IMPROVING INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICE: THE VALUE OF CLASSROOM GOAL TEAMS AS MEASURED BY ELEMENTARY TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS

By

Debra J. Easton Rodenburg

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Student achievement is in the forefront of education as never before. Educators, parents, business leaders, community members, and politicians are all actively watching reports of student achievement. Wong (2003) found in more than 200 studies, the only way to improve student achievement is with a knowledgeable and skillful teacher. The expertise of a teacher is a critical variable in effecting student achievement (Marzano, 2003). In this study, Classroom Goals Team Project (CGTP) was utilized as a professional development program to bring about improvements in teaching and learning in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The CGTP, implemented in a suburban school district in Nebraska, is a process where classroom teachers were asked to identify an area of concern within their classroom based upon student performance assessment data.

The major finding of the CGTP indicates the teachers of this district view the CGTP as an effective professional development model and classroom goals team meetings were perceived as productive by 89% of the teachers. Other findings of this study focus on the impact of five constructs identified in the research as critical to effective professional development programs. These constructs are: learning

community/collaborative teams, quality teaching/instructional practices, leadership, data driven decision making, and equity.

A benefit of the CGTP was the foundation for fundamental change in attitudes and perceptions of what professional development looks like and sounds like in this district. Professional development has gone beyond a one day, shot in the dark event to a much higher level of active engagement and monitoring of successful implementation with consistent and frequent feedback from peers. Students had an increased opportunity to learn through the CGTP, which according to Berlinger & Biddle (1997) is the single most powerful predictor of student achievement. The results of the review of literature and the data from this study support the need to have a professional development program, which is student achievement driven, and teacher focused in learning communities.

Sign Off Form

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DEDICATION

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My sister Donna, who doesn't know a thing about stats but spent a week of her summer vacation reading numbers for me, has always believed in me. My brother Bryan, who doesn't always quite understand why I do the things I do, but supports and encourages me regardless of my craziness.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Tinkering with professional development programs to significantly impact student achievement is a waste of resources (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sparks, 2002). Those who believe having everyone seated in an auditorium listening to a speaker from afar, sending staff members to a one-day workshop without purposeful follow-up, or bringing in an "expert" to constitute a productive development activity, are all ill advised. Fullan (1991), 13 years later, is still recalling his rationale behind failure of professional development. The reasons Fullan (1991) gave in 1979 are: one-time events; topics chosen by someone other than the participant; follow-up not considered or planned; no evaluation; lack of a conceptual plan for professional development in the beginning; and no consideration for the individual needs of a school. Wong (2003) found in more than 200 studies conducted by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future in 1996, the only way to improve student achievement is with a knowledgeable and skillful teacher. There is no time for tinkering or "drive by" models of professional development.

Literature About the Problem

Guskey (1995) views professional development, not as isolated events, but as a series of processes put into action. Every year there is a plethora of reports, articles, research studies, and books published; workshops and presentations performed; and resources allocated - all with the intent of improving the quality of instructional practices in the classroom through professional development programs. These tend to

fall well short of the intended goal, that of impacting student achievement (Sparks, 2002).

Quality teaching does not happen by accident, and in being both an art and science; professional development programs may need to address the dichotomous nature of teaching and learning. According to Darling-Hammond (1997), "Teachers who know a lot about teaching and learning and who work in environments that allow them to know students well are the critical elements of successful learning" (p. 8). The expertise of a teacher is a critical variable in effecting student achievement (Marzano, 2003).

If educators are to engage every student in every classroom, all teachers must be provided with the support and opportunity to develop their instructional skills through a professional development program. Quality professional development opportunities, when organized and implemented appropriately, may impact the quality of teaching that can be observed in the classroom, which can significantly impact student achievement (Marzano, 2003). The primary teacher-level factor that affects student achievement and impacts student achievement is "instructional strategies", which must be affected through effective professional development for student success (Marzano, 2003).

Sparks (2002) offers three premises when presenting a case for powerful professional development: (a) quality teaching makes a difference in student learning; (b) professional learning of teachers and administrators is a central factor in determining the quality of teaching; and (c) the experiences of the teacher and principal are

determined by the district structures and culture. According to Sparks and Hirsh (1997), "professional development must affect the knowledge, attitudes, and practices of individual teachers, administrators, and other school employees, but it also must alter the cultures and structures of the organizations in which those individuals work" (p. 2).

Reviews of the literature identify examples of and summarize the findings regarding the relationship between professional development and improvements in student achievement (Asayesh, 1993; Wright, Horn, & Sanders, 1997). Based on the knowledge of professional development gleaned from personal experience and research, most school district personnel can build a professional development program that enhances professionalism and supports instructional and curricular changes. The main issue rests upon whether a professional development program can or does impact teaching and learning.

Weathersby and Harkreader (1999) studied the connection between professional development and student achievement in Georgia, comparing professional development activities between high achieving and low achieving schools. They found that professional development was viewed to have little connection to classroom results in low achieving schools, while staff in high achieving schools viewed it as an authentic and collaborative effort designed to improve student achievement. Professional development programs in high achieving schools had a greater focus on student achievement and the classroom. Professional development was described as, "central to teacher discussions about professional development was what happened to their

students, what happened in their classrooms, and what happened in their schools" (Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999, p. 5).

Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning (CASL) is one example of a professional development system that assists educators in establishing a culture for collaborative inquiry while gaining deeper understanding of the link between their instruction and their students' learning, which consists of standards-based target learning goals (Langer & Colton, 2002). Langer and Colton, (2002) suggest the benefits of study teams/classroom goals teams related to student achievement include improved student learning and increased clarity about intended outcomes. Benefits for teachers include: analytical and reflective inquiry skills, professional knowledge, and collaborative expertise (Langer & Colton, 2002).

Teachers who are knowledgeable about their subject area and effective instructional strategies are found in high achieving schools (Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999). It was also found that the content of professional development programs in high achieving schools were curriculum and instructional and assessment strategies (Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999). While a professional development program with the previous focus is necessary, it is not sufficient in and of itself. The attitudes of the teachers and administrator toward "teaching and learning were found to be connected to the translation of teachers' skills and knowledge into higher student achievement" (Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999, p. 12).

Classroom Goals Team Project

The CGTP, a professional development program implemented in a suburban school district in Nebraska, is a continuous professional development process where classroom teachers were asked to identify an area of concern within their classroom based upon student performance assessment data. The CGTP (CGTP) facilitates monthly professional dialogue by defining target classroom objectives and reviewing classroom teaching strategies, leading to a process of evaluating strengths and weaknesses of instructional strategies. Team members offered input in the form of instructional strategies, classroom activities, and additional resources to be implemented by the classroom teacher in an effort to reach the classroom goal. To improve student achievement, the teacher acted on the plan for a month and returned to the team with additional student assessment data to learn how the instructional strategies affected students' performance, and whether student achievement improved. Student achievement was measured using informal measures to document improvement of the monthly data collected for the classroom goal.

Each classroom goal team was made up of four or five certified teachers or staff members, organized by the building administrator. Each team was diverse in composition, with members representing heterogeneous groupings of grade level and content areas. Teams remained constant for the academic school year.

The administrator, prior to the implementation of the CGTP, identified a classroom goals team leader. The leader of each team identified a facilitator who

appoints a timekeeper and note-taker, and who leads a discussion regarding background information and follow-up information (via district-provided forms).

The team focuses on data provided by the teacher making sure there is a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the students. Based on the strengths and weaknesses of the students, the team assists the teacher in forming a classroom goal. The team members then assist in identifying what classroom strategies might be useful in achieving the classroom goal, and in identifying assignments and/or activities the teacher may use to meet the classroom goal. This process is followed for each of the four members of the classroom goals team. Classroom team leaders provide a copy of each classroom goals action plan (via district provided form) to the principal following each monthly meeting. The classroom goals teams reconvene on a monthly basis to review new data, which support the success of the implementation of the classroom goals plan goal and documented student achievement.

To assimilate innovations, teachers need opportunities to reformulate their ideas about the teaching-learning process. "Educational change depends on what teachers do and think – it's as simple and as complex as that" (Fullan, 1991, p. 117). Fullan goes on to suggest that change is not merely an event, but a process. Student success through effective instructional practices and the use of assessment data is dependent upon the teacher and the successful implementation of change, like the CGTP, is dependent upon teachers' attitudes and beliefs (Fullan, 1991).

The coherence or the extent to which the CGTP is consistent with what has been learned in previous professional development activities, which is a critical component of

an effective professional development program (Garret, Porter, Desimone, Birman, & Yoon, 2001), was explored within this study. The CGTP encouraged professional communication among teachers who were engaged in efforts to reform their teaching in similar ways, which was found to be effective in a study of 1,027 teachers to significantly impact their perception of increases in their skills and abilities (Garret et al., 2001).

In this study, CGTP was utilized as a professional development program to bring about improvements in teaching and learning in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The over-riding question addressed by this study is: "Did the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model, positively impact instructional practices as measured by elementary teachers' perceptions and responses?"

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of Classroom Goals Team Project to improve instructional practices, as measured by elementary teachers' perceptions using a quantitative measure of results.

The variables of years of experience, assigned building, level of education/degree, specialty areas, gender, primary vs. intermediate, building administrator's perceived support, and previous study team experience were explored.

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the quantitative study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project as a professional development model?

2. Does grade level/area of concentration taught (primary, intermediate, specialist) impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
3. Does educational level impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
4. Does gender impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
5. Does area/content taught impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
6. Does building of employment impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
7. Does previous experience with study teams impact teacher's perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
8. Is there a relationship among teacher perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project across the five constructs of CGTS?

Theoretical Frameworks

As the "No Child Left Behind" data being released across the United States point out, there are too many students who are learning far less than they are capable of learning. In this day, where the focus is on accountability, a professional development program must be one that continuously improves the performance of all teachers (Joyce & Showers, 2002). A professional development program must focus on deepening a teacher's knowledge of content area, expand the teacher's repertoire of instructional

strategies to effectively teach diverse students, and embed learning and collaboration as a seamless part of the teacher's workday so that every teacher is learning every day (Sparks, 2001).

Research studies and reviews show that if widespread and sustained change in schools is to be found, a new form of professional development must be implemented (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 1991; Sparks, 2001). "The field of professional development has trouble changing and yet it is poised to change as never before because of increases in the knowledge base and pressures from within the field and outside the field of education" (Joyce & Showers, 2002, p. ix).

Fullan (1991) stated, "The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation, but to fragmentation, overload, and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations" (p. 197). Togneri (2003) studied 5 school districts that exhibited 3 years of improvement in student achievement in reading and math across multiple grade levels and across all races and ethnic groups. Togneri (2003) found that all schools in the study had moved away from the 1990 era of traditional, fragmented professional development practices of one-time workshops and replaced them with coherent, district-organized strategies to improve instruction. Embedded within these professional development programs were: (a) deliberate strategies to utilize data in the decision making stage (b) clear and concise connections between the goal of the district and building level practices, and (c) research-based principles of professional development (Fullan, 1991).

McLaughlin and Marsh (1978) propose teacher efficacy is the extent to which the teacher believes he/she has the ability to impact student performance. Self-efficacy is one's belief in their capability to implement and accomplish the procedures essential to achieve the intended level of performance (Bandura 1977, 1989, 1990). An individual's commitment to goal setting, effort expended, and levels of persistence are influenced by one's feelings of efficacy (Bandura 1977, 1989, 1990). The supposition that beliefs or perceptions are the best indicators of what decisions individuals will make throughout their career or life can be traced to one's earliest reflections (Bandura, 1986; Dewey 1933; Pajare, 1992).

Studies have shown relationships between student achievement (Ashton, Webb, & Doda, 1983) and a teacher's strong feeling of efficacy, classroom behaviors that are associated with effective teaching (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembro, 1984). Teacher efficacy has also been linked with teacher willingness and effectiveness in implementing instructional innovation (Guskey, 1987; Stein & Wang, 1988), which was measured on the perceptual survey for this study.

Perceptual data will be used to draw assumptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project success in changing teacher behavior. Perceptual data will be considered as one measure of efficacy.

Assumptions

The following assumptions guided this study and are drawn from research in the literature:

1. There is a strong and positive relationship between professional development and improvements in student achievement (Asayesh, 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Marzano, 2003; Wong, 2003; Wright et al., 1997);
2. Professional development can improve instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Sparks, 2002; Wong, 2003);
3. Collegial groups can improve instructional practices (Darling-Hammond, 1997; Fullan, 1995; Sparks, 2001, 2002);
4. The culture of the building where professional development activities take place impacts the teachers' perception of the impact of the Classroom Goals Project (Fullan, 1995; Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001; Lieberman & Miller, 1991).
5. Perceptions equate to value in measuring the effectiveness of Classroom Goals Team Project towards improving instructional practices (Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembro, 1984; McLaughlin & Marsh, 1978).

Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited by the following boundaries:

1. Respondents were certified teachers in the 12 elementary school buildings in a suburban school district in Nebraska.
2. Analysis was restricted to elementary teacher perceptions of a K-12 district implemented professional development program.

3. Surveys were electronically distributed to each certified teacher who participated in the CGTP. Time was provided during the workday at each building for completion.
4. The Assistant Superintendent based upon the student enrollment for that specific building determined the number of positions in a school building.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations of the study include:

1. The use of perceptions to measure effectiveness.
2. Respondents self-report perception data. Every attempt was made to guarantee anonymity of the respondents to encourage honest, open responses.
3. A potential bias as the researcher is conducting an internal investigation for the purpose of this study. The researcher is a trainer for the project and a principal in the school district in which the study is being conducted.

Definitions of Terms

Elementary Administrator is defined as a certified administrator who is assigned administrative duties in an elementary school building with a current administrative contract.

Elementary Classroom Teacher is defined as a certified teacher who is currently assigned a classroom of students in grade Pre-K - 6.

Classroom Goal Teams and Study Teams are a collaborative group of professionals/teachers developed to help strengthen their professional development.

Professionals/teachers are in charge of their own independent learning but seek to reach professional goals through interaction with others (modified from Cramer, Hurst, & Wilson, 1996). They are organized into interdisciplinary teams driven by student data results. Educators collaboratively share ideas and strategies to improve classroom instruction to increase student achievement.

Intermediate Classroom Teacher is a classroom teacher who teaches in grades 4-6.

Primary Classroom Teacher is a classroom teacher who teaches in grades Pre-K-3.

Professional Dialogue is a "particular form of conversation to identify common ground and build bridges of understanding among group members" (Sparks, 2002, pp. i-iii).

Professional Development is an organized learning opportunity for teachers to acquire knowledge and skills to help become a more effective teacher (Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999).

Specialist is a certified professional of grades Pre-K - 6 who is not assigned a full time classroom. These include: art teacher, music teacher, band instructor, physical education teacher, media specialist, special education teacher, school psychologist, speech pathologist, OT/PT, guidance counselor, HAL, reading specialist/Title I/reading consultant, and principal.

Student Achievement is the acquisition of knowledge and skills necessary for success as measured by district standards.

Study Teams are a collaborative group of professionals organized and sustained by team members to help them strengthen their professional development in areas of common interest. These may be identified as curriculum toolbox, school improvement teams, or other collaborative team experience.

Significance of the Study

Contribution to research. There are a variety of models for professional development projects available to schools and research to support the impact of such projects. These models may include college courses, in-house workshops, workshops sponsored by professional development companies, and conventions. Little research is available on the classroom goals team model as a professional development initiative. This study will contribute to the larger body of research literature on professional development, specifically on the previously unstudied context of classroom goals teams.

Research has not been able, at this point, to clearly answer questions regarding how professional development can improve student achievement. This is partially due to vague indicators of effectiveness and the fact that the quantity of professional development has overshadowed quality. Guskey (1997) believes multiple professional development cases should be analyzed with both quantitative and qualitative methods to gather details from multiple contexts. This research study goes beyond measuring seat time and level of "fun".

Contribution to practice. This study will assist school district staff in developing a professional development program that may improve instructional practices and impact

student achievement. Insights from this study may be useful in identifying strategies to implement comprehensive professional development projects.

This study will provide information about whether resources allocated to classroom goals teams, such as built-in contractual time for training and implementation, are impacting teachers' perceptions of improved instructional practices. This study will also provide information that can be used to assist schools in maximizing the effectiveness of professional development practices.

Outline of Study

Chapter 2 presents a review of literature relative to professional development; learning communities and collaboration, leadership, data-driven professional development; design and quality teaching (effective use of research-based instructional strategies) as these are linked to improved student achievement (Sparks, 2002); and the primary components that are inclusive of the development of the "Classroom Goals Team Project" as a professional development model.

Chapter 2

Review of the Literature

The purposes of this literature review are to examine past and present practices of professional development as a whole, learning community/collaborative teams, quality teaching/instructional practices, leadership, data driven decision making, and equity. Each will be reviewed as these are linked to improved student achievement (Sparks, 2002) and the primary components that are inclusive of the development of Classroom Goals Team Project (CGTP) as a professional development model.

Professional Development

Historically, professional development has been a necessary act of fulfillment for re-certification, new certification, postgraduate degree, or satisfying district professional growth requirements. Many teachers view professional development as a buffet; filling their plates with a variety of samples, but the abundance allows for no more than a nibble before indigestion sets in. Guskey (1995) found that professional development should not be isolated events, but a series of processes.

Professional development needs to be day-to-day action of an educators' professional life if they are to be enmeshed in a continuous improvement cycle (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Richardson, 2002; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997). Collecting data, setting meaningful student achievement goals, collaboratively planning and assessing, and spending time reflecting are critical requirements for a teacher's time (Laine, 2000; Little, 1990). There is a perception that the time teachers spend outside of direct contact with students does not raise student achievement, but it does (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

Study teams, action research, team planning, and problem-solving groups are job-embedded professional development activities (Richardson, 2002). Wood and McQuarrie (1999) identify the benefits of these activities as: less time away from the classroom, immediate application, cost is less, and matches adult learning models.

Teaching career stages were identified by Fessler (1995) as: pre-service, induction, competency building, enthusiastic and growing, career frustration, career stability, career wind-down, and career exit. As with all developmental stages, teachers do not all go through all the stages, nor at the same time. Family and life stage, organizational environments, and professional membership may influence placement in the career cycle. Fessler (1995) suggests that teachers expressing the most satisfaction in their career participated with a close group of peers, attained results in their classroom, and had actively selected career role changes for themselves. CGTP, as a professional development model, can influence two of these three factors through small collaborative teams, focusing on data-driven decision making for attaining results in the classroom.

There are a phenomenal number of areas in which teachers need to keep current. Among these are: classroom management and discipline, technology, updated instructional strategies to meet a variety of learning styles, curriculum enhancements, assessment literacy, and standards implementation. Teachers are seeking research-based practices to learn more about differentiation, school improvement systems, inclusion, learning styles, and brain research.

The National Staff Development Council (NSDC) published an initial set of professional development standards in 1994 and, based on extensive research,

subsequently updated the standards in 2001 and 2004. NSDC's work is grounded in the research conducted by respected researchers (complete annotated bibliography can be found in Standards for Staff Development Revised, 2004). The research, from which the standards were formed, identified factors that made professional development successful or ineffective. The standards are entrenched in the belief that teachers alone should not benefit from high quality professional development; students should also be benefactors.

NSDC's *Standards for Staff Development* (2001) "start from the premise that the primary purpose of staff development should be to help educators develop the insights, knowledge, and skill they need to become effective classroom and school leaders, better able to increase students learning" (p. vi). The NSCD standards are organized into context standards, process standards, and content (Sparks, 1983). They are defined as:

> Context standards address the organization, system, and culture in which the new learning will be implemented. They describe the structure that must be in place for successful learning for all students to occur. Process refers to the 'how' of staff development. It describes the learning processes used in the acquisition of new knowledge and skills. Process standards address the use of data, evaluation, and research. Content refers to the 'what' of staff development. Content decisions begin with an examination of what students must know and be able to do. Staff development content standards address the knowledge and skills that ensure all students are successful. (NSDC, 2001, p. 2)

NSDC identified context standard indicators that must be present in a professional development initiative if improved learning of all students is to be attained (NSDC 2001, 2004). Of these, learning communities, formally organized groups of adults, whose goals are aligned with those of the school and district, are critical. Effective professional development must have skillful personnel in the leadership role of guiding continuous instructional improvement. Resources to support adult learning and collaboration must also be allocated for an effective professional development program (NSDC 2001, 2004).

Professional development programs that use disaggregated student data to determine priorities, scrutinize progress, and help maintain constant improvement are said to be data driven, one of the NSDC process standards. Also, multiple sources of information are used to evaluate program success, guide improvement, and demonstrate impact. Professional development programs that train educators to utilize research-based decision making, design learning strategies appropriate to the intended goal, apply knowledge about human learning and change, and develop educators who have the knowledge and skills to collaborate are process standard indicators also identified by NSDC (2001, 2004).

The first indicator of the NSDC content standards reviews the issue of equity. Professionals must hold high expectations for all students, while understanding and appreciating their uniqueness. Students must be provided with a safe, organized, and supportive learning atmosphere with an educator who has content knowledge and expertise, research-based instructional strategies, and who is assessment literate.

Educators must also have the skills to engage and involve families and other stakeholders (NSDC 2001, 2004).

Lake, Hill, O'Toole, and Celio (1991) found schools that made significant gains in student achievement, as measured on test scores in Washington, took a pro-active approach towards school improvement. "Our findings make it clear that schools – and what the people who work in them do – can make a difference in what students learn" (Lake et al., 1991, p. 5). It was found that: (a) teaching methods and materials are focused and school-wide; (b) improved schools operate as teams; (c) professional development is focused on school development that prepared schools to focus on instructional weaknesses and support the overall school improvement plan; (d) high performance pressure was positive and led to determination; (e) schools actively sought help and did not wait passively for the help to be provided by someone outside of the school; (f) limited funding was strategically utilized to maximize benefits; and (g) actively sought parental support (Lake et al., 1991).

Hirsh (2004) found professional development must be embedded within the school improvement work, viewed as the primary strategy for achieving the improvement goals of a school and district, and support the priorities of the school. To be the most effective, the professional development plan must be "results-driven, standards based, and focused on an educators' daily work" (Hirsh, 2004, p. 13).

Learning Communities, Collaboration, Study Teams/Groups

The tools of a framer are used to secure the frame of a house, which is structurally the core of longevity, as the professional development model of the school is

the frame for longevity of student achievement and ultimate success. It is of no consequence in which subdivision a house is built; it is the quality of the framers that will determine the quality of the structure. The quality of the professional development framers will also determine the quality and impact of teachers in our classrooms, regardless of the subdivision (district) in which the school is found.

Skillful collaboration necessitates a number of tools or skills, which may or may not be part of the "tool kit" of educators. Conzemius and O'Neill (2001) identified the following skills: "(a) problem-solving skills, (b) decision making skills, (c) communication skills, (d) group process skills, and (e) meeting skills" (p. 69).

Pedigo (2003) found one of the most effective strategies to increase student achievement is to have teachers look at and analyze student work in a learning community. Schmoker (2004) found extensive consensus in the research on the effects of strategically structured collaborative teams supporting that it is affordable and capable of improving instruction. Joyce and Showers (2002) found traditional forms of professional development "probably will not generate the amount of change necessary to affect student achievement" (p. 35). Joyce and Showers (2002) promote the creation of teacher communities, which are attentive to instruction, assessment, and the modification of instructional strategies. Other researchers echo this premise of creating structures in which teachers work collaboratively while they reflect on instructional strategies, share strategies, and reflect on student achievement results as an effective professional development strategy (Danielson, 2002; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Guskey, 1997; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Garret et al. (2001) found "three core features of professional development activities that have significant, positive effects on teacher's self-reported increases in knowledge, skill, and changes in classroom practice" (p. 916). These include the focus on knowledge of the content knowledge, active learning opportunities, and coherence with other professional development activities (Garret et al., 2001). It is mainly through these central characteristics that the following structures considerably affect teacher learning: (a) the configuration of the activity in a collaborative team rather than workshop format; (b) cooperative involvement of teachers; and (c) the period of time and length of the activity (Garret et al., 2001).

Framers of professional development must create teachers who are life-long learners by creating a frame of professional community of learners (Darling-Hammond, 1999; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Guskey, 1995; Richardson, 2002; Sparks & Hirsch, 1997). The culture of a school must be redesigned for professional development to occur as a natural part of the school day (Fullan, 1995). Fullan (1995) goes on to identify four core capacities teachers need to be continuous learners: "1. personal vision, 2. inquiry, 3. mastery, and 4. collaboration" (p. 255).

Framers are but one carpenter of the trade and must work as a team with other specialists in the building project. Teachers must also go beyond their classroom to be a member of the building team and the broader community of teachers (Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Little, 1990). Lieberman and Miller (1991) found professional development needs to build a culture, which will focus on learning for students and

professionals, emphasize teacher query into practice, and maintain a balance between collaboration and the teacher's individual art of teaching.

Re-designing schools to become collaborative learning communities demonstrate the potential for rejuvenating teachers for the best interest of student achievement (Guskey, 1997). Time must be provided for concentrated efforts of collaboration within the workday, or staff will be discouraged by the inability to make considerable advancement (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001).

Sparks (2002) argues that a high-quality professional development model, driven by the need for student learning, must have as a core, "a professional learning team whose members accept collective responsibility for the academic achievement of all students represented by the teachers in the group and who meet regularly to learn, plan, and support one another in the process of continuous improvement" (p. 1-4). Fullan (1995) believes collaboration is essential for personal learning to occur, for without the collaboration, a "ceiling effect" (p. 257) will occur. He believes that there is a limit to how much an individual can learn when working by himself/herself and in isolation. Collaborative teams - where reflection of experiences, and the application of and experimentation with new assessment approaches in existing classrooms take place - is where assessment literacy can be attained; which is integral to continuous improvement of instruction (Stiggins, 1999).

Lewis, Perry, and Hurd (2004) have studied lesson design, a form of professional development involving collaborative teams that originated in Japan and was credited with bringing about Japan's evolution of effective teaching of math and science.

Researchers interviewed teachers from Japan over that past 10 years and found seven key conduits to improvement that underlie successful lessons (as cited in Lewis et al., 2004). These keys are: "increased knowledge of subject matter; increased knowledge of instruction; increased ability to observe students; stronger collegial networks; stronger connection of daily practice to long-term goals; stronger motivation and sense of efficacy; and improved quality of available lesson plans" (Lewis et al., 2004, p. 19).

There are multiple advantages for designing professional development activities for teachers formed in groups (Garret et al., 2001). The first advantage lies in the opportunity for teachers to discuss notions, skills, and apprehension that may arise during the activity. Secondly, teachers who are in groups based on same grade level or department are more likely to share commonalities in curriculum, assessment, or building requirements and are more able to integrate new learning with other aspects of their instructional content. Also, teachers participating in these groups are more likely to share or know the same students. The final advantage, which could be of the greatest advantage, is found when teachers from the same building are grouped in teams; professional development may sustain changes in practice over time and help contribute to a shared professional culture (Garret et al., 2001).

There are a number of terms used to describe professionals working together in collaborative groups. They are: collaborative teams, study teams, study groups, grade-level teams, and many more. While the terms used to describe the activity changes, the concept of small groups of educators organized to promote collegial change and action is not new; Aristotle engaged in such a group (Murphy & Lick, 2001).

Leadership

Heck & Marcoulides (1993) found, "our results indicate that the manner in which elementary and high school principals govern the school, build strong school climate, and organize and monitor the school's instructional program are important predictors of academic achievement" (p. 22). Spark (2002) stated his belief in the power of leadership on quality staff development quite clearly as: "while quality teaching is obviously where the rubber meets the road, such teaching cannot be ensured in all classrooms for all students without skillful leadership" (p. 11-4). Spark (2002) goes on to express his opinion that no one, even researchers, authors, and support consultants, can compensate for the leadership in a building or district. Teacher leadership is also an important element for school improvement and success of initiatives to occur, but the combination of teacher leadership with administrative building leadership, increases the likelihood that substantive changes will occur (Sparks, 2002).

When teachers are involved in decision making and leadership opportunities within the school, they become less opposed to change and more supportive of the overall process. The role of the principal becomes one which is focused on empowering teachers to develop leadership skills and creating a learning community which is conducive to shared leadership (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) came to the conclusion that principals are key when developing a supportive and safe environment that supports teachers as decision-makers and leaders. Lake et al. (1991) identified the role of the principal in high achieving schools as one who identifies student achievement deficiencies, seeks the leadership role with teachers and parents in

defining and implementing an aggressive improvement plan, pro-actively seeks assistance, and ensures all resources contribute to the effective implementation of the school improvement plan.

Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) found a strained relationship between teachers and principals as a result of teachers' resistance to change when the principal failed to include teachers in the implementation of innovations. Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) found, in their review of the Newmann and Wehlage study, student achievement increases in schools where collaborative work cultures foster a professional learning community among teachers and others.

Complexity is found when creating collaborative work cultures because of the implications for teachers and principals (Fullan, 2000a). Principals, who maintain a focus on control, intervention, efficiency, and accountability, rather than on the mission of the school, do not promote collaboration, cooperation, and a sense of community (Fullan, 2000b). Providing leadership requires of the principal an action to develop a professional learning community that integrates diversity and differences while creating a sense of efficacy among individuals and empowerment among staff members (Clark & Astuto, 1994).

Pedigo's (2003) work on why professional development has failed noted it was due to the principal's role of in-servicing teachers. While providing in-service, principals were focused on the attendance at activities, thinking they were "doing the right thing to create change in teacher pedagogy so that each and every student could be successful" (Pedigo, 2003, p. 7). Pedigo's (2003) focus to achieve sustained school

improvement focused on building professionalism within a staff, by asking teachers to think beyond the students in their classrooms by thinking about their own learning.

Pedigo (2003) compares teachers to the students that they teach – "teachers learn at different rates, in different ways, and at different times . . . and if all students can learn, then all teachers can learn" (pp. 7, 11). To develop a differentiated professional development program for teachers, administrators must take a pro-active approach by developing a learning community that requires continuous reflection about adult and student learning, and takes action on these reflections (Pedigo, 2003).

Data-Driven

Data about student learning can serve multiple, and significant, purposes in a professional development program. Powerful professional development models use data to determine professional development goals, motivate and lead teacher learning, and monitor the impact of professional development on student achievement (Sparks, 2002). Teachers also use data as confirmation of the impact of changes made in instructional practices on student achievement (Kemmis & McTaggart, 1992; Sparks, 2002). He also goes on to say there is a close link between teachers' use of data and their review of student work (Sparks, 2002). Data are tools for learning (Allen & Callhoun, 1998; Conzemius & O'Neill, 2001).

Stiggins, in an interview with Sparks (1999), expresses his belief that it is critical for teachers to master two tasks: "the ability to clearly articulate the achievement targets they want students to hit and knowledge of how to transform those targets into quality, day-to-day indicators" (p. 9-4). The continuous monitoring of student learning will go

beyond improving student achievement to become a powerful motivator for teachers to continue to make changes (Sparks, 2002).

Professional development, study groups, and reflexive practices can improve instruction. Cawelti (1999) believes two of the most direct processes to improve instruction are to have teachers continuously work with peers on improving lesson quality and examining student work to ensure lessons are supporting all students to perform at high levels. Research conducted by Little, Gearhart, Curry, and Kafka (2003) attempted to capture how reviewing student work occurred in schools. Little et al. (2003) found the following three elements to be constant regardless of beliefs, practices, and local frameworks: (a) teachers were brought together to focus on student learning and instructional practices, (b) student work was the focus of the conversation, and (c) the teachers' conversations were structured through the use of a protocol.

Design, Quality Teaching

According to Katzenmeyer and Moller (2001) students will also benefit from teachers becoming actively involved in school leadership. Teachers involved in school decision making roles improve teaching performance, experience an increase in their feelings of efficacy, influence other teachers, and increase accountability for results (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2001). When teachers immerse themselves in leadership, they reflect on current practices, learn new and effective strategies, and read and reflect on the current educational research and become more accountable for all students' learning (Darling-Hammond, 1993). Teacher leadership, when combined with strong administrative leadership, is also an important element for school improvement and

success of initiatives to occur because it increases the likelihood that substantive changes will occur (Sparks, 2002).

Results of numerous studies reveal that the most remarkable factor that will impact student achievement is an individual teacher (Haycock, 1998; Marzano, 2003; Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright et al., 1997). Wright et al. (1997) noted:

> The immediate and clear implication of this finding is that seemingly more can be done to improve education by improving the effectiveness of the teachers than by any other single factor. Effective teachers appear to be effective with students of all achievement levels. (p. 63)

Haycock (1998) found that students with a highly effective teacher gained 53 percentile points, while students with a least effective teacher gained 14 percentile points over one year. When looking at these gains over a 3-year cumulative period, Marzano (2003) found students with a least effective teacher gained 29 percentile points whereas students with a most effective teacher gained 83 percentile points. Commenting on this discrepancy of these 54 percentile points, Haycock (1998) noted:

> Differences of this magnitude – 50 percentile points – are stunning. As all of us know only too well, they can represent the differences between a 'remedial' label and placement in the 'accelerated' or even 'gifted' track. And the difference between entry into a selective college and a lifetime at McDonald's. (p. 4)

Researchers have identified a number of variables, ranging from 3 to 150, which correlate with teacher effectiveness (Brophy, 1996; Fraser, Walberg, Welch, & Hattie, 1987; Marzano, 2003). Marzano (2003) identified three teacher-level factors that

correlate with teacher effectiveness that were drawn from his research and collapsing variables from other researchers. The factors were identified as "instructional strategies, classroom management, and classroom curriculum design" (p. 76). Marzano (2003) suggests that these factors can be discussed in isolation, but cannot be implemented in isolation.

Teachers must know or develop research-based, effective instruction to frame the design and execution of their lessons (Marzano, 2003). Hattie (as cited in Marzano, 2003) identified instructional strategies with a significant effect size and percentile gains as: "individualization, simulation and games, computer-assisted instruction, tutoring, learning hierarchies, mastery learning, homework, and instructional media" (p. 79). Marzano's (2003) research also identified categories of instructional strategies that affect student achievement as measured by effect sizes and percentile gains. These instructional strategies were: "identifying similarities and differences; summarizing and note taking; reinforcing effort and providing recognition; homework and practice; nonlinguistic representations; cooperative learning; setting objectives and providing feedback; generating and testing hypotheses; and questions, cues, and advance organizers" (Marzano, 2003, p. 80).

Weiss and Pasley (2004) advocate for high quality instruction that emphasizes the need for relevant and developmentally appropriate learning goals, instructional strategies that engage students in the content, an environment that is both supportive and challenging, and effective questioning strategies. Lake et al. (1999) found the role of the teacher in high achieving schools as one who takes "responsibility both for adapting

teaching to the new strategies, and for coordinating with, listening to, and making demands of, other teachers" (p. 19).

Teachers must take into account a multitude of aspects when designing a lesson to determine what content is to be taught, how it is to be taught, and what resources they will use to engage students with the content (Weiss & Pasley, 2004). Understanding instructional influences is an antecedent if the goal is to impact curriculum and instruction (Guskey, 2003; Weiss & Pasley, 2004). Educators have discovered how to demonstrate remarkable improvement in student achievement by increasing teacher learning through professional development. Killion's (1999) research confirms that "teacher knowledge, skill, and collaboration contribute to improved instruction and student achievement" (p. 78).

Summary

The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 summarized the work of many researchers of professional development. Historically, professional development models have not been found to be successful in changing teacher behavior in the classroom, which is critical in impacting student achievement. Recent research documents the impact of learning communities, leadership, data-driven decisions, and quality teachers in the classroom as powerful components of a professional development program, which will impact student achievement.

Chapter 3 describes the research design of the survey and procedures that were used to gather and analyze data for this study.

Chapter 3

Methodology

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of Classroom Goals Team Project (CGTP) to improve instructional practices, as measured by the perceptions of elementary teachers as they related to CGTP. This study provided information about whether resources allocated to CGTP, such as built in contractual time for training and meetings, professional dialogue, follow-up, and implementation, impacted teachers' perceptions of improved instructional practices. The study provided information that was used to assist school district personnel in maximizing the effectiveness of professional development practices and identify themes that emerge from teachers about the CGTP.

In this study, the CGTP was utilized as a professional development program to bring about improvements in teaching and learning in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The over-riding question addressed by this study is: "Did the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model, positively impact instructional practices as measured by elementary teachers' perceptions and responses?"

Research Design

An on-line survey was used to explore the perception of elementary level teachers and certified professional staff towards CGTP as a professional development model to improve instructional practices.

Participants

The participants included 335 Pre-K – 6th grade certified teachers and specialists who participated in the CGTP in the 2003-04 school year from a suburban district consisting of 12 elementary school buildings in Nebraska. Eleven percent were male and 89% were female.

Respondents represented a range of experience from first year to over 31 years in the field of education. Eighty-eight professionals included in the sample had between 0 and 5 years of experience; 61 had between 6 to 10 years; 29 had between 11 to 15 years; 40 had between 16 to 20 years; 52 had between 21 to 25 years; 41 had between 26 to 30 years; and 24 had over 31 years of experience. Fifty-eight professionals had an education level of BA (Bachelor of Arts/Science); 39 had a BA +30 hours; 150 had a BA +36 hours or Masters; 41 had a Masters + 18 hours; 45 had a Masters + 36 or Specialist Degree; and 2 had a Ph.D. or Ed.D.

Respondents were assigned to pre kindergarten through sixth grade. When responding to their current assignment, 131 were pre kindergarten through third grade; 84 were fourth through sixth grade; 93 were kindergarten through sixth grade; 21 were pre kindergarten through sixth grade; and 6 did not respond to the question.

Respondents represented a range of professional assignments. Two hundred fourteen were classroom teachers; six art teachers; 10 music teachers; two band instructors; 10 physical education teachers; 10 media specialists; 34 special education teachers; three school psychologists; 10 speech pathologists; 10 guidance counselors; six High Ability Learner (HAL) Facilitators; 13 reading specialists/Title I/reading

consultants; and nine principals. Two hundred thirty-four respondents had previous study team experience, while 100 did not, with one person not responding.

Data Collection Procedures

Permission to survey the district professionals was obtained from the district's Superintendent of Schools and Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction. Authorization for the research was sought and obtained from the Institutional Review Board in March of 2004 (see Appendix A). The on-line survey included a cover letter describing the purpose of the survey, support from the Superintendent of Schools and the Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum and Instruction, and directions for on-line completion and submission was sent via email (see Appendix B). Each building administrator also distributed a paper copy of the cover letter with the on-line link address.

In order to facilitate a favorable response rate to the survey, a two-step process was used to collect data. The survey cover letter and instructions for on-line submission were distributed via a paper copy by each building administrator and via school email with an electronic link to the survey site. Teachers were provided with time during a professional development day to complete the survey on-line, so completion could occur during the respondents' contractual workday. Respondent's identification information was not maintained as to insure confidentiality.

Three hundred eighty-four surveys were distributed and 335 were returned for a return rate of 87%. The numbers of respondents who participated and return rate by school are listed in Table 1.

Table 1

Respondents and Return Rates by Building

School	Frequency	Return Rate
School A	15	94%
School B	36	97%
School C	25	93%
School D	30	88%
School E	24	80%
School F	30	84%
School G	30	81%
School H	37	100%
School I	14	78%
School J	32	94%
School K	31	97%
School L	31	100%

Instrument

The review of literature identified several surveys, used in previous research studies, designed to evaluate professional development programs (Langer & Colton, 2002; Supovitz, 2002; Weathersby & Harkreader, 1999; Wong, 2003). Research studies aligned to this study were reviewed and questions modified from the following sources.

A summary of a research study conducted by Langer, Colton, and Goff, as cited in Langer and Colton (2002), at an Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) Conference, entitled Mining the Gold of Student Work: Collaborative Analysis of Student Learning, provided a summary of study group questions that were modified for the survey for this study. Wong (2003) identified six factors for successful professional development. Further survey questions were developed around the six factors for successful professional development. Weathersby and Harkreader (1999) used a survey instrument to collect statistical data as a component of a mixed method research study to study the connection between professional development and student achievement in Georgia. The themes from this survey were reviewed for the purpose of this survey. Supovitz (2002) conducted a 4-year research study to evaluate teacher communities using a survey developed by the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE). Survey items for the current research study were modified from the original CPRE survey items. Jonathan Supovitz on December 7, 2003 granted approval for modifications of his survey and the use in this study.

The final source for the development of survey questions was the "District Professional Development Committee" from which the Classroom Goals Teams Project evolved. This committee identified factors to be evaluated regarding the CGTP. This research project was one component of the CGTP evaluation system. Observations of strategy implementation, feedback observations, collection and analysis of classroom goals team graphs and forms, and interviews were the other components of the evaluation system that were conducted outside of this study.

The Classroom Goals Team Survey (CGTS) was designed using a 4-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 4 (Strongly Agree). A 4-point Likert scale, without a middle score, was intentionally utilized to force a positive or negative response to each item. Individual respondent scores of a 1 Strongly Disagree or 2 Disagree would be considered a negative response, while a 3 Agree or 4 Strongly Agree would be considered a positive response. While analyzing group mean scores, scores of 2.5 or above are considered a positive response, while scores 2.49 or below are considered a negative response.

These survey items represent the 5 themes of the CGTP. These constructs are: learning communities/collaborative teams, quality teachers/instructional practices, administrative leadership, data driven decision making, and equity. Demographic information collected included: years of career experience, building, level of education/degree, area of teaching/specialty areas, gender, current grade level teaching (primary vs. intermediate), and previous study team experience.

Content validity. The content validity was based upon two sources. The first was a review of the literature on the topics of professional development, collaborative teams, and instructional practices. Secondly, a peer review panel, which included members of the District's Central Office Staff, professionals involved in the 2002-03 pilot program, and the District's Professional Development Committee who were currently involved in the CGTP, conducted a validity review. The panel assisted in ensuring the content validity by rating the appropriateness of each item in assessing the identified constructs by themes (1 = Not Appropriate. 2= Marginally Appropriate, and 3 = Appropriate) and the clarity of each question (1 = Not Clear, 2 = Marginally Clear, 3= Clear). Appropriate adjustments, based on feedback, were made to the instrument. A pilot study was conducted in April 2004 to test the survey instrument.

Conducting a pilot study in April 2004 did further validation of the instrument. A draft survey was sent to 25 staff from the district who have previously been involved in study teams, 2002-03 pilot CGTP members, District Central Office Staff, District Cadre Associates, college doctoral committee members, and the District Professional Development Committee members who are currently involved in the CGTP. To ensure technological concerns were adequately addressed, these individuals accessed the web-link and completed the survey on-line. They provided feedback regarding the on-line instructions, ease of use, time needed for completion, and any technological difficulties encountered.

Reliability. For the purpose of this study, the reliability coefficient was estimated using Cronbach's alpha. Cronbach's alpha estimates the internal consistency of the

responses to the Likert items and is considered a conservative measure of reliability. The range for Cronbach's alpha is 0 to 1.0 with an alpha of 0.70 considered to be internally consistent (Mitchell & Jolley, 1996). The reliability for each construct on the CGTS ranged from a low of 0.8382 (equity/high expectations for all) to a high of 0.9312 (data driven decision making). The reliability coefficients of the CGTS for each construct are: leadership (0.92); equity (0.84); quality teaching (0.93); data driven decision making (0.93); and learning community (0.92).

Variables

This study included six independent and five dependent variables. Descriptions of each follow.

Independent variables. The independent variables for this study were defined as:

1. grade level taught (Pre-k – 3rd, 4th – 6th, K-6th, Pre- k – 6th)
2. educational level (as identified on district salary schedule – BA, BA +18, BA +36/MA, MA + 18, MA +36/SPEC, PhD/EdD)
3. gender (male or female)
4. area/content taught (classroom teacher or specialist)
5. building of employment (building name)
6. previous experience on study teams (yes or no)

Dependent variables. The five dependent variables for this study were defined as the mean scores of the five constructs: learning community/collaborative teams, quality teaching/instructional practices, leadership (administrative), data driven decision

making (data guides improvement in student achievement for intended goal), and equity (high expectations for all - student achievement).

Research Questions

The following research questions were used to guide the quantitative piece for this study:

1. What are teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project as a professional development model?
2. Does grade level/area of concentration taught (primary, intermediate, specialist) impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
3. Does educational level impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
4. Does gender impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
5. Does area/content taught impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
6. Does building of employment impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
7. Does previous experience with study teams impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?
8. Is there a relationship among teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project across the five constructs of CGTS?

Data Analysis

Research question 1 was analyzed using descriptive statistics with means and standard deviations. Research questions 2, 3, 5, and 6 were analyzed using one-way analyses of variance (ANOVA). The one-way ANOVA was used to examine the differences between more than two groups (independent variables) on a dependent variable. Research questions 4 and 7 were analyzed using independent t-tests. Research question 8 was analyzed using the Pearson product moment correlation coefficient. Because multiple statistical tests were conducted, a .01 level of significance was employed to control for Type I errors.

Mean Substitution Process

A mean substitution process was used to compute the mean scores on the subscales when there were missing or incomplete data. This research project was one component of the District's Comprehensive Professional Development Evaluation Plan. The results of the CGTS are reported in Chapter 4.

Chapter 4

Results

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of the Classroom Goals Team Project (CGTP) to improve instructional practices, as measured by elementary teachers' perceptions using a quantitative measure of results. An on-line survey was used to collect data.

A survey was sent to 384 Pre-K – 6th grade certified teachers and specialists who participated in the CGTP in the 2003-04 school year from a suburban district consisting of 12 elementary school buildings in Nebraska.

In the survey, specific areas were identified as constructs through an analysis of past research and related literature. These constructs were identified as: learning community/collaborative teams, quality teaching/instructional practices, leadership (administrative), data driven decision making (data guides improvement in student achievement for intended goal), and equity (high expectations for all - student achievement). Survey items related to each of the constructs were designed using a 4-point Likert scale with the following choices: 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. A 4-point Likert scale, without a middle score, was intentionally utilized to force a positive or negative response to each item. Individual respondent scores of a 1 Strongly Disagree or 2 Disagree were considered a negative response, while a 3 Agree or 4 Strongly Agree were considered a positive response. While analyzing group mean scores, scores of 2.5 or above were considered a positive response, while scores 2.49 or below were considered a negative response.

For the purpose of statistical analysis, means were computed for each of the five constructs. Means were computed from useable responses, and the mean substitution process was utilized for the purpose of using a respondent's score if he/she did not complete all survey items.

Research Question 1

What are teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project as a professional development model?

The mean scores for the five constructs were as follows: leadership (M = 3.21, SD = 0.66); quality teaching/instructional practices (M = 3.28, SD = 0.57); equity (M = 3.65, SD = 0.42); data driven decision making (M = 3.16; SD = 0.57); and learning community/collaborative teams (M = 3.57; SD = 0.50).

The means for individual items ranged from a low of 2.94 on an item in the leadership construct (My principal talks with me about ways to improve my classroom goal.) to a high of 3.75 on an item in the equity construct (I set high standards for myself toward improving student achievement.). Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations of each individual item and the means and standard deviations for each of the five constructs for the survey.

Research Question 2

Does grade level/area of concentration taught (primary, intermediate, specialist) impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Reported for All Items

Construct 1- Leadership Items	*Mean*	*SD*
My principal offers me feedback on my classroom goals.	3.11	0.83
My principal talks with me about ways to improve my classroom goal.	2.94	0.84
My principal has observed my classroom goal team meetings.	3.52	0.66
My principal inquires about the success I've had towards improving students' learning with my classroom goal.	3.09	0.84
My principal inquires about or comments on instructional strategies stated in my classroom goal after observing in my classroom.	3.02	0.85
The principal in this school strongly supports the classroom goal team model.	3.58	0.63
Construct 2 – Quality Teaching Items	*Mean*	*SD*
Teachers in this school use classroom goal team meetings to assist with planning instruction.	3.33	0.61
I have gained instructional insight due to participation in classroom goal team meetings.	3.26	0.74
I have added new (or re-introduced old) instructional strategies since participating in classroom goal team meetings.	3.34	0.69
I am able to analyze students' strengths and weaknesses using student assessment data I have collected for my classroom goal teams.	3.37	0.66
I have implemented the instructional strategies identified at my classroom goal team meetings.	3.47	0.62
I have had more conversations with colleagues about what helps students learn and to assess student learning since participating in my classroom goal team meetings.	3.30	0.72
Participating in classroom goal team meetings increased the frequency that I identify and implement intervention strategies for students who are not meeting the target goal.	3.08	0.80
The classroom goal team project improved my students' achievement.	3.13	0.74

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Reported for All Items (continued)

Construct 3 – Equity Items	*Mean*	*SD*
I share in the responsibility for improving student achievement in our school.	3.66	0.52
I set high standards for myself toward improving student achievement.	3.75	0.48
I am eager to try new ideas I learned through my classroom goal team meetings to improve student achievement.	3.64	0.59
Teachers in our school feel responsible for insuring that all students learn.	3.67	0.51
It is important for my students that I achieve my classroom goal.	3.56	0.59
Construct 4- Data Driven Items	*Mean*	*SD*
Participating in classroom goal team meetings has increased the frequency that I use student achievement data to plan for instruction.	3.02	0.71
Analyzing student assessment data for classroom goal team meetings helps me set a learning goal.	3.22	0.69
The student performance graph tells me about the success of the instructional strategies I use.	3.19	0.69
Student assessment data collected in preparation for classroom goal team meetings helps me understand my students' learning needs.	3.22	0.63
Instructional strategies I learned at classroom goal team meetings will help me improve student achievement.	3.25	0.66
Student achievement will be positively impacted as a result of my participation in classroom goal team meetings.	3.20	0.69
Classroom goal teams are an important component of the school improvement process in our school.	3.17	0.73
Progress noted on my student performance graph has caused me to improve assessment practices.	3.01	0.75
Construct 5- Learning Community Items	*Mean*	*SD*
Teachers in this school interact with the members of their classroom goal teams in a professional manner.	3.69	0.51
My classroom goal team works collaboratively.	3.70	0.53

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics Reported for All Items (continued)

The members of my classroom goal team offer useful instructional strategies.	3.60	0.61
Each teacher is a contributing member of my classroom goal team.	3.57	0.63
I have received meaningful feedback from my classroom goal team members.	3.54	0.65
Our classroom goal team meetings are productive.	3.43	0.64
I have received useful instructional strategies from my classroom goal team members.	3.44	0.70

There were no significant differences across grade level/area of concentration taught (primary, intermediate, specialist) in the area of leadership, $F(2, 321) = 1.38$, $p = .253$; quality teaching, $F(2, 320) = 1.62$, $p = .200$; equity, $F(2, 317) = 0.284$, $p = .753$; data driven decision making, $F(2, 315) = 0.126$, $p = .882$; and learning community, $F(2, 314) = 2.16$, $p = .117$. Means and standard deviations for primary, intermediate, and specialist for each construct are listed in Table 3.

Research Question 3

Does educational level impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

There were no significant differences across educational level in the area of leadership, $F(5, 324) = 1.11$, $p = .357$; quality teaching, $F(5, 323) = 0.215$, $p = .956$; equity, $F(5, 320) = 1.006$, $p = .414$; data driven decision making, $F(5, 320) = 1.006$, $p = .414$; and learning community, $F(5, 317) = 1.78$, $p = .113$. Means and standard deviations for education levels for each construct are listed in Table 4.

Research Question 4

Does gender impact teachers' perception of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

There were no significant differences between males and females in the construct of leadership, $t(326) = 1.90$, $p = .058$; quality teaching, $t(325) = -0.33$, $p = .743$; equity, $t(322) = -0.54$, $p = .589$; data driven decision making, $t(320) = 0.39$, $p = .699$; and learning community, $t(319) = 0.62$, $p = .537$. Means and standard deviations for males and females for each construct are listed in Table 5.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Five Constructs

Grade Level/Area of Concentration

Grade Level/Area of Concentration	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
Primary (*n*=129)	3.14	0.61
Intermediate (*n*=82)	3.26	0.70
Specialist (*n*=113)	3.26	0.68
Quality Teaching Construct		
Primary (*n*=129)	3.34	0.50
Intermediate (*n*=81)	3.29	0.61
Specialist (*n*=113)	3.21	0.61
Equity Construct		
Primary (*n*=128)	3.67	0.38
Intermediate (*n*=81)	3.67	0.51
Specialist (*n*=111)	3.63	0.41
Data Driven Decision Making Construct		
Primary (*n*=127)	3.18	0.56
Intermediate (*n*=80)	3.16	0.59
Specialist (*n*=111)	3.14	0.57
Learning Community		
Primary (*n*=126)	3.58	0.47
Intermediate (*n*=80)	3.64	0.52
Specialist (*n*=111)	3.49	0.52

Table 4

Means and Standard Deviations for Five Constructs

Education Level

Education Level	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
BA (*n*=56)	3.31	0.65
BA +18 (*n*=36)	3.14	0.52
BA +36/MA (*n*=150)	3.15	0.67
MA + 18 (*n*=41)	3.25	0.63
MA +36/SPEC (*n*=45)	3.45	0.71
PhD/EdD (*n*=2)	2.92	1.53
Quality Teaching		
BA (*n*=56)	3.27	0.56
BA +18 (*n*=36)	3.23	0.45
BA +36/MA (*n*=150)	3.29	0.63
MA + 18 (*n*=41)	3.29	0.49
MA +36/SPEC (*n*=44)	3.32	0.55
PhD/EdD (*n*=2)	3.56	0.62
Equity		
BA (*n*=56)	3.58	0.52
BA +18 (*n*-36)	3.63	0.41
BA +36/MA (*n*=147)	3.65	0.41
MA + 18 (*n*=41)	3.74	0.36
MA +36/SPEC (*n*=44	3.69	0.35
PhD/EdD (*n*=2)	4.00	0.00
Data Driven Decision Making		
BA (*n*=55)	3.25	0.51
BA +18 (*n*=36)	3.10	0.52
BA +36/MA (*n*=146)	3.13	0.60
MA + 18 (*n*=41)	3.10	0.57
MA +36/SPEC (*n*=44)	3.23	0.58
PhD/EdD (*n*=2)	3.38	0.71
Learning Community		
BA (*n*=55)	3.66	0.45
BA +18 (*n*=36)	3.44	0.54
BA +36/MA (*n*=145)	3.60	0.49
MA + 18 (*n*=41)	3.42	0.54
MA +36/SPEC (*n*=44)	3.57	0.49
PhD/EdD (*n*=2)	3.86	0.20

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Five Constructs

Gender

Gender	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
Male (*n*=36)	3.40	0.66
Female (*n*=292)	3.18	0.65
Quality Teaching Construct		
Male (*n*=36)	3.25	0.63
Female (*n*=291)	3.29	0.56
Equity Construct		
Male (*n*=35)	3.62	0.60
Female (*n*=289)	3.66	0.40
Data Driven Decision Making Construct		
Male (*n*=34)	3.20	0.54
Female (*n*=288)	3.16	0.58
Learning Community		
Male (*n*=34)	3.62	0.49
Female (*n*=287)	3.56	0.50

Research Question 5

Does area/content taught impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

There were no significant differences across area/content taught in the area of leadership, $F(12,316) = 1.48$, $p = .130$ and equity, $F(12, 312) = 1.07$, $p = .387$. Means and standard deviations for the constructs of leadership and equity are listed in Table 6.

There were significant differences across area/content taught in the area of quality teaching, $F(12, 315) = 3.80$, $p < .0005$. Follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated that the mean scores for classroom teachers were significantly greater than for the music teachers and special education teachers. Mean scores for the principals were significantly greater than the mean scores for music teachers, band instructors, and speech pathologists in the constructs of quality teaching (see Table 7).

There were significant differences between area/content taught in the area of data driven decision making, $F(12 , 310) = 3.04$, $p < .0005$. Follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated that the mean scores for principals were significantly greater than the mean scores for the music teachers, band instructors, and speech pathologists in the construct of data driven decision making (see Table 7).

There were significant differences between area/content taught in the area of learning community, $F(12, 309) = 4.24$, $p < .0005$. Follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated that the mean scores for classroom

Table 6

Means and Standard Deviations for Area Taught/Area of Concentration for Leadership and Equity Constructs

Area Taught/Area of Concentration	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
Classroom Teacher (*n*=211)	3.20	0.65
Art Teacher (*n*=6)	3.42	0.53
Music Teacher (*n*=10)	3.17	0.41
Band Instructor (*n*=2)	2.83	1.18
Physical Education Teacher (*n*=10)	3.55	0.58
Media Specialist (*n*=10)	3.32	0.76
Special Education Teacher (*n*=32)	2.92	0.71
School Psychologist (*n*=3)	3.62	0.40
Speech Pathologist (*n*=10)	3.22	0.51
Guidance Counselor (*n*=10)	3.27	0.81
HAL (*n*=6)	3.33	1.07
Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant (*n*=13)	3.24	0.57
Principal (*n*=6)	3.83	0.21
Equity Construct		
Classroom Teacher (*n*=210)	3.70	0.41
Art Teacher (*n*=6)	3.73	0.39
Music Teacher (*n*=10)	3.50	0.43
Band Instructor (*n*=2)	3.70	0.14
Physical Education Teacher (*n*=10)	3.60	0.35
Media Specialist (*n*=10)	3.62	0.38
Special Education Teacher (*n*=32)	3.49	0.46
School Psychologist (*n*=3)	3.53	0.12
Speech Pathologist (*n*=10)	3.56	0.61
Guidance Counselor (*n*-10)	3.48	0.44
HAL (*n*=6)	3.80	0.20
Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant (*n*=13)	3.63	0.43
Principal (*n*=6)	3.81	0.32

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Quality Teaching, Data Driven Decision Making, and Learning Community Constructs

Area Taught/Area of Concentration	Mean	*SD*
Quality Construct		
Classroom Teacher (*n*=210)	3.37	.52
Art Teacher (*n*=6)	3.21	0.54
Music Teacher (*n*-10)	2.73	0.56
Band Instructor (*n*=2)	2.21	0.11
Physical Education Teacher (*n*=10)	3.31	0.25
Media Specialist (*n*=10)	3.21	0.36
Special Education Teacher (*n*=32)	3.02	0.63
School Psychologist (*n*=3)	3.50	0.25
Speech Pathologist (*n*=10)	2.79	0.66
Guidance Counselor (*n*=10)	3.23	0.43
HAL (*n*=6)	3.25	1.16
Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant (*n*=13)	3.37	0.63
Principal (*n*=6)	3.73	0.44
Data Driven Decision Making Construct		
Classroom Teacher (*n*=207)	3.22	0.55
Art Teacher (*n*=6)	2.90	0.33
Music Teacher (*n*=10)	2.76	0.74
Band Instructor (*n*=2)	2.00	0.53
Physical Education Teacher (*n*=10)	3.23	0.42
Media Specialist (*n*=10)	3.19	0.48
Special Education Teacher (*n*=31)	2.98	0.51
School Psychologist (*n*=3)	3.33	0.19
Speech Pathologist (*n*=10)	2.71	0.79
Guidance Counselor (*n*=10)	3.13	0.53
HAL (*n*=5)	3.53	0.30
Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant (*n*=13)	3.17	0.68
Principal (*n*=6)	3.72	0.39
Learning Community Construct		
Classroom Teacher (*n*=206)	3.66	0.45
Art Teacher (*n*=6)	3.52	0.64
Music Teacher (*n*=10)	3.03	0.62
Band Instructor (*n*=2)	2.36	0.71
Physical Education Teacher (*n*=10)	3.56	0.43

Table 7

Means and Standard Deviations for Quality Teaching, Data Driven Decision Making, and Learning Community Constructs (continued)

Media Specialist (*n*=10)	3.26	0.49
Special Education Teacher (*n*=31)	3.44	0.55
School Psychologist (*n*=3)	3.38	0.22
Speech Pathologist (*n*=10)	3.24	0.52
Guidance Counselor (*n*=10)	3.39	0.47
HAL (*n*=5)	3.83	0.19
Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant (*n*=13)	3.51	0.48
Principal (*n*=6)	3.83	0.41

teachers were significantly greater than the mean scores for the music teachers and band instructors. Mean scores for the High Ability Learner (HAL) teachers were significantly greater than the mean scores for the band instructors. Mean scores for the principals were significantly greater than the mean scores for the band instructors in the construct of learning community (see Table 7).

Research Question 6

Does building of employment impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

There were no significant differences across building of employment in the area of equity, $F(11, 317) = 1.33$, $p = .208$. Means and standard deviations are listed in Table 8.

There were significant differences across building of employment in the area of leadership, $F(11, 318) = 6.980$, $p < .0005$. Follow-up Turkey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated Schools A, B, C, F, H, I, and L had significantly greater mean scores than School G. School I had a significantly greater mean score than Schools D, E, G, J, and K (see Table 9).

There were significant differences across building of employment in the area of quality teaching, $F(11, 317) = 2.30$, $p = .010$. Follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated a significance difference between Schools E, I, and J in the construct of quality teaching. The mean score for School I was significantly greater than the mean scores of Schools J and E (see Table 9).

There were significant differences across building of employment in the area of data driven decision making, $F(11, 312) = 2.61$, $p = .003$. Although the overall ANOVA

Table 8

Building of Employment: Means and Standard Deviations for Equity Construct

Building of Employment	Mean	*SD*
Equity Construct		
School A (*n*=15)	3.72	0.42
School B (*n*=26)	3.72	0.34
School C (*n*=24	3.70	0.33
School D (*n*=29)	3.54	0.52
School E (*n*=24)	3.44	0.44
School F (*n*=30)	3.60	0.39
School G (*n*=30)	3.70	0.37
School H (*n*=35)	3.66	0.41
School I (*n*=13)	3.82	0.29
School J (*n*=30)	3.59	0.38
School K (*n*=30)	3.69	0.37
School L (*n*=30)	3.74	0.60

Table 9

Building of Employment: Means and Standard Deviations for Four Constructs

Building of Employment	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
School A (*n*=15)	3.41	0.62
School B (*n*=36)	3.48	0.53
School C (*n*=24)	3.26	0.55
School D (*n*=30	3.00	0.68
School E (*n*=24)	2.99	0.80
School F (*n*=30)	3.32	0.50
School G (*n*=30)	2.63	0.52
School H (*n*=36)	3.43	0.54
School I (*n*=13)	3.82	0.29
School J (*n*=31)	3.01	0.57
School K (*n*=30)	2.99	0.62
School L (*n*=31)	3.49	0.76
Quality Teaching Construct		
School A (*n*=15)	3.67	0.35
School B (*n*=36)	3.39	0.48
School C (*n*=24)	3.24	0.55
School D (*n*=30)	3.25	0.77
School E (*n*=24)	3.14	0.51
School F (*n*=30)	3.23	0.51
School G (*n*=30)	3.20	0.43
School H (*n*=36)	3.19	0.55
School I (*n*=13)	3.78	0.34
School J (*n*=31)	3.14	0.57
School K (*n*=30)	3.26	0.56
School L (*n*=30)	3.35	0.70
Data Driven Decision Making Construct		
School A (*n*=15)	3.41	0.49
School B (*n*=36)	3.38	0.53
School C (*n*=24)	3.03	0.63
School D (*n*=29)	3.20	0.60
School E (*n*=23)	3.04	0.69
School F (*n*=30)	3.13	0.55
School G (n=30)	3.10	0.53

Table 9

Building of Employment: Means and Standard Deviations for Four Constructs (continued)

School H (*n*=35)	3.03	0.54
School I (*n*=13)	3.47	0.48
School J (*n*=30)	2.94	0.46
School K (*n*=30)	3.05	0.59
School L (*n*=29)	3.38	0.51
Learning Community Construct		
School A (*n*=15)	3.84	0.37
School B (*n*=36)	3.43	0.55
School C (*n*=24)	3.58	0.51
School D (*n*=29)	3.43	0.64
School E (*n*=23)	3.27	0.54
School F (*n*=30)	3.65	0.43
School G (*n*=30)	3.46	0.48
School H (*n*=34)	3.61	0.44
School I (*n*=13)	3.84	0.36
School J (*n*=30)	3.50	0.45
School K (*n*=30)	3.74	0.37
School L (*n*=29)	3.71	0.47

test indicated significant differences, follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated no significant differences between Schools in the construct of data driven decision making.

There were significant differences across building of employment in the area of learning communities, $F(11, 311) = 2.98$, $p = .001$. Follow-up Tukey pairwise comparison tests using a .05 familywise alpha level indicated significant differences between Schools A, E, I, K, and L in the construct of learning community. Mean scores of Schools A, I, K, L, and I were significantly greater than the mean score of School E (see Table 9).

Research Question 7

Does previous experience with study teams impact teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model?

There were no significant differences between previous experience and no previous experience groups in the constructs of leadership, $t(327) = -0.24$, $p = .810$, quality teaching, $t(326) = -0.014$, $p = .909$, equity, $t(323) = 1.55$, $p = .126$, data driven decision making, $t(321) = -0.05$, $p = .957$, and leadership, $t(320) = -0.83$, $p = .410$. Means and standard deviations for previous experience are listed in Table 10.

Research Question 8

Is there a relationship among teachers' perceptions of the Classroom Goals Team Project across the five constructs of CGTS?

Construct 1 – Leadership. There is a significant positive relationship between the construct of leadership and the constructs of quality teaching, Pearson $r = .462$, $p < 0005$, $n = 329$; equity, Pearson $r = .415$, $p < .0005$, $n = 326$; data driven decision making,

Table 10

Previous Study Team Experience: Means and Standard Deviations for Five Constructs

Previous Experience	Mean	*SD*
Leadership Construct		
Previous Experience (*n*=232)	3.20	0.68
No Previous Experience (*n*=97)	3.22	0.61
Quality Teaching Construct		
Previous Experience (*n*=231)	3.28	0.59
No Previous Experience (*n*=97)	3.29	0.51
Equity Construct		
Previous Experience (*n*=229)	3.68	0.42
No Previous Experience (*n*=960)	3.60	0.43
Data Driven Decision Making Construct		
Previous Experience (*n*=227)	3.16	0.57
No Previous Experience (*n*=96)	3.17	0.57
Learning Community Construct		
Previous Experience (*n*=226)	3.55	0.51
No Previous Experience (*n*=96)	3.60	0.48

Pearson $r = .390$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; and learning community, Pearson $r = .346$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$.

Construct 2 – Quality Teaching. There is a significant positive relationship between the construct of quality teaching and the constructs of leadership, Pearson $r = .462$, $p < .0005$, $n = 329$; equity, Pearson $r = .555$, $p < .0005$, $n = 326$; data driven decision making, Pearson $r = .820$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; and learning community, Pearson $r = .600$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$.

Construct 3 – Equity. There is a significant positive relationship between the construct of equity and the constructs of leadership, Pearson $r = .415$, $p < .0005$, $n = 326$; quality teaching, Pearson $r = .555$, $p < .0005$, $n = 326$; data driven decision making, Pearson $r = .487$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; and learning community, Pearson $r = .513$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$.

Construct 4 – Data Driven Decision Making. There is a significant positive relationship between the construct of data driven decision making and the constructs of leadership, Pearson $r = .390$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; quality teaching, Pearson $r = .820$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; equity, Pearson $r = .487$, $p < .0005$, $n = 324$; and learning community, Pearson $r = .514$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$.

Construct 5 – Learning Community. There is a significant positive relationship between the construct of learning community and the constructs of leadership, Pearson $r = .346$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$; quality teaching, Pearson $r = .600$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$; equity, Pearson $r = .513$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$; and data driven decision making, Pearson $r = .514$, $p < .0005$, $n = 323$.

Chapter 5

Discussion of Research Questions

Introduction

In this study, the Classroom Goals Team Project (CGTP) was utilized as a professional development program to bring about improvements in teaching and learning in an effort to positively impact student achievement. The CGTP, a professional development program implemented in a suburban school district in Nebraska, is a continuous process where classroom teachers were asked to identify an area of concern within their classroom based upon student performance assessment data.

The CGTP facilitated monthly professional dialogue by defining target classroom objectives and reviewing classroom teaching strategies, leading to a process of evaluating strengths and weaknesses of instructional strategies. Instructional strategies and classroom activities were provided by team members to be implemented by the classroom teacher in an effort to reach the classroom goal. The teacher acted on the plan for a month and returned to the team with additional student assessment data to learn how the instructional strategies affected students' performance, and whether student achievement improved.

The five constructs analyzed by this survey were: learning community/ collaborative teams, quality teaching/instructional practices, leadership (administrative), data driven decision making (data guides improvement in student achievement for intended goal), and equity (high expectations for all - student

achievement) as perceived to be connected to the CGTP. These constructs were identified, based on the review of literature and research studies previously conducted, as critical components of a comprehensive professional development program to impact teaching and learning, thus impacting student achievement.

The purpose of this study was to determine the value of the Classroom Goals Team Project to improve instructional practices, as measured by elementary teachers' and specialists' perceptions. The over-riding question addressed by this study is: "Did the Classroom Goals Team Project, as a professional development model, positively impact instructional practices as measured by elementary teachers' and specialists' perceptions and responses?"

Major Finding of the Classroom Goals Team Project

The major finding of the CGTP indicates the elementary staff of this district views the CGTP as an effective professional development model and classroom goals team meetings were perceived as productive by 89% of the staff. The mean scores for all five constructs ranged from a 3.21 (3=Agree) to a very high 3.65 (4=Strongly Agree), once again indicating significant support of the CGTP. As one staff member stated, "I would highly recommend this to a district.....It was a great experience!"

While each of the five constructs were rated 3.21 or above, the staff perceived the construct of equity (high expectations for all/student achievement) as the strongest of the five constructs with a mean score of 3.65. In their perception, setting high expectations for themselves for student success ("I set high standards for myself toward improving student achievement"), with an item mean score of 3.75, was a responsibility

and characteristic they exemplified. Belief in high expectations is strongly supported by NCLB as a key for improving student achievement (Elmore, 2003; No Child Left Behind, 2004). Although the means for individual items were all positive, the lowest item mean score was 2.94 on an item in the leadership construct ("My principal talks with me about ways to improve my classroom goal"). This is still considered a positive response and once again demonstrates support of the CGTP.

"It helped me to realize how much I know about instruction and student needs and how much I can help teachers in those areas" is a powerful statement. This professional was empowered to be an instructional leader within the CGTP group and created a sense of efficacy that is so vital (Clark & Astuto, 1994; Pedigo, 2003). Another staff member clarified the significance of CGTP to students by stating, "It has made me feel more accountable and has created a really professional environment with students at the center of what we do." One teacher summarizes feelings about the CGTP,

> I am a better teacher because I was able to focus on one area that I wanted to improve. The suggestions from group members, the creative energy that I applied in this concentrated effort to improve, the safe environment that encouraged improvement of instructional strategies and best practices have all helped me to improve in my teaching. I loved the process!

Others expressed their positive perceptions of the CGTP and were looking towards the future. "This process has great potential, so I'm looking forward to seeing what takes place next year" would indicate that staff members are not only supportive, but indicate a strong desire to see the CGTP continue in the future.

Related Findings

Learning Communities. A significant finding of this study was that learning communities are a vital component of establishing change and increasing student achievement through a professional development model. The mean score for the construct of Learning Communities was 3.57. Research identified a significant positive relationship among all five constructs and open-ended questions regarding collaborative teams were very positive.

The development of learning communities as an integral component of the CGTP is also reinforced in literature. Learning communities were found to be one of the most effective strategies to increase student achievement (Garret et al., 2004; Lewis et al., 2004; Pedigo, 2003; Schmoker, 2004; Stiggins, 1999). The CGTP revolves around the creation of teacher communities, which are focused on instruction, assessment, and instructional strategies, as supported by Joyce and Showers (2002). Other researchers echo this premise of creating structures in which teachers work collaboratively while reflecting on instructional strategies, share strategies, and reflect on student achievement results as an effective professional development strategy (Danielson, 2002; Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Guskey, 1997; Sparks, 2002; Sparks & Hirsh, 1997).

Staff members expressed quite clearly the impact the CGTP had when they stated, "Collaboration helped me to grow as a professional" and "Collaboration with peers has great potential for affecting instruction and learning."

The comment, "The best resource we have in this district is each other" paints a picture in which teachers have developed a strong sense of community through the implementation of the CGTP. Building the learning community is a benefit and strength of CGTP.

Diversity of Learning Communities. Another significant finding relates to the diversity of the learning community. Diversity of learning communities in this area is not related to the demographic variables, but to the compilation of members and their uniqueness (i.e. teacher of special education, band, or speech pathologists).

Researchers argue that professional development activities for teachers must go beyond their classroom to be a member of the building team and the broader community of teachers (Garmston & Wellman, 1999; Little, 1990). Sparks (2002) goes on to say that a high-quality professional development model, driven by the need for student learning, must have as a core, learning teams whose members share the responsibility for the academic achievement of all students. Fullan (1995) writes that collaboration is essential for personal learning to occur, believing there is a limit in how much an individual can learn working in isolation. The majority of teachers appeared to appreciate the diversity of their CGTP group and learned from people with a variety of backgrounds. It became clear that many staff members learned that they were more alike than different through the diverse groupings of the CGTP.

> When considering classroom goals teams, one thing that became apparent was regardless of building role, teachers are all working together to do what is best for kids. It did not matter if the team member giving feedback was a specialist,

primary or upper elementary teacher, or principal. All ideas were taken into consideration, and it was of great advantage to have different perspectives.

Staff members summarized the more alike than different theme when they said, "My team was very diverse--in fact I was the only regular classroom teacher. It became apparent, however, that ALL educators can make a difference and can help each other meet goals."

Another aspect of diversity that was a positive experience for team members included the varying ages and experience of staff members.

> The most important thing that I think has come from these meetings is the sharing of ideas and practices. Since I was the 'oldster' on my team, I was revitalized by the youthful idealism of the youngest members, and I felt validated when I was able to offer suggestions that worked for colleagues who were struggling in a particular area.

There were no significant differences across area/content taught in the area of leadership and equity, but there were significant differences across area/content taught in the area of quality teaching. These differences can be linked to those who were not classroom teachers. Music teachers, special education teachers, band instructors, and speech pathologists varied in their acceptance of the CGTP. A special education teacher offered one perspective when he/she said, "The team knew very little about the population of students that I work with [SDC]".

Another specialist shared, "At the beginning of the year I remember wondering that classroom teachers were not going to be able to help me improve my

Speech/Language practices/teaching methods. At the end of the year I am grateful for the opportunity to have others (different grades and areas of expertise) brainstorm and offer suggestions for meeting my goals. Their views were very insightful and appreciated." This statement represents a professional who was willing to honestly examine his/her perceptions and beliefs, and acknowledge misconceptions.

Responses toward involvement in the CGTP indicate that while some doubted the decision for them to be involved, they decided in the end that it was a beneficial experience; others did not. While there were some differing opinions, teachers as a group appeared to value the diversity of the groups and the involvement of specialists in the process.

Equity and High Expectations for All. A high expectation for all is the construct with the highest mean score of 3.65. When a staff member says, "It makes me look at what I am teaching, why I am teaching it, and the skills I need to teach to the students for better understanding" signifies the responsibility this staff member feels towards student success. The CGTP has created a culture where high expectations are expected and should be a consistent aim for all. Creating and supporting a belief in staff members that students can succeed if one sets high expectations and purposefully teaches to those expectations is critical for student achievement. The safe and supportive system that the CGTP provided allowed for teachers to step outside of the box and supported risk taking that was supported by student data.

Lake et al. (1991) found the role of the teacher in high achieving schools as one who takes "responsibility both for adapting teaching to the new strategies, and for

coordinating with, listening to, and making demands of, other teachers" (p. 19). Educators have discovered how to demonstrate remarkable improvement in student achievement by increasing teacher learning through professional development (Fullan, 1995). Students can make significant gains, regardless of socioeconomic background when exposed to high quality teachers with effective instructional strategies and who have high expectations for their students (Guskey, 2003; Marzano, 2003; Weiss & Pasley, 2004).

The CGTP "has made me more aware of students' progress towards an end result . . . and made me more aware of setting a process for meeting the end goal" examines the thoughts of a staff in setting high expectations. Setting high expectations and sharing those goals is significant. "I am verbalizing and writing down goals. I have always made them and worked on them but they seem more concrete because they are shared with my team and my principal" signifies the impact of keeping the goal out front.

One staff member tells the story of high expectations of staff members when saying,

> I am so excited that my students were able to reach the high goal I had set. I doubted the possibility of reaching my goal. But I knew it was important to set the bar high and my students would benefit from the extra effort I put forward.

Instructional Strategies. The mean score for the construct of Quality Teaching was 3.28, a positive outcome for this construct. Teachers were mixed in their responses to open-ended questions about CGTP impacting instructional practices. There are three themes that emerge regarding improved instructional strategies. The first theme focuses

on the polar opposite views of instructional strategies. Some valued the new learning and teaching strategies and the diversity of peers involved; others felt they were not provided with appropriate strategies from team members who were outside their specialty area. The second theme evolved from the focus on reflecting on the teaching and learning process. The third theme was found in the depth or quality of teaching.

As the first theme emerged regarding the acquisition of new and helpful instructional strategies, one staff member said, "It gives good directions and solid strategies that you may not have come up with on your own." While it was expressed by a Student Development Teacher (SDC), "I feel that my participation in CGTP has not impacted my instructional practices/teaching method. My team knew very little about the population of students." Another counters by stating, "Assessments in guidance are not overly common. My team helped me come up with unique and creative ways to assess students as well as offer different methods to target students who are struggling." Both are responses from specialists, someone other than a classroom teacher, but representing polar extremes.

Research by Marzano (2003) and Darling-Hammond (1993, 1997) identified the expertise of the teacher as a critical attribute in effecting student achievement. Comments from the majority of teachers reinforce that participation in CGTP improved their instructional practices, specifically in including more feedback to students and in connecting assessment to learning. While survey data and teacher comments did not clearly indicate a link between CGTP and increased student achievement, research

supports that teacher practices are the key factor in impacting student achievement (Darling-Hammond, 1993, 1997; Marzano, 2003).

CGTP "made me think about my goal on a daily basis and act upon it" signifies the second theme of reflecting on the teaching and learning process. A commanding statement which supports the influence of the CGTP is heard in this staff member's statement, "I now have a more automatic self-evaluating system working within me at all times. I am constantly giving myself feedback and looking at how I approach the lessons. Therefore, my instruction continues to get better."

The impact on the depth or quality of teaching is clearly stated by one staff who said, "It has helped me to focus on specifics in my classroom instead of surface teaching. I've learned it is quality not quantity."

Instructional strategies are at the center of what occurs on a minute-by-minute basis in the classroom. Demographic identifiers did not significantly differ on staff members' perceptions of quality teaching/instructional practices. One can derive that a support for developing and expanding instructional practices can be found in collegial teams such as those found in the CGTP.

Data Driven Decision Making. Another finding of this study was in the area data driven decision making. The mean score of 3.16 was the lowest of the five constructs, but was still in the positive range. "I thought the emphasis on data-driven decision making was very helpful" and "It's caused me to focus on both individual and group assessment . . . giving me insight to the use of data to make decisions about classroom

instruction" demonstrate the connection staff have made to data and the decisions for instruction.

Responses to the survey responses focused more on the extension of instructional strategies, assessment strategies, and collegial groups than on specific student achievement increases. "It has made me more aware of student achievement. I look at scores of the group and try to create new ways of teaching" signified a major step towards connecting frequent feedback and assessment, a change in assessment practice, which will ultimately positively impact student achievement.

The use of data to guide improvement in student achievement for the intended goal is a critical component of effective teaching. Results of numerous studies reveal that the most remarkable factor that will impact student achievement is an individual teacher (Haycock, 1998; Marzano, 2003; Sanders & Horn, 1994; Wright et al., 1997).

One staff member summarized the impact of data driven decision making on their students when they said, "I am driven by the data more than my impression of what needs improvement. I feel less 'scattered' now that I have a focus for instruction." The benefit of the data collection component of the CGTP is "Having a target, then I know if I've hit it or not!"

Another perspective in which data collection impacted students is found in sharing data with students and involving them in developing the CGTP goal. "I incorporated my students into the goals. My students felt like they were a part of the process and I think they tried even harder to meet the goal. They were very excited when they did."

Developing leaders. The mean score for the construct of leadership was 3.21, demonstrating a strength in the area of leadership. Leadership, defined a leadership assumed by staff, has been impacted through the implementation of the CGTP. Teachers became empowered to impact their own classroom as well as the classrooms of others. "Shared responsibility for learning, growing, and developing the entire school" demonstrates one teacher's belief in the power behind the CGTP.

Staff members clearly expressed the impact the CGTP had on leadership emerging from their meetings and interactions with peers. The data from this study supports the research of others regarding the importance of leadership in impacting professional development, student achievement, and change (Heck & Marcoulides, 1993; Spark, 2002).

According to Kotter (1996a) when a group, instead of the leader, decides that its members should change their behavior, promoting change can be more effective and successful. Developing staff, encouraging staff to emerge as a leader, is a component of CGTP and leadership development among staff is also a positive result of the CGTP. For the building principal, it is important to identify change agents, invite them to become active members in the change process, and teach them how to transfer the message effectively (Kotter, 1996b).

"Becoming instructional leaders – facilitators of learning" is how another describes what has occurred within this model of professional development. "As a part of the inservice team, it was also an opportunity for me to . . . impact everyone in the building" gives power to the use of the Trainer of Trainer model and developing leaders

among teachers. Teachers sharing with teachers and teachers becoming respected as instructional leaders emerged throughout the comments. "It has helped me to realize how much I know about instruction and student needs, and how much I can help other teachers in those areas" clearly demonstrates how this teacher believes CGTP has influenced his/her leadership.

Breaking barriers and feeling sanctioned to ask for help are clear for the person who said, "I am much more apt now to ask others for help in solving problems with student achievement." Creating a culture in which professionals can openly and honestly seek help and problem solving is a benefit of creating a professional development program centered on leadership, which emerges from learning communities.

Implications for Practice

The data clearly indicate that the implementation of the CGTP, as a professional development model, was perceived as a beneficial program within this district. Staff members perceived leadership, quality teaching/instructional practices, equity, data driven decision making, and learning communities/collaborative teams as positive aspects of an effective professional development program. One can assume that by incorporating the components of the CGTP structure into future professional development projects, future projects would also be viewed as successful by staff.

A benefit of the CGTP was the foundation for fundamental change in attitudes and perceptions of what professional development looks like and sounds like in this district. Professional development has gone beyond a one day, shot in the dark event to

a much higher level of active engagement and monitoring of successful implementation with consistent and frequent feedback from peers. One open-ended question on the CGTP survey asked, "As you think about the classroom goals team meetings, what things stand out in your mind?" As one staff member said, "The ability to work with colleagues I may not work with usually, the focus on improvement, the ability to track my progress and that of my students, feeling like in-service days have a purpose" clearly demonstrates a positive change in the thinking behind professional development practices.

When developing a professional development program, such as CGTP, one should keep in mind:

- The success of the CGTP centers on the development of a professional development program that revolves around the interactions of professionals in a study team approach and developing a learning community, for the purpose of impacting student achievement.
- Maintaining the diversity of the members of learning communities is necessary. The role of the specialists may need to be adjusted, but their involvement should not be discontinued.
- Staff members must understand and embrace the significance of maintaining high expectations for student achievement.
- Teachers will need to have access to research-based instructional and assessment strategies.

- Principal support and the nurturing of strong staff leadership within teams are necessary components of establishing positive team climate.
- Demographic issues such as grade level taught, educational level, gender, or previous study team experience did not affect perceptions of the CGTP and are not a factor for implementation.

Implications for Research

The results of the CGTP survey provide insight into an effective professional development program, but there continue to be questions to answer. These include:

- The role of collaborative teams as a component of an effective professional development program and its relationship to improved student achievement is a need for future research. The next step of research should directly link the CGTP process with student achievement data.
- Further research should also be directed towards examining the relationship between positive team cultures with the overall perception of the CGTP.
- Much could be gained through a more extensive study of the instructional and assessment strategies implemented via the CGTP. A study of specific teaching, learning, and assessment strategies could provide insight into the relationship of specific strategies and student achievement gains.
- Identifying the types of data scored (selected response, performance, essay, or personal communication) that are tied to high achievement data could positively impact future professional development programs.

- While there has been a connection to data collection, analysis, and the use of data in instructional decision making, there is a need for further research that connects these skills directly to student achievement gains.
- This was the first year of implementation of the CGTP. Gathering longitudinal data to follow up on the changes that the CGTP made over time could provide meaningful data for ongoing improvement.

Summary

Students have had an increased opportunity to learn as a result of the CGTP, which according to Berlinder & Biddle (1997), is the single most powerful predictor of student achievement. Experiences and skills that a teacher brings to the classroom, coupled with the professional learning community in which he/she teaches, determine the quality of teaching that takes place in the classroom (Marzano, 2003). The teachers of this district have been impacted through the CGTP learning community, thus impacting the students within their classrooms. Through the CGTP, teachers are seeing through new eyes, which is important when changing one's perspective.

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APPENDIX A

Institutional Review Board

Approval for Exempt Educational, Behavioral,

Social Science and Medical Research

IRB Letter

APPENDIX B

Classroom Goals Team Survey (CGTS)

IRB # 128-04-EX

Dear Papillion-La Vista School District Teachers and Administrators:

As a member of a classroom goal team, please complete this on-line survey for the evaluation of the district's *Classroom Goal Teams Project.* We are asking for your help in assessing the *Classroom Goal Teams Project* as we are coming to the end of the first year of implementation. Mrs. Deb Rodenburg will be the principal investigator and researcher, but the research is being conducted for district purposes. The results of the research will be used to provide feedback on a major professional development project and in continuing to provide quality professional development programs in the future. Your submission is confidential and will not be tracked in any manner that will identify you as an individual.

The link to the survey is: http://coedb.unomaha.edu/lschulte/drsurvey.htm. Please be sure to answer each question. Directions will be provided at the site. The survey site will be active from May 17 to 28. You will be provided time during your classroom goal team meeting today (May 17) to complete the survey on-line. We appreciate the time you will commit to completing the survey.

Thank you for participating in this survey and for providing valuable information the district will need to make future recommendations for a quality professional development program for the teachers and administrators in the Papillion-La Vista School District.

Sincerely,

Dr. Harlan Metschke Superintendent	Dr. Jef Johnston Assistant Superintendent, Curriculum and Instruction	Mrs. Deb Rodenburg Principal, Carriage Hill Elementary

Classroom Goals Team Survey (CGTS)

Demographics:
Gender:

1. Male
2. Female

2. Your current school (if you serve more than one school, please identify the school in which you participate in the classroom goal team meetings):

    1. School A
    2. School B
    3. School C
    4. School D
    5. School E
    6. School F
    7. School G
    8. School H
    9. School I
    10. School J
    11. School K
    12. School L

3. Your years of experience in education (including years outside of PL):
    1. 0-5 years
    2. 6-10 years
    3. 11-15 years
    4. 16-20 years
    5. 21-25 years
    6. 26-30 years
    7. 31+ years

4. Your level of Education:
    1. BA
    2. BA +18
    3. BA +36/MA
    4. MA + 18
    5. MA +36/SPEC
    6. PhD/EdD

5. Have you had previous formal collaborative team experience (study team, curriculum toolbox, 2003-04 classroom goal team meetings, school improvement team, etc.):
    1. Yes
    2. No

6. Your current assignment:
    1. Pre-k – 3rd
    2. 4th – 6th
    3. K-6th
    4. Pre- k – 6th

7. Your current assignment:
    1. Classroom Teacher
    2. Art Teacher
    3. Music Teacher
    4. Band Instructor
    5. Physical Education Teacher
    6. Media Specialist
    7. Special Education Teacher
    8. School Psychologist
    9. Speech Pathologist
    10. OT/PT
    11. Guidance Counselor
    12. HAL
    13. Reading Specialist/Title I/Reading Consultant
    14. Assistant Principal
    15. Principal
    16. Other, please list _____

Survey Question:	Theme: **LC** – Learning Community/Collaborative Teams **QT** –Quality Teachers/ Instructional Practices **L** - Leadership (Administrative) **DD** – Data Driven (Data guides improvement in student achievement for intended goal) **E-**Equity (High Expectations for All - Student Achievement)	Survey respondents will be asked to answer these questions on a 4-point Likert Scale: 1 = strongly disagree 2 = disagree 3 = agree 4 = strongly agree			
My principal offers me feedback on my classroom goals.	L	1	2	3	4
My principal talks with me about ways to improve my classroom goal.	L	1	2	3	4
My principal has observed my classroom goal team meetings.	L	1	2	3	4
My principal inquires about the success I've had towards improving students' learning with my classroom goal.	L	1	2	3	4
My principal inquires about or comments on instructional strategies stated in my classroom goal after observing in my classroom.	L	1	2	3	4
The principal in this school strongly supports the classroom goal team model.	L	1	2	3	4
Teachers in this school use classroom goal team meetings to assist with planning instruction.	QT	1	2	3	4
I have gained instructional insight due to participation in classroom goal team meetings.	QT	1	2	3	4
I have added new (or re-introduced old) instructional strategies since participating in classroom goal team meetings.	QT	1	2	3	4
I am able to analyze students' strengths and weaknesses using student assessment data I have collected for my classroom goal teams.	QT	1	2	3	4
I have implemented the instructional strategies identified at my classroom goal team meetings.	QT	1	2	3	4

I have had more conversations with colleagues about what helps students learn and to assess student learning since participating in my classroom goal team meetings.	QT	1	2	3	4
Participating in classroom goal team meetings increased the frequency that I identify and implement intervention strategies for students who are not meeting the target goal.	QT	1	2	3	4
The classroom goal team project improved my students' achievement.	QT	1	2	3	4
I share in the responsibility for improving student achievement in our school.	E	1	2	3	4
I set high standards for myself toward improving student achievement.	E	1	2	3	4
I am eager to try new ideas I learned through my classroom goal team meetings to improve student achievement.	E	1	2	3	4
Teachers in our school feel responsible for insuring that all students learn.	E	1	2	3	4
It is important for my students that I achieve my classroom goal.	E	1	2	3	4
Participating in classroom goal team meetings has increased the frequency that I use student achievement data to plan for instruction.	DD	1	2	3	4
Analyzing student assessment data for classroom goal team meetings helps me set a learning goal.	DD	1	2	3	4
The student performance graph tells me about the success of the instructional strategies I use.	DD	1	2	3	4
Student assessment data collected in preparation for classroom goal team meeting helps me understand my students' learning needs.	DD	1	2	3	4
Instructional strategies I learned at classroom goal team meetings will help me improve student achievement.	DD	1	2	3	4
Student achievement will be positively impacted as a result of my participation in classroom goal team meetings.	DD	1	2	3	4
Classroom goal teams are an important component of the school improvement process in our school.	DD	1	2	3	4

Progress noted on my student performance graph has caused me to improve assessment practices.	DD	1	2	3	4
Teachers in this school interact with the members of their classroom goal teams in a professional manner.	LC	1	2	3	4
My classroom goal team works collaboratively.	LC	1	2	3	4
The members of my classroom goal team offer useful instructional strategies.	LC	1	2	3	4
Each teacher is a contributing member of my classroom goal team.	LC	1	2	3	4
I have received meaningful feedback from my classroom goal team members.	LC	1	2	3	4
Our classroom goal team meetings are productive.	LC	1	2	3	4
I have received useful instructional strategies from my classroom goal team members.	LC	1	2	3	4

Open Ended Questions:

How has participation in the classroom goals team meetings impacted your instructional practices/teaching methods?

As you think about the classroom goals team meetings, what things stand out in your mind?