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Abstract

Current trends in the education literature currently point to school leadership as responsible for the professional growth of the faculty (Fullan, 2010; Reeves, 2006) leading to the desired academic growth of the students. The Christian school community, however, has limited resources compared to those in the public sector. Unfortunately, the literature rarely includes the 400,000 teachers or the school leaders who have chosen to work in private education and their influence on the lives of over 5 million children (Broughman & Swaim, 2006). By examining effective professional development and its relationship to the development of professional learning communities specifically for Christian schools, this study's findings provide much needed research for leadership in the private school community. Because participating in professional development is important to continued teacher growth and quality as well as student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Haycock, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996), it is hoped this study will lead to improved teacher and student performance under the guidance of school leadership. While Headley's (2003) work surveyed 60 ACSI schools, providing an overview of professional activities most commonly provided for teachers in those schools, additional knowledge is needed about which activities are of most value to professional learning community development, leading to teacher growth and student success.

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Significance of the study

Current trends in the education literature currently point to school leadership as responsible for the professional growth of the faculty (Fullan, 2010; Reeves, 2006) leading to the desired academic growth of the students. The Christian school community, however, has limited resources compared to those in the public sector. Unfortunately, the literature rarely includes the 400,000 teachers or the school leaders who have chosen to work in private education and their influence on the lives of over 5 million children (Broughman & Swaim, 2006). By examining effective professional development and its relationship to the development of professional learning communities specifically for Christian schools, this study's findings provide much needed research for leadership in the private school community. Because participating in professional development is important to continued teacher growth and quality as well as student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 2004; Haycock, 1998; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996), it is hoped this study will lead to improved teacher and student performance under the guidance of school leadership. While Headley's (2003) work surveyed 60 ACSI schools, providing an overview of professional activities most commonly provided for teachers in those schools, additional knowledge is needed about which activities are of most value to professional learning community development, leading to teacher growth and student success.

Literature

In the early 1900s, sociologist Willard Waller defined school to be "wherever and whenever teachers and students meet for the purpose of giving and receiving instruction" (Waller, 1961, p. 6). Throughout his study, however, he returned again and again to the observation that the teacher was separate from the community, the students, and even fellow teachers in the same school. The collection of separated classrooms was described by a teacher to Barth (1990) as "our adjoining caves" (p. 31) and as a system of self-sufficient units or "cells" by Lortie (1975), where teachers spend the majority of their day isolated from other adults. According to Fullan (2010), "The teaching profession has been built on the individual professional autonomy of the teacher" and cannot thrive if it is "not willing to measure itself and be open about what it is doing" (p. 63).

Current Trends in Professional Development

While those involved in adult continuing education in the major professions realized the value of informal learning that included such things as supervised training, mentoring, casual or "brown bag" presentations, and reading and discussing professional journals and magazines for professional growth (Merriam, Cafarella, & Baumgartner, 2007), the field of education lagged behind. Teachers became the targets of remediation in most school reform measures as noted by McLaughlin (1993): "Unfortunately, the majority of research driving government sponsored education reforms has focused on the external contexts of education, leaving the teacher in deficit, 'targets of effective schools policies'" (p. 79).

This misconception of teachers as the targets of reform has its roots in the superimposition of the factory model and its efficiency corollaries on the educational system in the early 1900s (Callahan, 1962). As Callahan stated in his book,Education and the Cult of Efficiency:

This misconception, which still persists in our own time, was and is one of the most harmful outcomes of the confusion of the school with the factory and of the teacher with the worker whose work is finished when the whistle blows. (p. 133)

As the school board bureaucracies distanced themselves from teachers and the classroom in the search for efficiency, they adopted advertising techniques in order to convince the public that they truly had the best interests of their constituency at heart (Callahan, 1962). According to Eisner (1994), "Distance breeds generalization, and generalizations yield broad categories that provide little place for particulars" (p. 7). Educational policy, which is general by nature, is developed by those removed the furthest from the particulars of the classroom. The drive to mollify public opinion led to the adoption of educational slogans, replacing educational thought (Eisner, 1994). Slogans such as back to basics, individualization, educational standards, and learning by discovery give an image of up-to-date practice, "an aura of technical sophistication" (Eisner, 1994, p. 376), while ignoring the "rigorous thought" issues that education requires. Teachers were also minimally trained to put these slogans into practice. As Goodlad found in 1970, lectures, brief orientation sessions and manuals were expected to improve classroom instruction. However, mere exposure to new ideas was not enough. Teachers needed to internalize the full meaning of a change before being left alone to implement it.

Twenty years later, Senge (1990) called for the development of learning organizations to move business ahead into the future. A learning organization consists of people who continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspirations are set free, and where people are continually learning how to learn together. (Senge, 1990, p. 3)

Fullan (1991) sees learning as a part of work. Both teacher commitment and student learning follow in direct response to teacher learning and teacher collaboration. Unfortunately, in the next several years short-term workshops still remained the bread-and-butter of staff development (Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, 2000). As Joyce and Showers (1990) stated in the first sentence of their book, Student Achievement through Staff Development, the field of staff development is only gradually evolving "from a patchwork of courses" into a system that will enhance and ensure that "education professionals regularly enhance their academic knowledge and professional performance" (p. 1).

In 1993, Thomas, through the Southeastern Regional Vision for Education (SERVE), organized a teacher advisory council from the 1992 and 1993 Teachers of the Year from Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Mississippi, North Carolina, and South Carolina. The initial meetings of the Council focused on teacher education and teacher professionalization. In those meetings the participants identified a list of six characteristics detrimental to effective professional growth:

- One-shot workshops with no follow-up
- Instruction that was purely theoretical and included no practical content
- Activities that they were required to attend and had no choice about regardless of their relevance to individual teachers' needs
- A requirement of more paperwork
- Poor timing, such as inservice training presented in a long faculty meeting
- Workshops that suggested lack of trust, lack of respect, or lack of teacher professionalism (p. 5)

This list includes characteristics of the ineffectual update model for continued adult learning (Mott, 2000) and closely matched those provided by Fullan (1991) summarizing why most professional development fails. The use of quick-fix, one-shot workshops arranged for by those removed from teachers' needs, along with a lack of follow-up and support rank high on his lists, as well. Darling-Hammond (1996) added her voice, criticizing the minimal investment of most school districts in ongoing professional development, opting to spend their limited resources on "hit-and-run" workshops.

In 1993 McLaughlin and Talbert published the findings of their research conducted from 1987 to1992 in Contexts That Matter for Teaching and Learning: Strategic Opportunities for Meeting the Nation's Educational Goals. McLaughlin and Talbert discovered that those teachers who made effective adaptations to their students all belonged to "an active professional community which encouraged and enabled them to transform their teaching" (p. 7). They reiterated their findings in 1996, noting that teachers who participate in strong professional communities have high levels of professionalism, "higher levels of shared standards

for curriculum and instruction, evidence a stronger service ethic in their relations with students, and show stronger commitment to the teaching profession" (p. 142) Little and McLaughlin (1993) support this in their examination of teacher workplaces in 16 public and private secondary schools in eight different communities in two states. They found that professional communities with high norms of collegiality were cohesive, had a high rate of enthusiasm and support for growth and learning, supportive relationships, and norms of innovation.

While no literature from this time addressed private education, these studies identified common ground for teacher success and professional growth to be the strength and cohesiveness of the community to which each teacher belonged. Professional development must look to the community structure and goals of the local school in order to be truly effective.

Professional Learning Communities

Just as Wenger (1998) stressed the importance of the social nature of learning at work in his description of communities of practice, Sergiovanni (2007) noted the same need in the area of K-12 education when he defined community as a place where the "community members connect with each other as a result of felt interdependencies, mutual obligations, and other ties" (p. 193). The educational branch of the government, as well as other professional organizations, has responded by calling for the creation and development of professional communities within the school structure. The re-issuance of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known now as No Child Left Behind (NCLB), requires that all teachers "be highly qualified in the core academic subjects they teach by the end of the 2005-2006 school year" (U.S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 9). In doing so, however, it has provided many opportunities for teachers to share knowledge and experiences with teachers from around the country through many Teacher-to-Teacher Initiatives, the Research to Practice Summit, and the Teacher Assistance Corps. The National Board of Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) promotes the development of community through two of its five core propositions, requiring teachers to "work together to strengthen their teaching" (NBPTS, 2002, p. 19). These initiatives are preceded by the National Staff Development Council's Standards for Staff Development (2001) which calls for teachers to be organized into learning communities in which they collaboratively apply knowledge about human learning and change. It is clear that each organization sees the need for the creation of opportunities for teachers to make connections with other professionals within the context of practice.

In like manner, Rosenholtz (1989) at the end of her study, concluded with the finding that teachers with shared goals, who practiced collaboration in learning-enriched environments, have greater certainty about their own abilities and commitment to the profession. Successful schools are able "to cherish individuality and inspire communality" (Rosenholtz, 1989, p. 221). Eisner (1998) and Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) both compared the teaching profession to the arts in an effort to respond to the need for community found in successful schools. While Eisner (1998) asserted that teaching is a skilled performance requiring coaching and feedback, Talbert and McLaughlin (2002) described a school that successfully puts this assertion into practice in the development of its mathematics curriculum. At Esperanza High School, they found that the mathematics department fostered a "shared repertoire of practice" (p. 336) among its teachers within the department's community. Both Alvarado in New York City's Community School District #2 (Elmore & Burney, 1997) and DuFour at Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125 in Illinois (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) experienced improvement in student achievement as teachers worked together to solve educational problems, unified by the goal of learning for all.

The question that follows, then, is how to define and create communities that foster professional learning while eliminating the isolation of teachers in schools today. The unique culture of schools requires a unique response, a response that is supported by the similarities of major researchers in this field (Barth, 1990; Darling-Hammond, 1996; Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour, Eaker, & DuFour, 2005; Fullan, 1991; Hargreaves, 1993; Hord, 1997; Hord, Meehan, Orletsky, Sattes, 1999; Lezotte, 2005; Little & McLaughlin, 1993; McLaughlin, 1993; Rosenholtz, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1994, 2007; Sparks, 2000; Talbert & McLaughlin, 1996). Each

researcher emphasized that teachers must have opportunities made available to them to work together toward increased student achievement under supportive conditions. Today, shared vision and mission are integral characteristics of professional learning communities along with shared practice and inquiry focused on learning outcomes. Learning is integral to teacher growth as well as student success (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; DuFour et al, 2005; Hord, 1997; Hord et al, 1999). A professional learning community is a place where educators "continuously seek and share learning, and act on their learning…to enhance their effectiveness as professionals for the students' benefit" (Hord, 1997, p. 6) in an environment that "fosters mutual cooperation, emotional support, and personal growth as they work together to achieve what they cannot accomplish alone" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. xii).

In the business world, the essence of the formation of communities of practice is based on the needs of the practitioner, rather than the needs of the practice (Cheetham & Chivers, 2000), making communities of practice difficult to mandate (Wenger & Snyder, 2000). However, those in positions of leadership in the field of education find that requiring—as well as making—time and space for learning communities is a necessity for the successful attainment of learning goals for both practitioners and students (Barth, 1990; Elmore & Burney, 2003; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fogarty & Pete, 2007; Fullan, 1991; Hord, 1997). Teachers need to work together to improve practice, sharing ideas and collaborating on projects and concerns, activities that require both time and space within the rigorous school schedule (Eisner, 1998; Kanold, 2006). At Adlai E. Stevenson High School District 125, teachers are required to be on a course-based team that meets throughout the year to set and work towards specific goals improving student achievement. "Learning thrives when the conditions are right…when the support is there…when someone cares…when someone is gently pushed…with consistency, with continuity, and with a coveted commitment" (Fogarty & Pete, 2007 p. 139). School leadership must provide the vision, support, training, resources, and encouragement necessary while always focusing on results and student achievement (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lezotte, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2007).

It is important to note, though, that it is the people and not the program that creates the capacity or "collective power" (Fullan, 2005, p. 211) of the learning community. Without the shared vision and efforts of the community to "engage in continuous improvement for ongoing student learning" (Fullan, 2005, p. 211), the program will lose its effectiveness. Professional learning communities are social structures where leadership emphasizes the connections of people to each other and their work based on shared beliefs and principles (Sergiovanni, 2007). Those connections appear to be most effective when mandated, as well as given the time, space, and opportunity to thrive. Teachers may "give up a measure of individual autonomy in exchange for significantly enhanced collective empowerment" (DuFour & Eaker, 1998, p. 154). When nurtured by trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Palmer, 1983) and guided by shared vision and goals (Eaker & Keating, 2008; Kanold, Toncheff, & Douglas, 2008; Rosenholtz, 1989; Rosenholtz, Bassler, & Hoover-Dempsey, 1986; Rosenholtz, 1989), a community of teachers can enjoy personal autonomy while striving collectively for growth in both themselves and their students. Fullan (2010) stated this well when he called "peer interaction the 'social glue' of focus and cohesion" (p. 36) and stated that "harnessing the power of peers" (p. 42) leads to collective capacity, the ability of the group to accomplish goals.

Christian-school teachers, however, find themselves in an educational culture separate from that experienced by their public school counterparts (Headley, 2003; Pike, 2004; Sikkink, 2001). While the goals of growth and academic excellence remain the same, the culture can have both a positive and negative impact on the attainment of those goals. Christian teachers have the unique gift of salvation along with the spiritual gift of teaching and the Holy Spirit to depend on (Nason, 2002). But good teachers are also learners and value professional development activities (Kynerd, 2002; Neuzil, 2008). Moreland (2002) points to the crucial nature of faculty development "in the world of ideas relevant to their teaching and not simply in educational methodology" (p. 191).

But what options do professionals in Christian education have at their disposal to increase professional relationships? Various Christian school organizations offer professional development

opportunities to teachers and administrators. However, these may be cost prohibitive and reminiscent of the "one-shot workshop." The Association of Christian Schools International (ACSI), Christian Schools International, and Independent School Management, all offer resources for those in the Christian school sector, but conferences, publications, professional memberships, and certifications all require fees that can break already stretched budgets.

Both Reeves (2006) and Fullan (2010) place the responsibility for professional growth, leading to student achievement, squarely on the shoulders of school leadership. According to Reeves (2006), it is up to the leadership to set the direction and allocate time for teacher collaboration, while Fullan (2010) calls principal involvement the number one most powerful finding in setting the direction for school wide improvement.

Methodology

This study addresses the following research questions in order to provide clarification of professional development activities for educators in Christian schools:

1. To what extent do professional development activities create conditions that support a professional learning community?
2. How does Christian school leadership provide time and financial support for professional development activities?

Sample

The population for this study consisted of teachers (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade) and school administrators in Christian schools from the ACSI Mid-America Region. ACSI was selected because it is the largest of the Christian school organizations due to its flexible membership policies, specifically in relation to the statement of faith. The more general language of the statement supports the biblical basics while allowing its membership to be as inclusive as possible, growing beyond limiting denominational divisions (Sikkink, 2001). Geographically, the Mid-America Region of ACSI covers the largest area of 32 national and worldwide offices. Also, the region includes both rural and urban school settings.

For this study, a stratified random selection of schools was made from each of the nine states in the Mid-America Region from categories based on size. The nine states included Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Schools in the ACSI directory were divided by enrollment into four categories: Group A: 0-99, Group B: 100-249, Group C: 250-499, and Group D: 500+. Next, schools were randomly selected from each category equaling one third of the total number within that category for the state using the calculator available at **http://graphpad.com/quickcalcs/RandMenu.cfm**. This led to a minimum of one school from each state in each category; more were selected from states with a greater number of schools in the enrollment category.

While 111 schools were selected to receive teacher and administrator surveys, five were discovered to no longer be in operation and were dropped from the sample. They were not replaced since a sufficient number of responses had already been received. Each of the 106 schools to receive surveys was called three weeks prior to the mailing in order to introduce the researcher and the study to the administration. If no personal contact was made, a voice message was left. Out of the 111 schools originally selected, 52 were in Group A, 34 were in Group B, 14 were in Group C, and 11 were in Group D, averaging 30% representation from each enrollment category.

Responses from 43 schools were received over the next three months. Because teachers either volunteered or were selected by administrators to complete the survey instruments, the factor of self-selection was included in consideration of the survey results. One administrator sent a letter expressing regret that the school could not participate due to the final closing of its doors at the end of the school year. Seven school survey packets were incomplete, lacking administrator signatures granting permission for use. Three were corrected and returned, allowing their inclusion in the study, but the data from the remaining four schools could not be used. In addition, fourteen teachers failed to sign the permission form and their data were also excluded.

In total, 218 surveys suitable for data analysis were returned, and the total response rate of usable survey data sets from schools to the total sent was 35.8%. Mertens (2005) recommended 20 to 50 responses for each subcategory, a goal which was achieved in three of the four categories for school

size. Group A (0-99) responded with a total of 86 surveys, Group B (100-249) responded with 73 surveys, and Group D (500+) responded with 45 surveys. Group C (250-499) responded with the fewest number of only 14 surveys. In addition, Mertens (2005) recommended a return of 100 surveys from each major subgroup. When the surveys are divided between administrators (minor subgroup) and teachers (major subgroup) the amount of data sufficiently satisfies this criterion with 38 administrator surveys and 180 teacher surveys. The total number of responses also satisfies the necessary response rate with the total of 218 returned and completed surveys. It is also important to keep in mind that all respondents were self-selected and demonstrate the desire to report about their school creating the limitation of reporter bias.

Survey

For the purposes of this study, an instrument incorporating several of Headley's (2003) survey instruments was used to collect data relating to specific professional development activities from both teachers and administrators, respectively, along with the PLC survey instrument for teachers developed by Hord (1997) and the staff at the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL). Headley (2003) had conducted an initial survey of ACSI administrators to explore opportunities available for teacher professional development in Christian schools at the Northwest Region of ACSI. He followed this survey with a questionnaire insert in the 2002 Northwest Region ACSI teacher convention gathering information on the professional development needs of Christian school educators in the region. His second instrument had been reviewed by a panel of experts, local school administrators, teacher educators, and ACSI officials to assess validity and usability prior to its use at the convention. Headley graciously agreed to share both instruments from which the administrator survey and the first section of the teacher survey for this current study were developed. The focus of these instruments was to determine the professional development opportunities available to teachers in the Mid-America Region of ACSI and in which activities teachers actually participate. An additional section was added to the administrative survey requesting information on how time and financial support were provided for each activity. A listing of the 28 professional development activities used can be found at**https://icctejournal.org/issues/v5i1/v5i1-professional-development/** while additional information is addressed in the complete study.

The second survey instrument for teachers only was developed by Hord and the staff at SEDL was used in its entirety with permission. The 17 questions were directly related to the descriptors Hord and her team developed of PLCs (Hord, 1997) and utilized a five-point scale to determine the degree to which respondents believed their school staff had developed into a learning community. The specifics of its construction, pilot testing, field testing, analysis, reliability and validity are available in Issues About Change (Hord et al., 1999). The final instrument was tested and then copyrighted in 1996. The five PLC categories are reviewed below:

PLC 1 School administrators participate democratically with teachers, sharing power, authority, and decision making.

PLC 2 The staff shares visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning, and these visions are consistently referenced in the staff's work.

PLC 3 The staff's collective learning and application of the learnings (taking action) create high intellectual learning tasks and solutions to address student needs.

PLC 4 Peers review and give feedback based on observing one another's classroom behaviors in order to increase individual and organizational capacity.

PLC 5 School conditions and capacities support the staff's arrangement as a professional learning organization.

Analysis

For Research Question 1, data collected were analyzed using MANOVA. First, the Wilks' lambda score was found to determine statistical significance relating each professional development activity to each of the five categories from the Hord instrument. Second, regression analysis in the form of tests of between-subjects effects was applied to determine the significance of each professional development activity when compared to each of the five categories of the Hord instrument.

Results from Research Questions 2 represented ordinal data that was ranked and then categorized

by percent (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2003; Mertens, 2005). The analysis of this question required collected data to be organized into categories that were counted, sorted, and then assigned a numerical identifier. SPSS v.16 provided the proper analysis of this data through the use of descriptive statistics.

Results and discussion

RQ#1 To what extent do professional development activities create conditions that support a professional learning community?

Two multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) tests were used to examine multiple dependent variables from the PLC questionnaire with each of the activities listed to determine which activities provide the greatest benefit to PLC development. In the first test, the Wilks' lambda score was examined to compare the mean score for the five categories of PLC development as a whole to each independent variable or activity. In the second test, the analysis compared the significance of each of the five PLC categories to each activity.

In the first test, four activities demonstrating a statistical significance of $p<.05$ to PLC development emerged:

Peer observation .000

Teacher evaluation for professional growth .009

School sponsored in-service .034

Collaborative teacher research .041

ACSI convention participation was close with a significance of $p<.072$.

In the second test, each professional development activity listed was compared to teachers' responses in the five categories defining a professional learning community along with their total mean scores from the Hord questionnaire. Only professional development activities compared with the PLC category demonstrating a statistical significance of $p<.05$ are listed in Table 1. Professional development activities demonstrating no significance are not included in the table.

Table 1: Professional Development and PLC Development

Activity	PLC Identifier	Sig.
Collaborative teacher research	PLC 1	.002
Classroom walk-throughs	PLC 1	.008
ASCI Enabler participation	PLC 2	.044
Teacher evaluation for professional growth	PLC 3 PLC 5	.005 .021
Peer observation	PLC 4	.000
ACSI Convention participation	PLC 4	.006
Curriculum design	PLC 4	.007
Accountability and support groups—Critical Friends Group	PLC 4	.025
School sponsored in-service	PLC 5	.008
Collaboration with other K-12 schools	PLC 5	.038

It can be seen that only ten professional activities significantly relate in some way to PLC development. While the PLC Total Mean score for school-sponsored in-service came close in significance with a factor of .054 in the second test, none of the PLC Total Mean scores from the MANOVA demonstrated significance. However, individual development activities did relate to certain categories of the PLC survey. The professional development activities that demonstrated statistical significance are listed below in relation to the PLC categories they affected:

- PLC 1: School administrators participate democratically with teachers, sharing power, authority, and decision making.
  - Collaborative teacher research .002
  - Classroom walk-throughs .008
- PLC 2: The staff shares visions for school improvement that have an undeviating focus on student learning, and these visions are consistently referenced in the staff's work.
  - ACSI Enabler participation .044
- PLC 3: The staff's collective learning and application of the learnings (taking action) create high intellectual learning tasks and solutions to address student needs.
  - Teacher evaluation for professional growth .005
- PLC 4: Peers review and give feedback based on observing one another's classroom behaviors in order to increase individual and organizational capacity.
  - Peer observation .000

- ACSI Convention participation .006
- Curriculum design .007
- Accountability and support groups—
- Critical Friends Group .025

- PLC 5: School conditions and capacities support the staff's arrangement as a professional learning organization.
  - School sponsored in-service .008
  - Teacher evaluation for professional growth .021
  - Collaboration with other K-12 schools .038

While four activities significantly relate to PLC development through the Wilks' lambda score, six additional activities can be found that significantly relate in part to PLC development. Added are classroom walk-throughs, ACSI Enabler participation, ACSI convention participation, curriculum design, accountability and support groups—Critical Friends Group, and collaboration with other K-12 schools. While the four opportunities identified by the Wilks' lambda contribute to overall PLC development, the remaining six activities are necessary to support individual categories from the PLC survey. Although these teachers readily participate in professional development activities as reported in the original study, it is important for administrators to help teachers focus their efforts in areas which will be most beneficial, especially when only ten of the 28 activities from the original list contribute in a statistically significant manner to PLC development.

RQ#2 How does Christian school leadership provide time and financial support for professional development activities?

This question was answered directly by administrators on the administrative survey. Space for open-ended responses to the questions of how time and financial support are provided by the school was available after each professional development opportunity listed. These responses were then sorted and coded into 14 categories relating to time allotment and eight categories relating to funding sources in order to enter data in the SPSS v. 16 program:

Time

1. Release time
2. Before school day
3. After school day
4. Scheduled as needed throughout the day/year
5. Weekly faculty meeting
6. Late start day
7. Half day
8. School closing
9. Before school year
10. After school year
11. Early dismissal
12. Planning time/team meeting
13. Personal time
14. Lunch/recess

Funding

1. Government funds
2. General fund (General Operating Fund)
3. Professional development fund
4. Tuition
5. Teacher personal
6. Parent organization
7. Church budget
8. Not applicable

Descriptive statistics through SPSS v. 16 found the greatest frequency or valid percent of positive responses for that activity. Only responses with a valid percent greater than 15.0 are recorded in Table 2.

Table 2: Administrator Report of Time and Funding

Activity	Time	Valid Percent	Funding	Valid Percent
School sponsored in-service	School closing	54.3	General fund	51.4
	After school day	17.1	Government funds	20.0
			Professional development fund	20.0
ASCI Enabler participation	Release time	66.7	General fund	37.5
	School closing	20.0	Professional development fund	37.5
New teacher mentoring	After school day	47.6	Not applicable	61.9
	As needed	28.6	General fund	28.6
Collaborative teacher research	After school day	60.0	Tuition	40.0
	After school year	20.0	Not applicable	40.0
	Planning time/team meeting	20.0	General fund	20.0
ACSI Convention participation	School closing	81.8	General fund	60.6
	Release time	15.2		
Teacher teaming	Planning time/team meeting	64.3	Not applicable	64.3
Accountability and support groups—Critical Friends Group	As needed	50.0	Government funds	50.0
	After school day	50.0	General fund	50.0
Professional leave days	Release time	73.9	General fund	47.8
			Government funds	17.4
Ongoing faculty development courses	Personal time	38.5	General fund	38.5
	After school day	15.4	Government funds	23.1
			Tuition	15.4
			Teacher personal	15.4
Book study groups	Before school day	33.3	General fund	66.7
	After school day	16.7	Government funds	16.7
	Weekly faculty meeting	16.7	Teacher personal	16.7
	School closing	16.7		
	Before school year	16.7		
Collaboration with other K-12 schools	Release time	40.0	Not applicable	60.0
	As needed	20.0	General fund	40.0
	School closing	20.0		
	Before school year	20.0		

Peer coaching	As needed Planning time/team	62.5 37.5	Not applicable General fund	62.5 37.5
Peer observation	As needed Planning time/team meeting	62.5 25.0	Not applicable General fund	62.5 37.5
Graduated salary scale based on educational attainment	Personal time After school day	66.7 33.3	General fund Tuition	56.2 31.2
Tuition reimbursement for graduate study	Personal time	100.0	General fund Professional development fund Tuition	54.5 18.2 18.2
Professional development fund for faculty	Release time After school day School closing Personal time	40.0 20.0 20.0 20.0	General fund Professional development fund	40.0 33.3
Collaboration with colleges and universities	Release time As needed Before school year	33.3 33.3 33.3	General fund Not applicable	66.7 33.3
Case Studies	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø
On-line learning activities	Personal time As needed After school day	50.0 33.3 16.7	Not applicable Professional development fund	37.5 25.0
Teacher evaluation for professional growth	As needed After school day	70.4 14.8	Not applicable General fund	53.6 39.3
Journaling	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø
Teacher portfolios	Planning time/team meeting	100.0	Not applicable	100.0
Assessment design	After school day School closing Planning time/team meeting	33.3 33.3 33.3	Not applicable Professional development fund	66.7 33.3
Video taping of peers	As needed	100.0	Not applicable	100.0
Classroom walk-throughs	As needed	90.0	Not applicable General fund	75.0 25.0
Curriculum design	After school day School closing As needed	38.5 23.1 15.4	Not applicable General fund	71.4 21.4
Teacher shadowing	As needed	100.0	Not applicable	100.0

Faculty handbook	Before school year	38.1	Not applicable	53.8
	As needed	23.8	General fund	34.6
	After school day	19.0		

In finding time for professional learning activities for faculty learning opportunities, "As needed" had the greatest valid percent six times; "Release time" was greatest for five opportunities; "After school day" was greatest four times, while "Personal time" was three, "Planning time/team meeting" and "School closing" were twice, and "Before school day" and "Before school year" had the greatest valid percent one time each. "Late start," ""Half-day," "After school year," "Lunch/recess," "Weekly faculty meeting," and "Early dismissal" never appeared in the top three greatest valid percent for any activity.

In response to the question concerning funding, "Not applicable" had the greatest valid percent 14 times, while "General fund" had the greatest for ten of the opportunities listed. "Government funds" and "Tuition" had the greatest valid percent only one time each, while "Professional development fund," Teacher personal," "Parent organization," and "Church budget," although occasionally reported, never appeared with the greatest valid percent.

Administrators scheduled time for professional development activities as needed throughout the year or school day. If necessary, release time was scheduled or time was allocated before, during, or after the school day. On some occasions, school might even be closed for extended meetings or a convention. Starting the school day late or closing early were never mentioned most frequently for any of the professional development activities. The question concerning funding sources was most often answered as not applicable by administrators. If costs were incurred due to professional development activities, most were paid through the school's general operating fund. In some cases, however, schools reported using government funds and tuition dollars.

Financially, either no money is currently allocated for teacher learning activities, or funding is coming from the general fund. While administrators reported limited funding for professional development, creative ways to provide training with those limited resources may be found. Few administrators listed collaboration with colleges and universities as available to faculty. However, area Christian colleges may be open to a partnership requiring little financial investment on the part of the Christian K-12 school. College faculty members may see providing training as a ministry and donate their time. The college, itself, may benefit by having additional locations for pre-service teacher field placement.

In addition, once more time has been provided for professional development, teachers can diversify, studying different topics and then sharing their knowledge with the entire faculty or those who would find that information beneficial for their own classroom. Book study groups, peer observation, collaborative teacher research, assessment design, accountability and support groups, teacher shadowing, portfolios, video-taping, case studies, and journaling have minimal costs associated with them but may reap great benefits in creating conditions that teachers find supportive of a professional learning organization, increasing individual and organizational capacity (PLC 4 & PLC 5).

Implications for school leadership

School leadership and administrators must take the lead in providing components two and three of learning communities, "shared and supportive leadership [and] supportive conditions, both structural and relational" (Hord, 2008, p. 12). The administration can develop the leadership potential of the staff, working with them to identify the target areas for teacher learning in order to respond to identified student learning needs, as well as provide the time, funding, and resources to accomplish collaboratively set learning goals. A simple response to the question, "What are your top three classroom needs?" on a 3×5 card at a faculty meeting could yield valuable information. Also, teachers can identify strengths and skills in each other that they would like to develop in themselves (Owens, 2008) and help each other during planning and observation times arranged by administration.

Teachers want to learn what is appropriate to their classroom setting in order to directly address student learning needs. Administrators need to collaboratively develop learning activities with teachers, listening and leading at the same time. They must also schedule time and space for teachers to interact while maintaining awareness of what is being shared and learned by teachers during that time.

Administrators must provide a balance between formal and informal professional development. Not every activity should be mandated and directed by administration; leadership in developing appropriate learning activities must be shared, demonstrating administrative support. They must also be aware of the "Top 10" professional activities that support PLC development:

(PLC 1) collaborative teacher research

(PLC 1) classroom walk-throughs

(PLC 2) ACSI Enabler participation

(PLC 3) teacher evaluation for professional growth

(PLC 4) ACSI convention participation

(PLC 4) curriculum design

(PLC 4) accountability and support groups

(PLC 4) peer observation

(PLC 5) school sponsored in-service

(PLC 5) collaboration with other K-12 schools

(PLC 5) teacher evaluation for professional growth

and use wisdom in determining the most effective use of available resources. Although no school could be expected to add all ten activities within the constraints of the school calendar and daily schedule, administrators can select one or two that might fill an existing need. They may also decide to drop an activity that provides little benefit to the faculty as a learning community, replacing it with one that does.

Flexibility in scheduling could help administrators create additional time within the school calendar by adding several late-start days or early dismissals for teachers, rather than adding time to an already full day. During those times teachers could determine successes, prioritize student learning requiring attention, plan for their own learning, and implement that learning in the classroom. This cycle of "reflection, discussion, assessment, and consideration of new professional learning that contribute[s] to staff's effectiveness with students" (Hord, 2008, p.13) would be continuous and time could be provided for it in the school calendar throughout the year. By providing this time for teachers, administrators are also reinforcing the fifth component of PLC development in which school conditions and capacities support the staff working together as a professional learning community.

Administrators should seek to develop partnerships with other Christian schools, colleges, and universities to expand opportunities for professional development activities and allow teachers to interact with the broader community and administrators to share professional learning materials. Professional learning networks can be developed to share the cost of purchasing professional learning materials with other learning institutions. Isolation must be combated at the administrative level as well as the teacher level within the Christian educational community.

Conclusion

There are still questions concerning how to facilitate PLC development in different schools with different cultures. As Little stated in an interview with Crow (2008), most of the research doesn't supply much guidance for what those organized efforts might pursue. Most research, my own included, tends to identify existing instances of robust communities, but doesn't really account very well how they got there. (p.53)

The best response to the question, "How do we best improve student achievement and teacher performance?" is simply asking another question that each school must answer for their own community: "What should we intentionally learn in order to become more effective in our teaching so that students learn well?" (Hord, 2008, p. 12). However, the common denominator in each school success story noted by Fullan (2010) is the participation of the school leadership "as a learner in helping teachers figure out how to get classroom and schoolwide improvement" p. 37. It is up to the school leader to harness the collective power of teacher-peers that will increase the collective capacity of the group to function as a professional learning community.

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