-to-day teaching responsibilities. Hold informational meetings explaining the process of creating and verifying the plan for initial educators and committee members. Hold collaborative networking opportunities for educators with like goals who can learn from one another. Provide time within the work day for initial educators to meet and support one another and time for committees to discuss the initial

educators' plans and subsequent professional development, relating how the educator is using their professional learning to change instructional practices and to discuss evidence of student achievement prior to the final sign off.

Recommendations for Future Research

With changes in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) brought on by the flexibility waiver, questions of how the current model of completing a professional development plan for re-licensure as a highly qualified educator will fit in with the new, upcoming expectations for educator effectiveness throughout the nation. This federal requirement in the reauthorized ESEA puts mandates upon districts to have in place an educator effectiveness system. The state of Wisconsin must comply with this federal law by 2014-15.

An additional recommendation for future research revealed redundancy in what teachers were already doing for professional development. Changes in the required professional development plan should be explored to streamline a process. Professional growth based on evaluation by certified evaluators using a defined, research based model could provide systematic, ongoing learning, based on classroom practices and student learning rather than mere verification.

Lastly, replication studies are recommended across districts to broaden the sample size or to compare districts and expand on the research throughout the state of Wisconsin. Replication with the addition of administrators or committee members would add another perspective to the study. Replication of the study within grade spans i.e. elementary, middle, and high schools and with analysis of similarities and differences of participants' perspectives would be another area for future study.

Implications

The research results augment current understanding of professional learning as it relates to motivation, change in classroom practice, and effects on student learning. The study provided insight into the minds of recent initial educators who have lived the experience of completing the professional development plan as required by the state for recertification. Additional implications include identifying the effectiveness of the current professional development plan practice and its relevancy to growth given the barriers that exist for new teachers. Lastly, the importance of collaboration for new educators and how that collaboration benefits professional development provides possibilities for restructuring time within a school schedule to help foster collaborative relationships for the purpose of professional growth and ultimately change in practice and gains in student learning.

Limitations of the Study

Participants were from one district and findings cannot be generalized beyond the sample presented, given the purposeful selection of participants and the qualitative design of the study. The study was limited to initial educators who had recently completed the process and were now labeled as professional educators.

Summary

The main focus of this study was to examine the lived experiences of teachers who took part in self-directed professional learning as part of the professional development plan in an effort to change their instructional practice and enhance student learning. Five urban educators who had recently moved from initial educator status to

professional educator status agreed to provide their insight into this required practice for re-licensure.

During the course of the study, three themes emerged: (a) teacher motivation; (b) professional development plan and process; (c) change in teaching and learning. The study provided insight to policymakers, administrators, and teachers. Overwhelmingly, participants shared their plea for policy makers to eliminate a practice they believe has no value. If elimination is not possible, changes need to be implemented. Those changes include the necessity to streamline the required professional development plan and process to make implementation deemed worthy of time and effort. Administrators, knowing the demands on initial educators, must find ways to support their newest teachers in an effort to reduce stress and retain qualified teachers. Teachers should find collaboration opportunities through traditional courses, workshops, or conferences, and choose self-directed learning opportunities that have meaning for themselves and their students. There exist many opportunities for future research on the phenomenon of self-directed professional development during a time when accountability is high and mandates require creating a system for identifying highly qualified teachers.

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Appendix A

Initial Request for Participants

Dear_____:

       I am a doctoral student in the Urban Education program at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. I am conducting a study to understand teachers' perspectives on The Quality Educator Initiative, PI 34, in the area of professional learning. The purpose of this study is to explore my primary research question: What are initial educator's perceptions of whether, and to what extent, their self-directed PI-34 mandated professional learning program has influenced their instructional practice and has impacted student learning? I am interested in learning more about how you view the PI 34 process and the professional development plan as a vehicle for continued growth. To date, no studies have specifically addressed this topic from the perspective of those involved in the creation and implementation of the professional growth plan, the teachers themselves. It is my intent to "give a voice" to initial educators and understand how classroom instruction and student learning may or may not be affected due to this Wisconsin state mandate.

       It would be necessary to meet at least three times throughout the study to obtain in-depth perspectives and understanding from your personal experience. All interviews will be recorded to help me in transcription. You will be able to review and clarify the transcripts as needed at any time. There will be complete confidentiality including participants' names and their schools. Pseudonyms will be used to maintain confidentiality. We would meet at a time and place that is convenient to you. In addition, if, at any time, you which to withdraw from the study, you may. Or if you have questions, you may contact my university professor, Dr. Leigh Wallace at 414-229-4305

       Your participation in this study will assist me to complete the degree requirements for my doctorate program and will help me to provide recommendations to policymakers and stakeholders in the field of education. The information gathered will be part of my dissertation study. It will be shared with a committee of university professors and then placed in the UWM library for others to read. It is my hope that the information you provide will assist others in learning from educators' perspectives about professional learning within The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative also known simply as PI 34.

       If you are willing to help in this study, please contact me at your earliest convenience. I can be reached at 894-7380 (nights & evenings) or 894-5116 (days) or through email at dsixel12@gmail.com.

Sincerely,

Deb Sixel

Appendix B

Interview Protocol #1

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

Introduction: The purpose of this first interview is to get to know you, your background and thoughts on education. You were selected because you have recently completed the PDP process as an initial educator. As mentioned in the letter, the data gathered will be used for my dissertation work at UWM. No information from you will be publically identified, published or shared with individuals from your school. As you know, the consent letter explains this in more detail. The interview will take approximately 45 minutes. (*Wait time and Questions are answered. The taped recording begins.*)

1. Tell me a little about your educational background, and experience as it relates to teaching. For example, where did you graduate? Is this your first teaching position? What grade and subject do you teach? What other experiences teaching have you had?

2. What motivated or persuaded you to become a teacher?

3. What do you enjoy about teaching?

4. What do you dislike?

5. What has your teaching experience been like these first 5 years? (share some experiences with the students, other teachers, parents, etc.)

6. How did your perceptions of teaching match the reality of teaching?

7. What type of professional learning do you enjoy?

8. Do you enjoy learning from a traditional class approach like a graduate credit class, online, workshop, independent, etc.? explain why…

9. What motivates you to learn something new?

Interview Protocol #2

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

1. In my research, I'm looking specifically at the PDP plan as required by PI-34.   What did you think about the PDP <u>process</u>?

2. What goal did you choose and Why?

3. Did you encounter any unexpected obstacles in working on your PDP? If so, how did you deal with those obstacles?

4. How did you find the self-directed learning to be? (easy, difficult to find topics, researched-based content, topics, depth of knowledge, motivation, etc)

5. How invested were you in developing the plan?

6. Do you feel your PDP has affected your professional growth and classroom instruction?
   a. How? In what ways? (This question will be probed to get to the heart of the matter- go in-depth)

7. Do you feel your professional development plan impacted student learning?
   a. If so, How, if not, Why not? (again, probe for depth, wait time)

   *Ask to obtain a copy of their PDP and reflection journal

Interview Protocol #3

Time:

Date:

Place:

Interviewee:

1. How do you learn best?

2. What did you feel about the self-directed learning within the plan? How did you direct your learning?

3. How would you describe the results of your professional growth?

4. Has your PDP changed your teaching practices?

5. How did you think and feel about the results or lack of results? If you found results will they be sustainable? (ieWill you continue the classroom practice that resulted from the PDP? Why or Why not?)

6. Did you feel writing the PDP was beneficial?
    a.   Did it help you grow professionally? Why or Why not?
    b.   What suggestions would you give to DPI?
    c.   What advice would you give to new teachers starting out?

7. What did you think and feel about the process of the professional development gained, did you feel you grew professionally? Why, why not? If not, What might have helped you grow more? Explain.

8. Do you feel the DPI was on the "right track" when they created this requirement opposed to the 6 credits every 5 years as a licensing requirement? Why or why not?

9.   Does your district assist you with the PDP in the required mentoring program? Explain.

10. How "invested" were you in the process of writing and implementing the PDP?

11. Do you feel your plan was verified with fidelity? Explain.

12. Anything else you would like to add?

Appendix C

INFORMED CONSENT

I am willing to be interviewed for a research study that will describe teacher perspectives and experiences gained in professional growth, classroom practice, and student learning through the creation of a professional development plan required by PI34, The Wisconsin Quality Educator Initiative. I am willing to discuss with the researcher how I view my role as an educator and how my professional growth plays a part in my own learning, classroom practices, and student learning.

I understand that I will participate in three recorded interviews that will last from 45 to 60 minutes in length. I understand that the information I provide will be used for the researcher's dissertation and shared with others with pseudonyms being used for participants and the school. I understand that my participation is completely voluntary and that I may remove myself from the study at any time with no consequence. Likewise, any questions of concerns about the study or my treatment, can be directed to the university supervisor, Leigh Wallace at 414-229-4305.

My signature below indicates that I give consent to be a participant in this study.

_____   _____

       (Participant)   (Date)

Deborah M. Sixel
95 Raider Heights
Kiel, WI 53042
1-920-894-7380
dsixel@kiel.k12.wi.us

EDUCATION: PhD Urban Education
      Specialization Administrative Leadership (2013)
        UW Milwaukee
      Superintendent Certification (2010)
        UW Milwaukee
      Educational Leadership: School Principal License and Director of
      Curriculum & Assessment License (2002)
        Marian University, Fond du Lac, WI
      MA Degree in Education, Teacher Professional Development (1990)
        Marian University, Fond du Lac, WI
      BA Education Degree Certification Grades 1-8 (1986)
        Lakeland College, Sheboygan, WI

WORK EXPERIENCE:
Director of Student Learning (2004-2012)
Director of Curriculum & Instruction and Associate Principal (2012-present)
Kiel Area School District, Kiel, WI

- Development & implementation of a cohesive program of curriculum and technology planning, development, and evaluation
- Leadership in implementation of common core state standards
- Directed strategic planning within the technology department including the state 3-year library, media, technology plan
- Leadership and support of professional learning communities
- Chairperson for curriculum and technology committees
- Planning, organization, and program orientation for new staff
- Coordination and administration of federal and state grants
- Development and implementation of district-wide curriculum and technology budgets
- Supervision and evaluation of faculty and staff
- Technology development for faculty and support staff

Adjunct Faculty, Education Outreach (2006-2008)
UW Green Bay

- Planned and taught courses in Digital Storytelling
- Planned and team-taught courses in use of data for instructional decision-making

Associate Dean, English as a Second Language and Adult Basic Education (2001-2004)
Lakeshore Technical College, Cleveland, WI
- Supervised a staff of 33 individuals to include full time, part time, adjunct and support staff
- Worked with a team of instructors to develop schedules, assign staff, monitor enrollment
- Oversaw and evaluated the adult learning program, curriculum, and services
- Assisted faculty with implementation of grant activities
- Worked with faculty to review and revise curriculum
- Assisted staff with professional growth through various learning activities
- Established and maintained partnerships with community agencies and other educational institutions to strengthen the ESL and adult basic education enrollment
- Provided service on college, community, and statewide committees and task forces

Wisconsin Virtual High School Online Instructor (2002-2004)
Tomahawk, WI (CESA #9)
- Taught online courses- World Civilizations and ESL
- Certified online instructor

Bookkeeper for Diamond Doors & Buildings, Inc. (1994-2009)
- Completed all functions of small business record keeping
- Prepared contracts, handled accounts receivable, payable, and completed payroll duties using Quickbooks Pro software

Middle School Reading/Language Arts and Social Studies Teacher (1987-2001)
Chilton Middle School, Chilton, WI
- Planned and taught lessons incorporating literacy strategies including reading in the content areas, workshop method, higher order thinking skills, and others
- Early integration of technology in all language arts and social studies courses
- Created and implemented school/community projects

SCHOLASTIC HONORS:
- Sylvia Sharp Award for District Innovation in Technology sponsored by the T.H.E. Journal and the International Society for Technology in Education- National Award Presented in Philadelphia (2005)
- Team Leadership in Technology Award- National Award from the Consortium for School Networking- Presented in San Francisco (2007)
- Published article in the Wisconsin State Reading Journal (Summer 2009)

- Published article in <u>T.H.E.Journal</u> (May 2011)
- Invited to present at the Consortium of School Networking Conference in Washington D.C. (March 2012)

ORGANIZATIONS & COMMITTEES:
- Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (2002-Present)
- Wisconsin Educational Media and Technology Association (2004-2010)
- Eastern Wisconsin Instructional Technology Consortium (2004-Present)
- Wisconsin State Reading Association (1991-Present)
- Chairperson of the WSRA Reading and Technology Committee (2007-2012)
- UWGB Advisory Board for Education Outreach (2007-2009)
- Lakeland College Center for Economics Advisory Committee (2005-2008)

COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES:
- People to People Ambassador Leader (2009-Present)
- Kiel Junior Achievement Advisory Board (2008-Present)
- Goodwill Tour Chaperone (2008, 2009)
- Sunday School Teacher (2006-2007)
- Kiel Public Library Board of Trustees (2005-2008)
- Girl Scout Leader (1999-2002)