Perceptions of Kindergarten Teachers regarding Professional Development in New Jersey's Public Schools

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PERCEPTIONS OF KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS REGARDING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN NEW JERSEY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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ABSTRACT

The Perceptions of Kindergarten Teachers Regarding Professional Development
In New Jersey’s Public Schools

PreK-3 is a growing national initiative designed to transform the educational experiences of young children. Research indicates that young children’s educational gains are more likely to last when quality preschool programs are linked with the elementary years. A PreK-3 approach integrates and builds strong connections between the learning experiences of children ages three through eight. Kindergarten is the grade where preschool and primary grade experiences intersect.

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the PreK-3 continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3 and specific professional development delivery models or formats.

The population investigated was kindergarten teachers employed in public schools in the state of New Jersey. A non-probability sampling method was employed, using a convenience sampling technique. A self-administered questionnaire was developed by the researcher to obtain pertinent information.

The knowledge gained from this study may be utilized to design meaningful professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. This may help bridge the gaps between preschool learning environments, kindergarten, and the primary grades
to create a cohesive unit, PreK-3, which has the potential to function as the foundation of an educational system.

The information and insight gained by this investigation may provide valuable information to educational administrators seeking to implement the PreK-3 learning continuum in their schools as well as contribute to the growing body of knowledge of the concept of the PreK-3 learning continuum and the effective steps to its implementation. PreK-3 provides a unique opportunity for teachers and administrators to enhance child development during the most formative time in a child’s journey through the educational system.
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“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.”

– Psalm 119:105

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DEDICATION

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

New Jersey has been recognized as a national leader in the field of early childhood education (Mead, 2009). For more than ten years, New Jersey has provided high-quality preschool to thousands of three- and four-year-olds throughout the state. However, research indicates that young children’s educational gains are more likely to last when quality preschool programs are linked with the elementary years (Bogard & Graves, 2006; Guernsey & Mead, 2010; Kauerz, 2006; Maeroff, 2006; Reynolds, Magnussin, & Ou, 2006). To this end, the challenge has been raised to educators and administrators on both the national and statewide levels to build successful PreK-3 systems (Kauerz, 2009).

A PreK-3 system is defined as the continuum of learning that transcends the traditional boundaries of preschool (learning-based programs children experience before they enter the formal educational system) and the early grades, kindergarten through third (Kauerz, 2009). A PreK-3 approach connects and integrates the learning experiences of children ages three through eight. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are based on knowledge of children’s development over this period. The focus is not only on subject matter mastery, but also on the development of the social, metacognitive, and motivational capacities critical to support learning and the whole child (Graves, 2006; Reynolds, Magnuson, & Ou, 2006).

The PreK-3 concept “pushes up” or extends upward the best practices of preschool into kindergarten and the primary grades to promote a greater focus on the
whole child and expands systems of accountability to enhance program quality. PreK-3 “pushes down” or extends downward from the lower elementary and primary grades into kindergarten and preschool programs, a stronger system of accountability that focuses on the child and dedicates itself to approaches that benefit all children (Kauerz, 2009).

Specific characteristics and components of PreK-3 have been studied and analyzed (Kauerz, 2007; Maeroff, 2006; Rice, 2008; Sullivan-Dudzic et al., 2011). Literature exploring the concepts associated with PreK-3 is becoming more prevalent as educators demonstrate increased interest in identifying, validating, and exploring the connections between the worlds of early childhood and elementary education. The implementation of a PreK-3 learning continuum may provide the opportunity to unite the best of preschool, kindergarten, and the primary grades.

Research demonstrates that high-quality, developmentally appropriate early childhood programs produce both short and long-term positive outcomes on children’s cognitive and social development (Barnett, 1995, 2008; Reynolds, 2001). Research, however, also indicates the presence of “fade-out,” a term which characterizes the tendency of earlier positive educational outcomes to fade over time if they do not continue to be reinforced (Barnett, 1995; Bowman et al., 2001; Reynolds et al., 2006).

Nationwide, trends indicate a “fourth grade slump,” a term created many years ago by Harvard University researcher Mary E. Engel. This term describes an overall decline in academic achievement, interest in schoolwork, and adjustment to the school situation at the fourth grade level as a common phenomenon in our nation’s schools (Goodwin, 2011; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009). The term “fourth grade slump” was also utilized by literacy expert Jean Chall (1983) to describe the difficulties that emerge when
children shift from learning to read (sounding out words) to reading to learn (making sense of the information and ideas presented in text).

School reformers identify fourth grade as a point at which many students disengage from school activities, which in turn affects many kinds of learning (Chall & Jacobs, 2003; Goodwin, 2011; Tyre & Springen, 2007). *Newsweek* further popularized the concept, reporting that fourth grade is when students lose their “mojo” (Tyre & Springen, 2007). At this grade level, academic standards become more difficult, expectations for student achievement are higher, and high-stakes testing and measuring student performance are educational expectations.

The early learning years lay the foundation for children’s educational success in school and in life. Studies have found that the quality and duration of developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences are strongly linked to later school performance and performance in society and have indicated the significant benefits of continuing the components of quality preschool experiences throughout the primary grades (Barnett, 1995; Campbell et al., 2002; Kauerz, 2007; Maeroff, 2006; Reynolds, Magnusson, & Ou, 2006; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). This development of a PreK-3 approach and implementation of a corresponding model helps prevent the “fourth grade slump.” The continuation of the best of preschool programs and practices into the primary grades also helps prevent “fadeout” effects, capitalizes on children’s learning gains, and makes the transition to the next grade level more successful (Kauerz, 2006, 2012; Reynolds et al., 2001; Sullivan-Dudzic, 2011). The challenge remains for educators and administrators to move the implementation of PreK-3 from words in code, policy,
and research to core knowledge and best practices in the classrooms throughout the state’s school districts.

**Statement of the Problem**

The PreK-3 movement calls for an alignment of preschool, kindergarten, and the first three grades. It bases its rationale and philosophy on the commonalities of these grades and the opportunity for teachers and administrators to enhance child development during a period which many educators believe is the most formative and potentially most productive time in a child’s educational experiences (Graves, 2006; Kauerz, 2006; Maeroff, 2006).

Research indicates that educational experiences are not aligned for most children between preschool and third grade (Kauerz, 2010). The differences in classroom quality within and among schools demonstrate a lack of vision and planning for how children’s experiences connect, overlap, and build upon one another (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005). A New Jersey study which reviewed district early childhood operational plans indicated no district had all of the essential components of a PreK-3 system and a significant number had very few (Rice, 2007). While the list of the essential elements of a PreK-3 system differ slightly among researchers, a comprehensive study (Kauerz, 2009) includes the following components: access to program; teacher and teaching quality; program quality; leader quality; learning standards which recognize the importance of educating the whole child; child-based assessments; transition planning; a sturdy infrastructure; and family and community engagement.

Kindergarten is a particularly important link in the PreK-3 continuum because it bridges preschool and the early elementary grades. Early childhood advocates have
focused on improving preschool quality and access over the last decade, and K-12 school reformers have focused on improving instruction in the early elementary grades. Kindergarten is viewed as a critical year to provide students with the prerequisite foundational skills for academic success (Ackerman, Barnett, & Robin, 2005; Elicker & Mathur, 2000; Goldstein & Baum, 2012; Kauerz, 2013). Kindergarten in New Jersey takes many forms, ranging from half-day to full-day programs and encompasses a wide variety of curricular approaches, philosophies, and teaching methods. Considering the wide range of individual children’s needs, abilities, aptitudes, and interests, kindergarten programs are challenged to be developmentally appropriate for the young child who is rapidly growing and changing physically, cognitively, socially, and emotionally during this unique period in life.

During the school year 2012-2013 there were a total of 91,834 students enrolled in public kindergarten classes throughout the state. Half-day kindergarten was comprised of 24,207 students (approximately 26%), and full-day kindergarten contained 67,627 students (approximately 74%) (New Jersey Department of Education, 2012).

Kindergartens throughout the state serve as a critical “linchpin” that bonds children’s preschool experiences and the elementary school years. A survey sponsored by the Advocates for Children of New Jersey (Donovan, 2009; Rice, 2007) examined the status of kindergarten programs throughout the state. Results indicated the need to strengthen kindergarten programs and standards and the need for better inter-grade coordination.

The Advocates for Children of New Jersey sponsored a series of three focus groups for kindergarten teachers throughout the state in the spring of 2010 which the
researcher attended. Kindergarten teachers indicated key issues include the following: (a) a weakened importance of kindergarten due to lack of a state mandate, (b) full-day versus half-day kindergarten, (c) addressing PreK-3 issues, (d) need for clear kindergarten guidelines, (e) lack of administrative leadership demonstrating knowledge and expertise in early childhood education, and (f) lack of relevant professional development experiences for kindergarten teachers (Donovan, 2010). Within all three of these focus groups, kindergarten teachers expressed a need for meaningful professional development to enable them to be more effective in their classrooms.

Meaningful professional development opportunities can provide teachers the opportunities to increase their knowledge base, explore and expand methods of teaching and assessment, organize their learning environments, strategically utilize resources and technology, and reflect on their teaching practices. Many kindergarten teachers stated that the professional development opportunities available to them rarely, if ever, dealt with the kindergarten level or early childhood issues (Donovan, 2010).

The group in a strong position to successfully develop a meaningful early learning program for kindergarten teachers is school administrators. An ACNJ 2007 report found that school districts furthest along in developing PreK-3 systems had administrators who understood developmentally appropriate practices and had a broad vision for early learning (Rice, 2007). Sustaining effective teachers and meeting their professional development needs is one of the greatest challenges facing today’s educational leaders. Professional development has been cited repeatedly among researchers as an integral component of a successful PreK-3 system (Kauerz, 2005, 2009, 2010; Maeroff, 2006). As the educational leader of the school organization, a principal must research, plan, and
advocate for meaningful professional development for all staff members. However, studies with school administrators as well as with teachers indicate a lack of both knowledge and experience regarding early childhood education and its components (Aarons, 2010; Donovan, 2010; Rice & Costanzo, 2011; Tyre & Springen, 2009).

If principals are to be successful in implementing the PreK-3 vision and taking the first step toward aligning educational experiences throughout the primary grades and preventing the “fourth grade slump,” they must become knowledgeable of and sensitive to the professional development needs and desires of kindergarten teachers, who serve as the bridge and significant link between early childhood programs and the elementary grades.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the PreK-3 continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3, as well as specific professional development delivery models or formats.

**Research Questions**

The primary research question guiding this study was as follows: What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3?
The answers were addressed through the following subsidiary questions:

1. Are kindergarten teachers satisfied with current professional development opportunities?
2. What or whom do kindergarten teachers perceive as key influencers of professional development offerings?
3. What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3?
4. What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of professional development opportunities in the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3?
5. Which professional development opportunities featuring the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction in PreK-3 would kindergarten teachers like to see offered?
6. What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified professional development delivery models and formats?
7. What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of identified professional development delivery models and formats?
8. Which identified professional development formats and delivery models would kindergarten teachers like to see offered?

Conceptual Framework

Educators and administrators throughout New Jersey have been challenged to implement the PreK-3 learning continuum. Professional development has been cited
repeatedly among researchers as an integral component of a successful PreK-3 system (Kauerz, 2006; Maeroff, 2006; Rice & Costanzo, 2011).

Utilizing the theoretical constructs of the reviewed literature, this study explored kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development in early childhood education. The three identified professional development components of context, content, and process (Caldwell, 1989; National Staff Development Council, 1997, 2010) guided this framework. These key components of professional development include the who, or the learner, encompassing the characteristics and contexts of the learners and the children and communities they serve; the what, or the content, encompassing what professionals should know and be able to do; and the how, or the organization and facilitation of learning experiences, including the approaches, models, or methods used to support professional development which is highly relevant to practice (Caldwell, 1989).

School geographic location, district factor grouping, grade level configuration, school size, kindergarten session length, teaching experience in education, teaching experience in kindergarten, level of educational degree achievement, attainment of a P-3 teaching certificate, and gender provided demographic information regarding the context area of professional development for the purposes of this study; they represent the characteristics of the teachers as well as the communities they serve. Additional contextual components included possible influencers of professional development. These included teachers, principals, technology directors, supervisors, superintendents, Board of Education, teachers’ union, parents, community members, and student performance.

Sadowski (2006) identified ten areas of what experts in the early childhood field identify as components of core knowledge and effective instruction for those involved in
the creation of high quality PreK-3 classrooms. These included child development, methods for teaching diverse children, use of multiple forms of assessment, organization of learning environments, curriculum that helps children make connections, strategic use of resources and technologies, parent and family outreach, professional collaboration and development, reflection for enhanced practice, and vertical alignment. These components served as the content area of professional development for the purposes of this study; they represent what experts in the early childhood education field believe teachers in PreK-3 should know and be able to do.

A review of the literature indicated many ways to organize and facilitate professional development experiences, as well as many models and methods which may be utilized. These components were explored and defined and served as the process area of professional development for the purpose of this study; they represent how professional development can be delivered to kindergarten teachers. These include single-session workshops, in-district workshops, out-of-district workshops, collaborative consultation, grade-level meetings, study groups, action research, on-line district courses, faculty meetings, professional learning communities, peer coaching, partnerships with universities, and wikis/blogs.

**Design and Procedures**

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the Pre-K continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core
knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3 and specific professional
development delivery models or formats.

Survey research design was used for this investigation. A review of the literature
revealed no existing instrumentation designed specifically to gather information
regarding kindergarten teachers’ opinions of professional development opportunities in
early childhood education. Consequently, a self-administered questionnaire,
Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey, was developed by the
researcher to obtain this pertinent information (see Appendix B).

The Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey was developed
based on the literature review. During the literature review, specific notes were made of
the philosophy and components of PreK-3, research in the field of professional
development components, and identified components of core knowledge and effective
teaching at the early childhood level. The items utilized in the survey were derived from
the literature review with the purpose of revealing the respondents’ opinions regarding
professional development. The section of the questionnaire investigating kindergarten
teachers’ perceptions of areas of core knowledge and effective teaching at the early
childhood level was adapted for the purposes of this study from Michael Sadowski’s
(2006) research on essential core knowledge for PreK-3 educators. Additional
demographic questions were added to produce specific data about the respondents and
their schools.

A jury of experts in the field of early childhood critiqued the questionnaire. The
questionnaire was validated by using a jury of kindergarten teachers to pilot the survey.
Reliability testing for the pilot test instrument was conducted by calculating Cronbach’s alpha.

Approval for the study was received from the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board in June of 2011 (see Appendix A). The survey was administered to kindergarten teachers during the winter of 2012.

The population to be investigated was kindergarten teachers employed in public schools in the state of New Jersey. A non-probability sampling method was employed, using a convenience sampling technique, which is the selection of a group of participants because of availability. The sampling group consisted of 150 kindergarten teachers who attended the New Jersey Department of Education Kindergarten Seminars held in northern (Parsippany), central (Perth Amboy), and southern (Clementon) regions throughout the state.

The researcher addressed the assembled groups and noted her affiliation with Seton Hall University. She explained the nature of the study and indicated the kindergarten teachers’ participation was voluntary. Further, participants were assured of the confidentiality of the research records.

A pencil and paper copy of the survey was distributed to all workshop participants. The researcher verbally invited the groups to participate in the study by completing the survey and returning it to the researcher during the course of the workshop day. Permission for this was granted in advance by Roseann Hansel, Education Program Specialist of the Division of Early Childhood Education of the New Jersey State Board of Education, and communicated by her to the group facilitator at each location.
A total of 150 surveys were collected. Of these, 14 surveys did not meet the inclusion criteria and were eliminated from the data pool. These included three surveys from reading teachers and four surveys from kindergarten teachers who indicated they were employed in non-public schools. Seven paper and pencil surveys were not completed. A total of 136 completed surveys were analyzed and included in the data. The usable return rate was 91%.

The results of the survey were analyzed to investigate kindergarten teachers’ perceptions regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities. Descriptive statistics were utilized to answer each of the research questions. These descriptive statistics included such information as the mean scores, standard deviations, percentages, and proportions of responses. SPSS, Gogledocs, and Microsoft Excel were utilized to chart and analyze responses. All data were inspected for patterns and trends and presented in table, graph, and narrative formats.

**Significance of the Study**

The implementation of the PreK-3 learning continuum is being explored in many New Jersey school districts. Universal district-wide concerns such as standardized testing scores, high school dropout rates, grade retention, and special education classification rates have been shown to be positively affected by the PreK-3 learning continuum (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005; Reynolds et al., 2006). The concept of PreK-3 represents a paradigm shift from the concept of viewing the earliest grades as a place to develop “school readiness” to a long-term view of continuous student success through aligned educational experiences beginning in grades PreK through third (Maeroff, 2006).
Teachers and administrators must have both the will and the capability to effectively implement change (NAESP, 2009). However, research notes there is no single comprehensive system in place to guide educators, administrators, and policy makers through the process of program expansion (Kagan et al., 2007). This study is significant because the data will add to the existing research and inform education practice and policy regarding the implementation of the PreK-3 learning continuum through the investigation of the PreK-3 component of professional development at the kindergarten level, which serves as the link between the preschool and elementary years.

The knowledge gained from this study may be utilized to create meaningful goals and design meaningful professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. These goals may become the catalysts used to bridge the gaps between preschool learning environments, kindergarten, and the primary grades to create a cohesive unit, PreK-3, which has the potential to function as the foundation of an entire educational system.

This information may provide early childhood leaders the impetus to effectively and systematically analyze and evaluate components of PreK-3 reform within their organizations. This study may aid principals implementing components of PreK-3 systems to make informed decisions regarding the perceived knowledge base, skills, and experiences of kindergarten teachers concerning core knowledge areas and qualities of effective teaching in early childhood education. As a result, meaningful professional development opportunities may be researched, developed, and provided to meet the perceived needs and delivery model preferences of kindergarten teachers.

The principal’s increased knowledge of the staff development needs of kindergarten teachers may also result in the creation of additional meaningful learning
experiences for students and both horizontal and vertical alignment among and between
grade levels.

This study may also aid principals in making informed decisions regarding their
own knowledge base, skills, and experiences concerning areas of core knowledge and
qualities of effective teaching in early childhood education and develop an awareness of
their personal need for additional education and/or training at the early childhood level.

It is hoped that the insights gained by this investigation may provide valuable
information to educational administrators seeking to implement the PreK-3 learning
continuum in their schools. The information and insights gained by this investigation may
contribute to the growing body of knowledge of the concept of the PreK-3 learning
continuum and the effective steps to its implementation.

This study serves to add to the current research on components of PreK-3.
However, caution must be used when making generalizations based on the findings of
this study as limitations and delimitations apply.

**Limitations of the Study**

The kindergarten teachers participating in this study were members of a sample of
convenience. The use of a non-probability convenience sampling technique limits
generalization and inference making about the entire population. Responses were based
on kindergarten teachers’ opinions, which may have produced a more optimistic picture
than more objective methodologies, such as observation. The researcher assumes the
survey instrument, which was piloted by a group of kindergarten teachers and critiqued
by a jury of experts, is an accurate measure of kindergarten teacher perceptions regarding
professional development.
This study was limited to kindergarten teachers who responded to the survey. The researcher is not aware of the responses and the characteristics of those who chose not to respond to the survey.

**Delimitations of the Study**

This study was limited to the perceptions of kindergarten teachers only. The perceptions of administrators or teachers at other grade levels in the PreK-3 continuum were not included in this study.

The study focused on the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in public schools and may not be relevant to private school settings.

The study examined the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in New Jersey. This may limit its relevance to policy, practice, and professional development in other states.

The investigation of teachers’ perceptions of professional development was limited to the components of the *Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey*.

The questionnaire developed and utilized no open-ended response questions. This did not allow in-depth individual kindergarten teacher perceptions to be communicated, nor did it provide an understanding of the complexities and nuances in teachers’ professional development experiences.

**Definition of Terms**

*PreK-3* -- is the continuum of learning that transcends the traditional boundaries of preschool (learning-based programs children experience before they enter the formal educational system) and the early grades kindergarten through third (Kauerz, 2009).
A Pre-K-3 approach connects and integrates the learning experiences of children ages three through eight, from PreK through Grade 3.

**PreK-3 Components** -- are defined as specific elements for the successful implementation of the PreK-3 continuum of learning, such as reduced class size, teaching practices, and parent-involvement activities.

**Drivers** -- are factors which enhance or promote the implementation of the PreK-3 continuum.

**Barriers** -- are factors which prevent or hinder the implementation of the PreK-3 continuum.

**Fadeout** -- is the tendency of earlier positive educational outcomes to fade over time if they do not continue to be reinforced (Reynolds et al., 2006).

**Early Childhood Education** -- is that period of time which encompasses a child’s school-based experiences in preschool through grade three. It has traditionally been viewed as the period of time from birth to kindergarten entry.

**Preschool** -- is an organized learning-based program for three- and/or four-year-old children, providing a nurturing and secure environment.

**Kindergarten** -- is an educational program designed for five-year-olds, following the preschool experience and before first grade.

**Primary Grades** -- are an educational configuration traditionally encompassing grades kindergarten through third.

**Elementary School** -- is an educational institution traditionally housing grades kindergarten through sixth or eighth.
PreK-3 Programs -- are planned interventions that begin during any of the five years of a child’s life before kindergarten and which continue up to third grade (Reynolds et al., 2006).

PreK-3 Practices -- are specific elements or components of extended early childhood programs that are hypothesized to be associated with children’s outcomes (Reynolds et al., 2006).

Professional Development -- is the systematic, ongoing, interactive, cumulative learning necessary to develop new concepts, skills, and behaviors (Fullan, 1995).

Alignment -- is a lining up or connection of standards, curricula, and assessments into a coherent plan for PreK-3 children (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005).

Horizontal Alignment -- ensures that within a grade or age level, children’s experiences are consistent and provide continuity (Kauerz, 2006).

Vertical Alignment -- ensures that among and across grade or age levels, children’s experiences reflect young children’s development and build upon one another (Kauerz, 2006).

Coordination -- is an ongoing effort by skilled teachers and strong leadership to use alignment to achieve the effective education of children in the PreK-3 years.

Standards -- are guidelines which help to ensure that children have consistent and developmentally appropriate opportunities to learn and grow during the formative years.

Preschool Teaching and Learning Expectations: Standards of Quality -- is a New Jersey Department of Education publication which notes expectations for preschool
children’s learning outcomes and expectations for high quality preschool teaching and programs (6A:10A-1.2).

*New Jersey Core Curriculum Content Standards* -- are guidelines which clearly define what students should know and be able to do in specific content areas as they complete benchmark periods throughout their formal educational journey.

*Curriculum* -- is the set of experiences that learners have in a program of education.

*Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Strategies* -- are research-based practices that serve to enhance the development of the whole child and are appropriate to the child’s age and developmental status and responsive to the social and cultural contexts in which they live.

*Developmentally Appropriate Teaching Expectations* -- are standards of quality that define the criteria for the development of quality early childhood education programs encompassing the cognitive, language, social, emotional, and physical developmental domains.

*Assessment Activities* -- refer to actions undertaken by teachers and/or students which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged. It is also the process of evaluating what already has been learned for the purpose of recording and/or reporting.

*District Factor Grouping (DFG)* -- represents an approximate measure of a community’s relative socioeconomic status (SES). District Factor Groupings are calculated using the following six variables that are closely related to socioeconomic status: percentage of adults with no high school diploma, percentage of adults with some
college education, occupational status, unemployment rate, percentage of individuals in poverty, median family income (New Jersey Department of Education, 2009).

**Organization of the Study**

This research study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I presents an introduction and discusses the statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research questions, conceptual framework, design and procedures, significance of the study, limitations, definition of terms, and organization of the study. Chapter II presents the review of the literature, including an investigation of the concept of the PreK-3 learning continuum, its components, and guiding principles; a study of the role of the principal in leading early childhood learning communities; an exploration of effective teaching qualities in Prek-3; and a review of the concept of professional development. Chapter III presents the study’s methodology, including an introduction, purpose of the study, research questions, research design, population, development of the survey instrument, data collection, data analysis, and summary. Chapter IV presents the research findings and analysis. Chapter V presents the findings, conclusions, and recommendations for policy, practice, and further research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the Pre-K continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3 and specific professional development delivery models or formats.

This study was designed to contribute to the growing body of knowledge concerning PreK-3 and its implementation. This study may aid educational leaders implementing PreK-3 reform to make informed decisions regarding professional development at the kindergarten level.

The literature review begins with a broad overview designed to provide a comprehensive understanding of the PreK-3 learning continuum and identification and analysis of PreK-3 components and guiding principles. The next area of the literature review explores the importance of the role of the principal in leading PreK-3 learning communities. The following section provides an exploration of core knowledge and effective teaching practices in early childhood education. The final section of the literature review investigates the concept of professional development. The literature review concludes with a summary of the research.
Literature Search Procedures

The search of theories, research, and literature was performed using databases including EBSCO, Proquest Education Journals, ERIC, Academic Search Premier, Dissertation Abstracts, PreK-3 Data Research Center, National Institute for Early Education Research, Foundation for Child Development, and JSTOR. The researcher also employed the use of Google to elicit additional research.

PreK-3 Continuum

A critical mass of evidence in support of PreK-3 has been developing over the past decade. The lack of a universal and consistent definition for “early childhood education” has had a direct impact on the development of PreK-3 systems (Kagan & Reid, 2008; Rice, 2007). Educational leaders in the early childhood field have realized it is important to achieve both definitional and conceptual clarity in discussing PreK-3. PreK-3 is defined as the continuum of learning that transcends the traditional boundaries of pre-school (learning-based programs children experience before they enter the formal educational system) and the early grades, kindergarten through third (Kauerz, 2009).

A PreK-3 approach connects and integrates the learning experiences of children ages three through eight, from PreK through Grade 3. Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are based on knowledge of children’s development over this period. The focus is not just on subject matter competency but also on the development of social, metacognitive, and motivational capacities critical to support learning as well as the whole child (Foundation for Child Development, 2007).

The PreK-3 vision has guided the field of early childhood toward a systematic and comprehensive model spanning the child’s first eight years of life (Reynolds, Wang, and
Walberg, 2003). The PreK-3 continuum is based on standards that respect children’s developmental stages and capacity to learn. PreK-3 integrates the subject-matter focus of grades kindergarten through third with the child development focus of PreK. PreK-3 “pushes up” the best practices of preschool to kindergarten and the primary grades to promote a greater focus on the whole child and expands systems of accountability to include program quality. PreK-3 “pushes down” from the primary grades a stronger system of accountability that focuses on the child and a dedication to universal approaches that benefit all children (Kauerz, 2009).

PreK-3 supports the belief that well-integrated early childhood experiences building from one year to the next provide the necessary foundation for later academic success for all students (Foundation for Child Development, 2008). The PreK-3 learning continuum starts early and focuses on developmentally informed learning experiences encompassing preschool through Grade 3. The goal is to provide a strong educational foundation for every child designed around aligned curriculum and assessments and supported by cross-grade professional learning communities (Foundation for Child Development, 2008). This system of shared accountability distributes responsibility for children’s growth and development across multiple stakeholders and over multiple years. Increasing empirical evidence indicates that programs designed to successfully address children’s learning needs must become more comprehensive, span multiple years, and target key transition points (Reynolds, Magnuson, & Ou, 2006).

Evidence indicates that a student’s journey throughout the educational spectrum is strongly affected by what occurs before the age of eight or nine (Dewey, 1938; Elkind, 1982; Piaget, 1955). This time is increasingly viewed as a critical period in children’s
scholastic development (Reynolds et al., 2006). This knowledge makes a powerful case for the critical importance of the implementation of integrated approaches to preschool, kindergarten, and Grades 1 through 3 for all children. A strong PreK-3 structure, by reducing the need for later remediation, can lead to more productive learning in the upper elementary grades and in secondary schools (Bogard, 2005). While PreK-3 has been traditionally recognized as providing a head start to those children with greater needs socioeconomically and academically, students from all backgrounds have evidenced achievement gains since these reforms began to be instituted (Maeroff, 2006).

PreK-3 recognizes there is something unique and special about children’s learning from birth to age eight. Knowledgeable educators, researchers, and policy makers acknowledge the importance of early childhood education for all children. They note the first years of life are critical to the development of cognitive growth, which occurs interdependently along with linguistic, social, motor, emotional, and problem solving skills development (Sadowski, 2006).

Brain development is at its peak during this period. Raudenbush (2009) notes young children are energetic learners and have the potential for dramatic developmental leaps. The National Academy of Sciences has stated that advances in knowledge and changing circumstances call for a fundamental re-examination of the nation’s ways of dealing with young children and their education. They point out our society continues to use outdated policies and educational strategies that do not recognize what has been learned about young children and how they learn (Maeroff, 2006).

David Elkind states, “Historically, the greatest innovators in education—Montessori, Piaget, and others—have worked in early childhood education. We have a
tremendously powerful legacy and a strong foundation on which to build” (ASCD, 1998, p. 4). Maeroff notes the following:

This period, Prek-3, accounts for more than a third of elementary and secondary education, a time when schools must prepare children for success in literacy and numeracy and instill habits of the mind, along with tending to social and emotional development. Schooling during the early years figures prominently in shaping a student’s future and offers great promise for all that follows, when youngsters who have learned to read must begin to read to learn (Education Week, May 10, 2006).

Studies have found that the quality and duration of developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences are strongly linked to later school performance and performance in society (Barnett, 1995; Campbell et al., 2002; Reynolds, 2004; Reynolds, Temple, Robertson, & Mann, 2001). Without an effective early education experience, statistics indicate a dramatic decline in children’s later academic performance. The positive outcomes found for many children by the end of preschool programs fade or dissipate when they enter elementary school and with the passage of time (Barnett, 1995; Bowman et al., 2001). Known as the “fading effect,” researchers have utilized this finding to initiate a call for the PreK-3 reform movement, which extends and aligns positive early educational experiences through the third grade level (Reynolds et al., 2006).

Research has shown that third grade is a transition point for long-term success in school. At this point in their educational journey, children typically take their first standardized tests in reading and math. Research indicates children who do not attain
literacy skills, including reading and writing, by third grade struggle to catch up in future years (Hernandez, 2011; Snow, 1991; Snow, Burns & Griffin, 1998). Felton (1998) found that children who were poor readers in third grade did not improve their skills by eighth grade. As children enter fourth grade, the learning paradigm shifts from “learning to read” to “reading to learn,” and academic standards and expectations become more stringent as educational skills are applied to a wide range of subject areas.

Nationwide, trends indicate a “fourth grade slump,” a term created many years ago by Harvard University researcher Mary E. Engel, which describes an overall decline in academic achievement and interest in school work at the fourth grade level as a common phenomenon in our nation’s schools (New York Times, 1963; Sanacore & Palumbo, 2009, Shore, 2009). The term “fourth grade slump” was also utilized by literacy expert Jean Chall (1983) to describe the difficulties that emerge when children shift from learning to read (sounding out words) to reading to learn (making sense of the information and ideas presented in text) (Rimes, 2009). Newsweek further elaborated upon the concept in 2007, reporting that fourth grade is when students lose their “mojo” (Shore, 2009; Tyre & Springen, 2007).

Several recent reviews and reports (Bogart & Takanishi, 2005; Foundation for Child Development, 2005; Reynolds, 2003; Reynolds et al., 2006) have described the strengths of the PreK-3 perspective as well as the emerging evidence of its research-based effectiveness. Researchers Arthur Reynolds, Katherine Magnusson, and Suh-Ruu Ou (2006) synthesized evidence on the contribution of PreK-3 programs and practices to children’s school success. They analyzed data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K) 1998-1999 to show links between PreK-3
components and children’s performance in third grade. Their analysis indicated that children participating in educational programs that included PreK-3 program components performed better in school than peers who did not.

Reynolds, Magnusson, and Ou (2006) reviewed evidence from four studies of high quality “extended early childhood programs” (Chicago Child-Parent Center Program, Head Start/Follow Through, Abecedarian Project, and the Head Start Transition Demonstration). Analyses of these programs corroborated the findings from the ECLS-K data and reinforced the belief that children who experience PreK-3 program components perform better in third grade than those who do not. The many evaluations conducted on these and other early childhood programs show evidence of the positive short-term as well as long-term effects of high quality early childhood programs (Barnett & Belfield, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2006).

A survey of existent programs by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) determined no one district in New Jersey had implemented all of the components that would lead to a comprehensive PreK-3 system (Rice, 2008). Research studies note that not one size fits all because communities, schools, and students have varied strengths, challenges, and resources. PreK-3 reform occurs when core principles are adapted to meet the unique needs of the school, community, and students. Research indicates that students who experience many of the components of PreK-3 perform better than those who experience only half, and those who receive only half perform better than those who experience none. This analysis also demonstrates the importance of students receiving multiple components of PreK-3 (Reynolds et al., 2006).
Unless these quality educational components dedicated to the young child continue over time, effective long-term change does not occur. The major assumption of PreK-3 programs is that better coordination and integration of educational programs and practices between ages 3 and 8 will enhance learning above and beyond the impact of typically organized school experiences (Kauerz, 2006; Maeroff, 2006; Reynolds, 2006).

**PreK-3 Components**

PreK-3 components are drawn from a wide variety of research-based sources. These include the literature on effective schools, intervention and prevention strategies, principles of early childhood education, demonstrated best practices, systems analysis, and developmental sciences. All good schools embody many of these components. Many of these components have long existed within the field of education but often in isolation from one another. Cynthia Rice (2008) notes while most educators have likely heard of the PreK-3 system, it is as likely they are unfamiliar with the components pivotal to that system. However, what differentiates a PreK-3 approach from merely being a mixture of isolated components implemented at random is alignment. This continuity of supports, particularly curriculum, instruction, and assessment, for the first five or six years of school is what distinguishes PreK-3 schools from other effective schools (FDC, 2006; Graves, 2006).

Kristie Kauerz (2009), former Director of PreK-3 Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education, identifies nine key components of PreK-3. The first component is access to program. This component incorporates the need to expand universal access to high-quality programs across the continuum, including pre-kindergarten, full-day
kindergarten, developmental screenings and early intervention, family literacy and reading readiness and wraparound child care before and after school.

The second component noted by Kauerz (2009) is teacher and teaching quality. This component ensures that teachers across the PreK-3 continuum have pre-service and in-service training, professional development, and certification addressing the full continuum of learning and that they demonstrate classroom effectiveness in understanding and supporting young children’s development and learning. This component also ensures teachers have appropriate licensure, credentials, and certification. It underscores the necessity of ongoing professional development and support for all personnel connected with the PreK-3 continuum in the form of collaborative and joint professional development opportunities.

Program quality is the third component noted by Kauerz (2009). This component ensures that programs across the PreK-3 continuum support the learning of young children, are assessed and reported for continual improvement, and are addressed at the classroom, building, and site levels. It emphasizes incorporating the environment, the importance of site-based quality assessments, and consistent quality measurement of those areas in which young children learn.

Leader quality is the fourth component. This component ensures leaders are visionaries, funders, advocates, and hands-on doers for PreK-3. It also ensures ongoing professional development for school administrators and the board of education concerning issues related to PreK-3. It emphasizes the importance of educating and supporting all levels of administration from the board of education and superintendent to
principals, supervisors, and child-care administrators. This component also emphasizes the importance of shared leadership in the PreK-3 learning continuum (Kauerz, 2009).

The fifth component cited by Kauerz (2009) incorporates learning standards which recognize the importance of educating the whole child. This reflects a principle that has been part of American public education since John Dewey. It is reflected in the work of the National Education Goals Panel (NEGP) and includes physical/motor, cognitive, communication/language development, and social and emotional approaches to learning. All domains of learning are meaningfully included across the full PreK-3 continuum. Standards are aligned and inclusive of all children. Accountability and instructional best practices are incorporated.

Child-based assessments are the sixth component. This component emphasizes that assessments must be appropriate for young children, used to improve instruction, inform and engage families, and be disseminated responsibly to families and the broader community. In addition, teachers should be supported to collaboratively discuss data-driven strategies (Kauerz, 2009).

An additional component to be considered is transitions. This component emphasizes the recognition of and seamless planning for transitions within the PreK-3 educational community. Transitions should be viewed as processes that transcend the entire PreK-3 continuum. Transition teams should play a meaningful role along with family involvement (Kauerz, 2009).

Kauerz (2009) notes the necessity for a sturdy infrastructure, including governance, accountability, sustainable funding, and longitudinal data systems to support the PreK-3 continuum. She maintains it is important to identify the ongoing and
consistent mechanisms which enable key stakeholders to convene, plan, and improve across sectors. Multiple funding sources should be identified and should maximize both impact and efficiency. Data should be utilized for continuous improvement.

The final component noted in Kauerz’s (2009) research is family and community engagement. This component notes the importance of families and communities, who provide consistent context for children’s daily lives; instill attitudes, values, skills, and practices; and manage and coordinate children’s various environments (home, school, and community). Families should be provided with appropriate, timely, and meaningful information as well as be meaningfully engaged to support their children’s learning.

The Foundation for Child Development (2006) identified five key PreK-3 components. The first is school organization, including principal leadership; voluntary full school day pre-kindergarten provided for all three- and four-year-old children; and full-day kindergarten, building on pre-kindergarten, offered to all students. The second component is alignment: ensuring standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment are aligned within and across grades from preK through third. The third component recognizes classrooms as learning environments, where instruction balances child-centered and teacher-directed approaches and utilizes assessment to improve instruction. Accountability to parents and community is the fourth component and is manifested by a number of interactive programs and practices. The final component is qualified teachers who are well trained and certified in their areas of responsibility (FCD, 2006).

Following a series of interviews with principals who are leading the way to build strong PreK-3 programs across the country, an NAESP study Principals Lead the Way for PreK-3 (2006) identified four core elements of successful PreK-3 programs. These
included strong PreK-3 alignment; strong principal leadership; high quality, ongoing professional development; and strong focus on student achievement.

Reynolds et al. (2001) noted six components in their research studies of exemplary programs and summarized evidence in each of these areas. These components included preschool, full-day kindergarten, reduced class size, teacher and classroom experiences, parent involvement, and school mobility/stability. The authors noted that all factors except full-day kindergarten consistently demonstrated enduring and sizable links to school achievement. The authors also found evidence that teacher background and training, the quality of the teacher-child relationship, and focus on child-centered instruction was linked to better school performance.

New Jersey Advocates for Children (Rice, 2008) cited the following components as necessary parts of a successful PreK-3 system: alignment, school organization, qualified teachers, classrooms as learning environments, and accountability to parents and community.

The PreK-3 Data Resource Center (2011) identified the following six components of PreK-3: school organization, principal leadership, qualified teachers, classroom learning environments, alignment and coordination, assessment and accountability, and family and community engagement.

**Alignment and Coordination**

In addition to identifying components of PreK-3, researchers indicate it is necessary to identify those principles that act as the connective facets which link components. Alignment and coordination are the two most important principles uniting the varied components.
Research indicates that one of the most critical components of successfully implementing a PreK-3 approach is for all standards to be aligned (Rice, 2007). Alignment is a lining up of standards, curricula, and assessments into a coherent plan for PreK-3 children (Bogard, 2005). Alignment occurs at several levels and refers to the connections among standards, curriculum, and assessments within and across grades pre-kindergarten through third (horizontal and vertical alignment, respectively).

Horizontal alignment ensures that within a grade or age level, children’s experiences are consistent and provide continuity. Vertical alignment ensures that among and across grade or age levels, children’s experiences reflect young children’s development and build upon one another (Kagan & Kauerz, 2007; Kauerz, 2006). Alignment can be viewed as a horizontal and vertical conception of learning that expands from the preschool years into the early childhood grades (kindergarten through third) within the elementary school system. Well-planned and well-implemented alignment results in children reaching successful levels of achievement by the end of third grade (Kagan & Scott-Little, 2004).

Coordination is the other important principle. Maeroff (2006) emphasizes that “coordination should be the watchdog of this effort, with standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment aligned across the PreK-3 continuum like the moving parts of a finely designed mechanical clock” (p. 3). Coordination is an ongoing effort by skilled teachers and strong leaders to use alignment to achieve the effective education of children in the PreK-3 years. This necessitates a master plan that intentionally lays out clear expectations for children at each grade level, aligns these expectations with classroom experiences that facilitate reaching the expectations, and utilizes multiple forms of
assessment that provide information on whether or not children are progressing toward the expectations set out for them during the years from PreK through Grade 3 (Maeroff, 2006).

Standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment focus on both social competence and self-discipline as well as academic skills. The key to successfully applying alignment strategies is streamlining the core elements of teaching and learning and focusing on grade level transitions to ensure that children get what they need to succeed at every step of the way (NAESP, 2005). Effective coordination enables educators to dovetail standards and curriculum to effect seamless transition between grade levels. Teachers must understand and articulate what children should know and be able to do at each stage of development.

Bringing pre-kindergarten expectations in line with those in kindergarten and the early school years enables principals to provide coherent, related experiences for children in the first critical years of schooling (NAESP, 2005). Many within the field of early childhood education, however, raise cautionary flags when examining standards, curriculum, and instruction to ensure they reflect the uniqueness that exists within the field of early childhood education and are not repackaged educational reforms designed for older grades which trickle down to the younger years (Stipek, 2006).

It is also important to note that researchers identify and conceptualize the connecting principles of PreK-3 in a variety of ways. Maeroff (2006) conceptualizes the components of PreK-3 as building blocks, such as legos, which fortify early education in the following ways: (a) emphasis—incorporating the designation PreK-3 as a unit onto itself with specific goals as a first step toward assuring the unique needs, abilities,
aptitudes and interests of the youngest children are not shunted aside in favor of older students; (b) teamwork–indicating that within a PreK-3 school or unit, staff can plan across grade levels and classrooms, viewing the students as one unified learning community. They have the opportunity to form both horizontal and vertical PreK-3 teams; (c) grouping–indicating flexible, small group instruction of pupils that reaches beyond single classrooms and crosses grade levels to acknowledge the uneven developmental nature of children; (d) staff development–wherein educators at this level share common professional interests which are best addressed through joint continuing education opportunities that recognize the interlocking nature of their work; and (e) culmination–where third grade, as a culmination point, becomes a juncture at which to gather the fruits of early learning to make success more likely in the grades that follow.

Kauerz (2009) notes the key concepts related to the PreK-3 vision. These include a learning continuum, alignment with both horizontal and vertical alignment serving as connective issues, continuity, and transitions. She notes the importance of intentionally embedding similarities across pre-school and the early grades and describes what she terms the “reciprocity” of PreK-3. In this concept, the preschool part changes to align with what is best about kindergarten, first, second, and third grade. Kindergarten changes to align with what is best about preschool and first, second, and third grade. First, second, and third grade change to align with what is best about preschool and kindergarten.

In contrast to Maeroff’s (2006) use of the metaphor of building blocks to describe the PreK-3 continuum, Kauerz (2006) initially utilizes the metaphor of ladders. She describes how one starts at the bottom rung and then climbs rung by rung, eventually reaching the top. Kauerz explains if there are no rungs, or only one or two at the base of
the ladder, it is harder to climb to the top. The climber needs more assistance and has more difficulty reaching the top. Kauerz states, “Education should be structured in such a way that all children have learning experiences that build on those previous years and connect with those to come, creating a smooth and predictable climb to the top” (2006, p. 1). In later research, Kauerz (2009) utilizes “pop beads” as the metaphorical illustration of the interlocking nature of PreK-3 components.

The components of PreK-3 have been identified. The importance of alignment and coordination has been stressed. Learning each year from pre-kindergarten through third grade then builds in deliberate ways on the previous year’s experience. There are identified steps a district can begin to take to start to think globally and move toward more fully initiating PreK-3 components. These include the following: (a) encouraging district administrators to reach out to community programs, (b) encouraging district administrators to reach out to families, (c) planning for professional development for teachers and administrators, (d) planning for ample time for teachers to meet regularly both within and across grade in order to implement aligned learning experiences for children, (e) providing simple opportunities for building principals’ and districts’ early childhood experts to collaborate, and (f) thinking creatively about assessments (Rice, 2008).

**Leading Early Childhood Learning Communities**

Principal leadership has been identified as a critical component in a successful PreK-3 program by many researchers. In addition to supporting a strong PreK-3 vision, principals apply their skills and knowledge to create a community focused on educating
young children. Managing resources, energizing teachers, building community support, and leading reform all play a part in successfully implementing PreK-3 (NAESP, 2005).

Principals should be familiar with exemplary PreK-3 teaching, classroom management practices, and knowledge of child development. A critical role of principals is to understand the practices and challenges of a PreK-3 classroom and build a bridge between preschool, kindergarten, the primary grades, and the grades beyond (NAESP, 2005). Principals are responsible for creating a school climate that balances developmentally appropriate teaching and learning with specific academic expectations.

Guiding schools and districts on the path to instructional quality takes leadership and a commitment to enhancing the learning of everyone in the school. This process requires a change in the culture of schools and new kinds of relationships among leaders (Weast, 2009). It reflects the reality that efforts to raise instructional quality must be ongoing and lasting. As anyone who has ever attempted to initiate change in an educational organization understands, change brings conflict.

The literature is replete with advice to educational leaders on how to instigate and maintain change, develop effective schools, exercise transformational leadership, and work effectively with various stakeholder groups. How educational leaders conceptualize the problem, involve and organize constituencies, implement innovations, monitor progress, provide resources, and evaluate outcomes determines the success of change (Ubben et al., 2001). NAESP (2005) conducted a number of case studies involving interviews with principals across the country who are leading efforts to build strong PreK-3 programs. They identified the following core elements among successful programs: strong principal leadership, strong PreK-3 alignment, high-quality ongoing
professional development, and strong focus on student achievement and results. Successful principals ensure these elements work together to create an environment of continuous improvement.

Educational leaders in PreK-3 must articulate a clear commitment to high quality instruction for every child in every classroom and recognize the need to align resources (Raudenbush, 2006). Developing and sustaining effective teachers is one of the greatest challenges facing today’s educational leaders. Although the day-to-day responsibility for continuity of standards and curricula often lies with classroom teachers, principals need to support teachers and help them understand the vision and philosophies of the continuum of learning that starts in Pre-K and ends at the start of fourth grade. Effective principals must ensure that educators have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students reach the high levels of learning defined by PreK-3. By bringing PreK-3 alignment expectations in line with those in kindergarten and the early school years, principals provide a coherent, related set of experiences for children in the first critical years of schooling (NAESP, 2005).

Pianta (2007) notes that early childhood and elementary educators continue to lack common ground on how to teach young children. An NAESP study (2005) identified principal leadership as a critical element in the development of a successful PreK-3 program. It noted each administrator brings a unique set of skills and personal strengths to the task of creating PreK-3 programs. Leading by doing can spur reform. In addition to supporting a strong PreK-3 vision, principals must apply all their skills and knowledge to create a community and school focused on educating young children. Tasks include managing resources, energizing teachers, building community support, and leading
reform initiatives. To promote an effective PreK-3 school, principals as well as teachers should be knowledgeable of areas of PreK-3 core knowledge and exemplary PreK-3 developmentally appropriate teaching and classroom management practices. Professional development, whatever its format or delivery model, has the potential to create a unified educational vision and strategy if it is ongoing and focused on the goal of providing a seamless continuum of PreK-3 learning to students.

One of the unforeseen consequences of tremendous support for early childhood education is that there are now many principals who may have to deal with the concept of PreK-3 for the first time. Principals who may not be familiar with areas of core knowledge of PreK-3 and exemplary PreK-3 teaching practices and classroom management should seek opportunities for professional development and classroom observations. Increasingly, opportunities are developing for educational leaders to gain an understanding of the practices and challenges of prekindergarten classrooms as well as kindergarten and the early elementary grades. Community Advocates for Young learners (CAYL), a Massachusetts-based organization, runs an intensive, year-long program designed to help elementary school leaders oversee and strengthen preschool classes at their school. “Very few principals have been trained in early childhood,” notes CAYL president Valora Washington (Education Week, November 19, 2008).

In recent years the National Association of Elementary School Principals has encouraged principals to play an active role in expanding and improving the quality of early childhood education programs in their communities. Fred Brown, Senior Associate Executive Director of the National Association of Elementary School Principals, noted
that acquiring expertise in educating young children falls into the “after market category” of principal preparation (NAESP, 2006).

Cynthia Rice (2007) notes a key factor in successfully developing a PreK-3 system is strong leadership. She states that while providing opportunities for teacher collaboration are important, they are not enough to develop the systemic reform necessary to successfully implement PreK-3 models within our school systems. The magnitude of this instructional change, or paradigm shift, requires leadership at the state, district, and building levels. Rice notes that studies sponsored by ACNJ indicated those districts that were the furthest along in developing PreK-3 systems had administrators at both the district and building levels who were well informed in developmentally appropriate practices.

In 2009, the New Jersey Foundation for Educational Administration (FEA) invited administrators throughout the state to attend an introductory workshop on Understanding and Implementing a PreK-3 Vision with Dr. Kristie Kauerz as guest speaker. This was followed by an Early Childhood Leadership Series for administrators responsible for preschool through third grade classrooms, including superintendents, assistant superintendents, elementary principals, assistant principals, curriculum directors, and supervisors. This series was sponsored by the New Jersey Department of Education, the Advocates for Children of New Jersey, and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association and funded through a grant from the Foundation for Child Development. The goal of this series of four full day-long workshops, beginning in the early fall of 2009 and held throughout the 2009-2010 school year, was to develop a
comprehensive understanding of the PreK-3 continuum reflective of research and early childhood best practices.

Specific objectives were intended to accomplish the following: (a) enable administrators to understand how to support the PreK-3 continuum in a way that is consistent with research and early childhood best practices, (b) utilize tools to assess and refine classroom practices in collaboration with teachers, (c) recognize how to use data-driven decision making to promote student achievement and family engagement, (d) learn strategies and techniques that teachers need to successfully differentiate instruction for all learners, and (e) share research which recognizes the importance of making children successful in the early years of school. The training sessions for all participants were standardized. The same core team presented for all training sessions in locations throughout the state to ensure that the same message was delivered.

Following this initial series, a second four-part series of advanced PreK-3 leadership workshops exploring topics such as using data to improve PreK-3 programs and readiness, assessment, and students’ learning were held throughout the state during the 2010-2011 school year. The initial set of PreK-3 leadership workshops was also repeated with a new group of registrants during the 2010-2011 school year. The 2011-2012 school year saw an advanced PreK-3 leadership workshop for principals who had attended the previous year’s Year 2 workshop. The initial conference and all subsequent leadership workshops in Years 1, 2, and 3 were attended by the researcher.

**Teacher Quality**

Previous efforts to improve education have often focused on class size, credentialing, accountability systems, governance structures, or other top-down
strategies. The theory of change was that such investments would lead to better teaching and more learning. But evidence connecting these broad policies with higher achievement is sparse (Grubb, 2009).

One of the most critical elements in the success of any PreK-3 program is the quality of teaching that occurs every day in every classroom. Policy, practice, and research all suggest that PreK-3 teachers have a significant impact on the education of their students. Researchers have found that teacher impact on student learning lasts for years after students have left the teachers’ classrooms. The challenge exists to spread powerful teaching to all PreK-3 classrooms.

Large scale studies have been conducted across the country as researchers have spent countless hours in classrooms observing and recording what teachers do and say and analyzing and identifying the factors and instructional practices which build a strong foundation for later learning (Hamre et al., 2007). Observational research on effective practices enables investigators to describe the kind of classroom strategies that have the best chance of producing good results for children of all backgrounds as teachers observe and respond to individual children’s development over time. Carrying out this cycle (instruction-assessment-instruction) is not easy. It requires ongoing opportunities to deepen understanding of child development with insight into both the typical development of children and developmental variations, a command of observation tools, assessment strategies that are appropriate for young children and embedded in the learning experiences (Sadowski, 2006; Schultz & Kagan, 2007), and frequent chances to reflect on children’s progress and instructional practices with colleagues (Raudenbush, 2009).
High-quality instruction has special significance during the PreK-3 years when children master foundational skills and concepts, develop attitudes toward school, and form ideas about themselves as learners. Teachers vary dramatically in the quality of their classroom practice, and this variation is strongly linked to significant differences in children’s learning (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Hamre et al., 2007). Teachers’ content knowledge varies markedly as well (Hill, Rowan, & Ball, 2005). Teachers also vary in their capacity to engage young children. When teachers provide the kinds of interactions and activities that engage children and motivate them to try hard, children make greater academic gains than their less engaged classmates (Bodovski & Farkas, 2007).

Researchers and educators have demonstrated the many benefits of high quality early education. Many teachers, administrators, and policy makers now view PreK-3 students as a special segment of the school population, one whose learning needs can only be met by highly trained professionals with a broad knowledge base about early childhood development and a rich repertoire of specialized strategies and subject matter teaching skills (Sadowski, 2006).

University of Chicago researcher Stephen Raudenbush believes many educational reforms have not produced powerful or lasting effects because “they have not been devised to support explicit notions of powerful classroom instruction” (2009, p. 172). Raudenbush presents educators with an epic challenge: ensuring that every teacher understands what constitutes good teaching and how to make it happen in the classroom.

Several national education organizations have published guidelines to inform the work of early educators and to define what thoughtful, high quality teaching of young children looks like in practice. These principles have been demonstrated through research
in cognitive science and related areas as well as observational studies of classroom practices to be the most critical components of early education. The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (NBPTS) PK-3 Standards, along with standards from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), serve as the basis for a core knowledge framework. Drawing on the guidelines set forth by national education groups and the research that underlies them, Michael Sadowski (2006) outlines what experts in the field identify as “core knowledge” for high quality PreK-3 teaching. This represents what PreK-3 teachers must know and be able to do to be effective in their work.

Sadowski (2006) noted ten areas of core knowledge for PreK-3 educators. The first area is knowledge of child development. Good teachers of PreK-3 know about young children from analytical as well as scientific perspectives. They understand how learning builds during the early years and they design instruction to support this building process for all students across multiple skill levels. “Good teachers help children build on their emerging understanding and skills by introducing them to new activities and engaging in interactions that are sensitive and responsive and foster children’s social, emotional, and cognitive growth” (Ackerman, 2005, p. 9). The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards (2000) notes that accomplished PreK-3 educators use their knowledge of child development and relationships with children and families to understand children as unique individuals and to plan in response to their needs and potentials.

Understanding how the many aspects of development interrelate as young children grow is a key aspect of the knowledge base for effective PreK-3 teaching. Debra Ackerman of Rutgers University’s National Institute for Early Education Research
(NIERR, 2005) indicates what teaching based on the knowledge of the many interrelated aspects of child development looks like in practice:

High quality, developmentally appropriate classrooms feature many meaningful interactions between children and teachers and their peers, whether working one-on-one with a teacher or within small-group or large-group activities. Children also have the opportunity to participate in a wide variety of age-appropriate activities, which are responsive to their individual interests, developmental abilities, curiosity, and home language and culture…In sum, good teachers help children build on their emerging understandings and skills by introducing them to new activities and engaging in interactions that are sensitive, responsive, and foster children’s social, emotional, and cognitive growth (p. 7).

A second area is methods for teaching diverse children. Teachers must be specifically prepared to work with the diversity of learners in their classrooms. The NBPTS standards call for PreK-3 teachers to promote the values of equity, fairness, and diversity among students by treating all students fairly and by instilling these same principles in the young children they teach. “The best PreK-3 teachers recognize that all children are different and benefit when they learn to view both their own and their peers’ differences as assets, not deficits that need to be erased or overcome” (Sadowski, 2006, p. 2).

PreK-3 teachers must also know how to work effectively with students of various skills and ability levels, including those identified as having special needs. All teachers need to work from a solid knowledge base about the kinds of physical, emotional, and
learning differences children might have and employ strategies for working with students of various abilities and skills all within one classroom in an inclusive setting.

Children from immigrant families are now the fastest growing segment of the U.S. child population. PreK-3 teachers must develop competence in working with children from immigrant families as well as English language learners. Studies indicate that few educators receive adequate training in this area either as a part of their pre-service education or later professional development (Russakoff, 2011).

Use of multiple forms of assessment is the third area noted by Sadowski (2006). In an era of widespread standardized testing, effective PreK-3 teachers use assessment not merely to sort students or gauge ability but to guide student learning and foster growth across the developmental spectrum. “In the teaching of young children, assessment should nearly always be embedded in the learning experience” (Shepherd, 2005, p. 72). The effective early childhood educator utilizes a variety of assessment strategies as teaching tools in themselves. Shepherd notes the importance of formative assessment, which takes place during and as part of the learning process. Both NBPTS and NAEYC standards highlight the understanding and use of multiple, developmentally appropriate assessment procedures as a necessary area of competence for today’s PreK-3 teacher.

Organization of learning environments is the next component. The NBPTS standards note that accomplished PreK-3 educators promote all aspects of child development by organizing and orchestrating the environment in ways that best facilitate the development and learning of young children. Leaders must know how to balance both teacher-directed and student-directed activity, incorporate both small group and
individual activities along with full-class instruction, and use play as an effective learning tool to enhance cognitive, social, and other forms of development. NAEYC standards emphasize the need for teachers to create learning environments that address the broad range of children’s developmental needs.

The next area is curriculum design that helps children make connections. Research indicates learning happens most effectively when children are able to transfer learning from one experience to another, both within and across academic disciplines. Accomplished PreK-3 educators design curriculum to promote skill development in such areas as language, mathematics, science, and the arts, integrating learning across disciplines and around key concepts and essential questions. The curriculum is integrated so that learning occurs primarily through projects, learning centers, and play activities that reflect current interests of children (Bredekamp, 1997). This integration is effective in fostering children’s transfer of knowledge and skills.

The strategic use of resources and technologies is the next component. As important as it is for PreK-3 teachers to know how to build content-rich curriculum to enable children to make connections within and across disciplines, it is also necessary for educators to know how to use the resources available to bring that curriculum to life. Technological resources are always changing. In all areas, new materials become available as older materials are revised, updated, or disbanded. The best teachers know how to use these resources to help them achieve learning goals for their students (Sadowski, 2006).

The next component is parent and family outreach. Both the NBPTS and NAEYC standards stress the importance of parent and family involvement in a child’s education.
Research points to the fact that when families and schools work together, the benefits to student learning increase. Parent involvement in schooling has been shown to have strong and long lasting effects on children’s school performance and to benefit the development of their language, self-help, motor, adaptive, and basic school skills (Rice, 2009). It is important for teachers to create multiple opportunities for family members to be involved and to communicate effectively with a wide range of families.

Professional collaboration and development is the next of Sadowski’s identified components (2006). Continuous, collaborative learning to inform practice is a hallmark of a professional in any field. Effective PreK-3 teaching requires educators to work collaboratively with colleagues both at their grade level and across grade levels to ensure alignment of curricular content, expectations, and assessment. Professionalism and professional growth are key to effective teaching. Effective PreK-3 teaching requires educators to work in productive collaboration with one another and with others both in their own school and in the larger professional community. Collaboration among PreK-3 teachers, both within and across grades, is necessary to ensure alignment of curriculum content, expectations, and assessment, since children learn best when learning happens continuously. NBPTS (2000) standards state, “Accomplished early childhood educators are able to work effectively with and assume leadership among supervisors, paraprofessionals, interns, peers, professionals from other disciplines, and volunteers” (p. 102). NAEYC standards also point to professionalism and professional growth on an ongoing basis, rather than teachers remaining static in their knowledge base and teaching approaches.
The next area noted (Sadowski, 2006) is reflection for enhanced teaching. The NBPTS (2000) standards state that accomplished PreK-3 teachers know how to “analyze, synthesize, and refine their own teaching practices using a variety of processes such as keeping a journal, meeting collaboratively with colleagues to discuss craft and practices, and working with a mentor. PreK-3 teachers must reflect on and learn from their practice on an ongoing basis so they can continuously improve their work with young children” (p. 96).

Vertical alignment is the final component. Aligning instruction and expectations across grade levels provides a continuum of learning for the child from ages 3 to 8. The National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP, 2009) recently conducted case studies in collaboration with the Foundation for Child Development demonstrating the many possible forms of vertical alignment and the ways it can benefit instruction and student learning.

Former NAESP executive director Vincent Ferrandino noted vertical alignment is an especially important tool for bridging the often separate worlds of prekindergarten, kindergarten, and the elementary grades, places where children can be held to vastly different expectations and there exists little continuity in educational experiences.

Learning from PreK through third grade must build in deliberate ways on the previous year’s experience. The key to successful aligning is streamlining the core elements of teaching and learning and focusing on grade-level transitions to ensure that children get what they need to succeed at every step. (NAESP, 2005, p. 3).
Currently, a child’s education and future prospects depend to a great extent on the teachers, classrooms and schools to which he or she is assigned. More than fifty years ago, renowned educator Ralph W. Tyler (1949) stressed that prior to teaching anyone anything, two fundamental questions must be addressed: What do we want students to learn and be able to do, and what evidence would we accept to verify that learning? Standards and frameworks now exist within the field of PreK-3 to provide this information.

Professional development helps recognize that defining learning goals and identifying specifically how those goals will be measured or assessed are not new ideas. Once these decisions are made, powerful professional development may then follow through by helping educators and administrators acquire the core knowledge, instructional skills and procedures, and research-based strategies they need to help all students reach the articulated learning goals. When children consistently have good teachers, they can make great strides. Teachers and administrators must share responsibility for strengthening teaching and learning. This can happen when professional development is frequent and collaborative, both within and across grades and levels of education.

**Professional Development**

“What teachers know and can do is the most important influence on what students learn” (National Commission on Teaching and America’s Future, 1997, p. iv). This Report concludes, “…schools that found ways to educate all students well have done so by teachers and staff” (p. 9). Without continuous and meaningful growth available for the adults who teach them, students are shortchanged. Research indicates that teachers are
eager for more meaningful professional development opportunities than are offered by most school systems (Donovan, 2010).

Researchers indicate reaching consensus on a definition as well as a conceptual framework of professional development is needed to effectively integrate professional development across the various sectors of the early childhood field (Buysse, Winton, & Rous, 2009). The absence of a definition of professional development in early childhood likely contributes to the lack of a common vision of the most effective ways of organizing and implementing professional development to improve the quality of early childhood professionals. This factor has also been identified in the literature as one of the challenges to conducting research on the topic (Maxwell, Field, & Clifford, 2005). There is a growing consensus that existing early childhood professional development efforts at the national, state, and local levels are fragmented at best (Winton & McCollum, 2008).

For the purposes of this literature review, the following definition of professional development for early childhood was utilized. “Professional development is facilitated teaching and learning experiences that are transactional and designed to support the acquisition of professional knowledge, skills, and dispositions as well as the application of this knowledge in practice” (NPDCI, 2008, p. 3). NAEYC (1999) views early childhood professional development as a continuum of learning and support opportunities designed to prepare individuals for work with young children and their families, as well as opportunities that provide ongoing experiences to enhance this work, resulting in improvements in the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions of early childhood professionals.
Attitudes and perspectives concerning staff development have changed as the concept and related perspectives have developed through the years. Dewey (1938) believed the educative process could be understood “in terms of growing” (p. 36). Hass (1957) stated that “…staff development promotes continuous improvement of the total professional staff of the school system” (p. 13). During the 1980s and 1990s, both the business world and the educational field began placing importance on human resources. Bradley, Kallik, and Regan (1991) offered that staff development is a “…systematic attempt to affect the professional practices, beliefs and understandings of school persons toward an announced goal” (p. 3). Danielson (1996) indicates that “continuing development is the mark of a true professional, an ongoing effort that is never completed” (p. 115). Whatever the beliefs or definitions, researchers agree staff development is concerned with building the climate for growth and success. Staff development is viewed as a lifelong pursuit to improve the quality of education.

Andragogy has been defined as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Knowles, 1970, p. 38). This research indicates the cornerstone of successful staff development is the way in which adults are engaged in learning. Understanding what motivates adults to grow enhances professional staff development. When exploring the many-faceted topic of professional development, the attributes of adult learning communities must be explored in relation to emerging research and practices from the field. Learning activities need to appeal to adults reflective of the ways in which adults learn. The ability of the principal to understand and apply the principles of adult learning impacts the effectiveness of staff development opportunities.
Greene (1988) stated that adults need and want to grow professionally. He believed they desire ongoing learning opportunities in a forum nestled within their own schools so that they can improve practice. Zemke (1995) concluded that as they mature, adults tend to prefer self-direction. He believed that adults’ experiences have the potential to be a rich resource for learning. Adults learn more effectively through experiential techniques such as discussion than they do through more passive techniques. Adults are competency-based learners, meaning that they want to learn a skill or acquire knowledge that they can apply pragmatically to immediate circumstances.

Zemke (1995) also focused on the successes that can be achieved by organizations which promote the development of adults who can be self-directed and who apply problem-centered approaches to the issues faced. He notes that with the teacher as the center of learning, ongoing administrative support needs to be embedded in learning goals to create momentum for growth. He believes that when organizational and individual learning goals are coupled, staff development has the capacity to transform a school into a learning organization. The principal can then include the community—teachers, professional staff, support staff, students, and parents to foster a unified vision for what learning can become. When all are engaged, the organization is more capable of growth. The researcher notes the needs of educators as adult learners include a climate conducive to learning, assessment of their needs, participatory planning, developing specific goals and objectives, providing varied learning activities, implementing new or refined practice, feedback and support, and evaluation and results. This uniquely adult form of learning becomes an important focus for any professional development activity.
Prior experiences are powerful sources of knowledge which should be considered by the principal in developing learning opportunities. Knowles (1992), cited by Brookfield (1995), notes, “In any situation in which adults’ experience is ignored or devalued, they perceive this as not just rejecting their experience, but their persona as well” (p. 223). He believes it is valuable to profile the adult learners in the building, emphasizing that if principals establish trusting relationships and build confidence, their teachers will reveal what they need. As a result of this, principals can be in a better position to meet the learning needs of their teachers.

Researchers also believe the principal can model action research by engaging teachers in charting their own career stages (Newman, Burden, & Applegate, 1980). Burden (1982) noted that teachers’ job skills, knowledge, behaviors, attitudes, and outlooks change over time. Burden’s research further suggests that teachers progress through three distinct stages: survival stage (first year of teaching), adjustment stage (years two through four), and mature stage (years five and beyond). He suggests professional development should be reflective of this.

Professional development can avoid battles over terminology by maintaining a focus on learning and learners. In dealing with standards, it can keep discussions centered on what students should learn, what they should be able to do, and what evidence best reflects that learning. Standards that emanate from such organizations as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) and the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) may serve as a base for designing staff development initiatives because they lay the foundation for the types of process, application, and context information to be considered in emerging designs.
Standards that emanate from organizations such as NAEYC and National or State Core Curriculum Content Standards as well as National Board Certification Standards offer educators a direction for professional development initiatives by providing consensus about what is important for students to learn and what skills teachers should acquire. Staff development has a powerful potential to directly influence student performance. Leaders are charged with ensuring that educators have the knowledge and skills needed to help all students reach the high levels of learning described by standards.

In 2011, the New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Early Childhood Education, published suggested guidelines for kindergarten programs. The Guidelines, conceived as an essential step in building continuity from preschool to grade three, responded to school districts’ many questions about developmentally appropriate kindergarten practices in the twenty-first century. The document examined the major components of successful kindergarten programming. Applied systematically and comprehensively, these components can yield high-quality programming for New Jersey’s kindergarten classrooms.

During the 2011-2012 school year, the New Jersey Department of Education offered three regional workshops for kindergarten teachers in northern, central, and southern New Jersey. These Kindergarten Seminars were designed to develop kindergarten teacher leaders and enhance the quality of kindergarten classrooms throughout the state through the use of the recently issued Kindergarten Implementation Guidelines. The stated goal was to help children reach maximum potential as learners through age-appropriate experiences in kindergarten.
In 1997, the National Staff Development Council (NSDC) released standards that included context, process, and content competencies for the elementary, middle, and high school levels. Based on NSDC standards, meaningful staff development was characterized as being ongoing; collaborative (involving the entire school community); research-based; driven by data-based decision-making (data collected, organized, and analyzed are used for making decisions); and supported with adequate resources such as released time and funding. Sparks and Hirsh (1997) reflect the commonalities of the NSDC standards in their vision of a paradigm shift in staff development changes from an individual development to include organizational development as well.

The NCATE standards mirror the National Policy Board standards and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards. These standards define an effective school administrator as someone who promotes the success of all and facilitates the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared by the school and community. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program designed to promote student learning is seen as part of a principal’s responsibility (ISLLC, 1997, p. 24). NCATE standards also state that principals should collaboratively develop a learning system that supports instruction and appropriate curriculum. They should work with the faculties’ and the stakeholders’ needs for professional development, facilitate and evaluate professional development programs to integrate district and building based priorities, and build professional development designed to improve student outcomes. They should formulate and implement a self-development plan utilizing a variety of resources for professional development (NCATE, 2010).
The term “instructional leader” clearly describes the role of principals in the quest for excellence in schools (Richardson, Flanigan, & Blackbourn, 1991). As the instructional leader, responsibility for effective staff development programs rests primarily with the principal (Rutherford, 1989). “Of the many roles the principal must play, the role…of staff development deserves the highest priority” (McCall, 1997, p. 23). As staff developer, the principal realizes that “the actual process of learning that teachers go through is important, if not more important, than the teaching they do in the classroom. Students learn from teachers who are themselves in the process of learning” (McCall, 1997, p. 23).

An analysis of studies that examined successful leaders (Ellis, 1986) noted successful leaders develop professional development programs based not only on personal beliefs and values but also upon their knowledge and understanding of the specific needs of their schools and communities. They set high expectations within their schools and reinforce them through daily interactions with staff and students. They promote collaboration and they cultivate mutual trust among teachers. Effectiveness in school leadership is characterized by an orientation toward continuous learning. If learning is a life-long goal to improve education, educators and administrators must be continually engaged in updating their knowledge and skills.

Principals have become key figures in implementing effective staff development programs (Bell, 1986; Rutherford, 1989). For the principal, providing staff development becomes akin to a moral responsibility to set the conditions for adults to grow and enable the school organization to grow to its fullest capacity. As instructional leader, the principal is often the one initiating the building staff development process. Caldwell
(1989) envisioned cutting edge staff development to be “…the facilitation of improvement goals and programs developed by the individual schools” (p. 52). Research indicates building an atmosphere of shared decision-making and collective responsibility among principals and teachers enhances professional development initiatives (Blasé, 1998).

Instructional leaders ensure that learning is tailored to the context and needs of staff members (Thurston et al., 1993). To uncover and understand the school’s culture, it is important to look for artifacts, practices, and expectations within the organization. The principal needs to shift attention to examining the school’s culture in terms of adult learning, staff development, and professional growth. The examination can start by reflecting on learning opportunities both formally and informally.

After identifying informal staff development activities, these can be examined in relation to the opportunities they provide for learning, sharing, reflecting, and discussing; examining the talk over time; reading the word; celebrating; accountability; safety issues; unique needs of students; technology; new developments in the field; changes in the teaching force; demographics; restructuring and site-based management; and organizational barriers. There are many dilemmas that teachers face, but “…sensitive principals are aware of these workplace dilemmas and try to alter their schools, from routine, non-inspiring work, to joyful centers of learning. Principals…. empower and challenge the intellect and inner glow of professional well-being within each staff member…” (Hoyle & Crenshaw, 1997, p. 38).

The workings of effective staff development need to be tailored to fit the unique and emerging needs of schools. The principal is the point of convergence for all that the
school is and does. Without leadership from both teachers and administrators, there is little hope that staff development will make an impact on individual growth.

Characteristics of effective schools as stated by Edmonds (1982) include the principal’s attention to the quality of instruction, pervasive and broadly understood instructional vision, and expectations for student achievement. Brennan (1988) indicates that the principal is the most visible administrator to parents and the ultimate authority to faculty and students. The primary responsibility of the principal is the improvement of instruction, and the majority of the principal’s time should be spent on curriculum and staff development (Murphy, 1990).

An organizing framework for planning and evaluating professional development can be utilized through the conceptualization of professional development as three intersecting components. Caldwell (1989) presented the nested nature of staff development as having three “constant” variables: context, content, and process. These key components of professional development include the who, or the learner, encompassing the characteristics and contexts of the learners and the children and families they serve; the what, or the content, encompassing what professionals should know and be able to do; and the how, or the organization and facilitation of learning experiences, including the approaches, models, or methods used to support self-directed experientially oriented learning that is highly relevant to practice (NPDCI, 2008).

Effective professional development models often have two goals: to deepen content knowledge relative to important topics and to provide time, guided support, and feedback to participants as they develop increased knowledge and skills relative to the identified topics. It takes knowledge and extensive pedagogical content experience
(experimentation with different instructional strategies) to be able to match appropriate instructional and assessment strategies with high-level instructional goals.

An effective process of professional development includes a number of criteria. The first component is the use of an integrated systems approach; that is, “a comprehensive system of preparation and ongoing development and support for all early childhood education professionals working with and on behalf of young children” (NAEYC, 2007). A second component is ensuring that professional development is an ongoing process. Professional development experiences should be evidence-based, structured to promote linkages between research and practice, and responsive to the adult learner’s background, experiences, and the current context of his or her role. Professional development experiences should be based on specific outcomes that define what the professional should know and be able to do and continuing education and training (NAEYC, 2007). Continuous assessment should be a component of all programs. Core knowledge areas as well as program standards should be addressed within professional development.

Effective professional development experiences include a variety of methodologies. The research indicates many available types of professional development. Research indicates staff development that is conducted as an integral part of the daily work routine is more effective than disjointed activities conducted as one-shot in-services throughout the school year. When staff development becomes a learning experience on a daily and ongoing basis, professional educators refer to this process as job-embedded staff development (Smith, 2011).
Job-embedded staff development can take many forms. Among these are mentoring, reflection, study groups, and peer coaching (including videotape analysis) (Sparks, 1997). The goals of job-embedded staff development are clearly delineated in the research. These include transfer and application of newly learned skills into classroom practice (Bennett, 1995; Wood & Killian, 1998), development of professionalism and collegiality (Ponticell, 1995), and school improvement (Wood & Killian, 1998). The major importance of job-embedded staff development models is their customized nature and immediate applicability for the learner. Mortenson and Grady (1979) state that “the value of job-embedded training lies in its unity with the teacher’s job and the economy of accomplishing several purposes at once” (p. 4).

Job-embedded staff development is “learning that occurs as teachers and administrators engage in their daily work activities” (Wood & Killian, 1998, p. 52). Job-embedded staff development has three major attributes: relevance, feedback, and transfer. Relevance is guaranteed if learning is a part of daily work and addresses current challenges. Feedback is provided and encouraged from a variety of sources including peer coaches and administrators. Transfer of practice is integral because the more transfer occurs, the more learning becomes embedded. A second attribute of job-embedded staff development is continuous refinement using feedback from a variety of sources (Wood, 1989).

A variety of approaches, such as technical assistance, coaching, consultation, mentoring, and communities of practice have gained prominence as key components of professional development which provide practitioners with both guidance and feedback.
Researchers note the lack of agreement on what each of these approaches means, how and when they can be used to enhance professional practice, and if they are actually effective in improving teaching performance. Some of the most commonly utilized staff development models and the processes inherent include, but are not limited to, the following components.

Action research is employed as a professional development process when educators conduct semi-formal studies to collect baseline data, track the impact of innovations on students, and report results. Action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in school. (NCREL, 1999). It allows educators to reflect on and assess their teaching; to explore and test new ideas, methods, and materials; and to determine the effectiveness of new approaches. Action research keeps teachers focused on student learning as well as on instructional practices, materials, and resources from the perspective of the impact on student performance.

Mentoring is an effective strategy in assisting teachers in adapting to new roles, new tools, and different teaching assignments. It is part of a strong support system that provides opportunities for veteran teachers to assist fellow teachers in learning new instructional strategies, skills, and classroom management techniques (Smith, 2011).

Networking involves professionals with common interests and concerns actively seeking out one another’s company to share insights and seek new solutions to problems of practice. Networks can hasten the successful implementation of a program or
instructional practice as teachers learn, not only from their own mistakes and successes, but also from those of others (Smith, 2011).

Peer coaching is a professional development strategy championed by Bruce Joyce and Beverly Showers (1990) which has proven useful in providing in-classroom follow-up to training that has taken place in a workshop or immersion setting. The goal of peer coaching is to provide school-based support for teachers as they begin to implement the skills or new teaching strategies that were developed in the training.

A professional learning community is a group of individuals who share a similar vision of educational values and beliefs which enables them to work toward common goals that enhance professional practice. Learning involves the collective capacity of all members of the group. The focus is on student learning (DuFour, 2004).

Reflecting on one’s own thinking processes is at the core of high-level learning. Reflective practice, a metacognitive strategy of linking and constructing meaning from experience as described by Costa and Kallick (2000), encourages insight and supports this sort of complex training. The central component of reflective practice is the capacity to be conscious of oneself. Whether we are engaged in reflecting on the process of our own learning or pondering the learning of others, reflective practice involves processing information and synthesizing, then evaluating, data. Reflective practice also means applying what we learn beyond the context in which we learn it. As a professional development strategy, reflective practice is at the core of evaluating instructional practices and intended outcomes.

Study groups are organized around a common interest, such as improved teaching and learning. While themselves a key professional development strategy, study groups
often employ a combination of other strategies as their members discuss research and best practices; examine student work together; reflect on classroom practices; analyze data; engage in problem solving and planning; and conduct action research. Study groups have proven useful in supporting school improvement efforts, investigating research and best practices, and identifying and solving problems. The goal of study groups is to provide a collaborative learning forum focused on improved student learning. Study groups help teachers connect new information to their existing knowledge, skills, and beliefs. They facilitate deep professional dialogue, reflection, and a balancing of current realities with desired outcomes (Smith, 2011).

Train-the-trainer programs, or collaborative consultation models, can increase the size and capacity of the local expert pool. An expert, either inside or outside the school, conducts a training program on-site, or trainers are sent off-site to a workshop. After initial training and follow-up, the trainers conduct training for others at the school, providing local support and collegiality for their learners (Smith, 2011).

Workshops may provide cost-effective training for many teachers; thus, they are a good choice when school or district-wide dissemination of strategies and skills and their underlying philosophy or beliefs are needed. In a typical workshop, a presenter determines the content, shares expertise, and manages the flow of the session. Researchers have found that one-shot workshops have little effect on teachers’ classroom practice, and overuse of these workshops has resulted in a negative attitude toward them (Indiana Department of Education, 2005).

Professional development has the potential to build a program’s, school’s, or district’s capacity for success. What teachers know and can do has an important influence
on what students learn and their subsequent performance. Attitudes and perceptions regarding professional development have changed throughout the years. Awareness of the unique needs of the adult learner have developed. Standards, research, and guidelines from many professional organizations exist to help guide the process. Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and professional development system is part of a principal’s responsibility as instructional leader. An organizing framework for planning and evaluating professional development can be utilized through the conceptualization of the three intersecting components of context (the who), content (the what), and process (the how).

**Summary**

The studies in this literature review examined the PreK-3 learning continuum, the role of the principal as the leader of an early childhood learning community, teacher quality, and professional development.

The first section of this review investigated the philosophical origins and conceptual framework of the PreK-3 learning continuum and the critical mass of evidence in support of PreK-3 that has been developing over the past decade. Studies determining both definitional and conceptual clarity of PreK-3 were reviewed (Foundation for Child Development, 2006; Kauerz, 2009; Maeroff, 2006; Reynolds et al., 2003). Studies have also indicated that the quality and duration of developmentally appropriate early childhood experiences are strongly linked to later school performance and performance in society (Barnett, 1995; Bogard, 2005; Reynolds et al. 2001, 2004, 2006). The positive outcomes found for many children, by the end of preschool
programs, fade or dissipate when they enter elementary school and with the passage of time (Barnett, 1995; Bowman, 2001).

Research studies indicate evidence exists supporting the effectiveness of the PreK-3 approach, which connects and integrates the learning experiences of children in grades PreK through third in a systematic and comprehensive model. Components of PreK-3 were presented and reviewed. These components were drawn from a wide variety of research-based sources, including the literature on effective schools, intervention and prevention strategies, early childhood education, systems analysis, and developmental sciences. Nine key components of PreK-3 were identified and discussed in detail. These included access to program, teacher and teaching quality, program quality, leader quality, whole child concept, child-based assessments, transitions, infrastructure, and family and community engagement (Kauerz, 2009). The components of additional studies were presented and discussed (Foundation for Child Development, 2006; PreK-3 Resource Center, 2007; Reynolds et al., 2006). This section also reviewed the principles of alignment and coordination, which link the PreK-3 components (Kauerz, 2000; Maeroff, 2006).

The following section explored the importance of principal leadership in early childhood learning communities. It discussed the many roles and responsibilities of principals (NAESP, 2005). It cited studies indicating that many school administrators do not have an understanding of the practices, challenges, best teaching practices, and core conceptual knowledge of early childhood educational practices (ACNJ, 2010; Education Week, 2008; NAESP, 2006). The New Jersey Early Childhood Leadership series was presented and discussed.
Policy, practice, and research indicate that one of the most critical elements in the success of any PreK-3 program is the quality of teaching that occurs every day in every classroom. Studies by researcher Michael Sadowski (2006) outline what experts in the field identify as “core knowledge” for high quality PreK-3 teaching and represent what teachers should know and be able to do. These include knowledge of child development, methods for teaching diverse children, use of multiple forms of assessment, organization of learning environments, curriculum design that helps children make connections, strategic use of resources and technologies, parent and family outreach, professional collaboration and development, reflection for enhanced teaching, and vertical alignment.

The last section explored the topic of professional development. Research indicates the lack of both a definition and conceptual framework of professional development in the early childhood field (Buysse et al., 2009; Maxwell et al., 2005). The concept of professional development was explored in the context of adult learning. Standards emanating from organizations such as NAEYC, National and State Core Standards, National Staff Development Council Standards, and NCATE and ISLLC Standards were noted. The role of the principal as instructional leader and staff developer was presented. An organizing framework for planning and evaluating professional development (Caldwell, 1989) introduced three constant variables: context, content, and process. Effective professional development methodologies were presented and reviewed, including action research, mentoring, networking, peer coaching, professional learning communities, reflection, study groups, train-the-trainer programs, and workshops.
CHAPTER III

METHODODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Introduction

Chapter III describes the research design and methods utilized to answer the research questions. This chapter includes the purpose of the study, research questions, research design, sample, development of the survey instrument, validity and reliability of the survey instrument, pilot testing, and techniques for data collection and analyses.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the PreK-3 continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3 as well as specific professional development delivery models or formats.

Research Questions

The primary question guiding this study was as follows: What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3?

The answers were addressed through the following subsidiary questions:

1. Are kindergarten teachers satisfied with current professional development opportunities?
2. What or who do kindergarten teachers perceive as key influencers of professional development offerings?

3. What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3?

4. What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of professional development opportunities in the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3?

5. Which professional development opportunities featuring the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction in PreK-3 would kindergarten teachers like to see offered?

6. What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified professional development delivery models and formats?

7. What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of identified professional development delivery models and formats?

8. Which identified professional development formats and delivery models would kindergarten teachers like to see offered?

After answering these questions, the researcher determined in Chapter V what suggestions or recommendations could be formulated from the data.

**Research Design**

Survey research design was used for this investigation. Survey research is a tool used to gather information about a population by studying a sample from that population and asking their opinion. Survey research design incorporates research procedures in which the investigator administers a survey to a group of people in order to describe the
attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the sample (Neumann, 2006). In addition to opinions, another type of information obtained by surveys is demographic information about the respondents themselves. These questions may ask about a person’s educational background, certifications, gender, and other variables (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).

The survey is the most widely used tool in the social sciences because it has the advantage of reaching a large population in a timely and relatively economical manner (Newman & McNeil, 1998). It can be utilized to reach a geographically dispersed population and enables the researcher to canvas participants anonymously without biasing reports (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Additionally, surveys are amenable to quantification and statistical analysis. They also have the benefit of replicability (Rea & Parker, 1992).

The Tailored Design Method guided the development of the survey instrument utilized in this study. The Tailored Design Method is an outgrowth of the Total Design Method (TDM), a method which demonstrated the ability to achieve high response rates through the development of survey procedures that create respondent trust and the perception of increased rewards for being a respondent (Dillman, 1978, 2006). The Tailored Design Method also considers features of the survey situation with the aim of reducing survey error as well as consideration of the incorporation of modern technological advances. The philosophy of social exchange theory, a theory of human behavior used to explain the development and continuation of human interaction (including why people do things for others), and its corresponding principles guided the methods chosen for designing and administering the survey.
A questionnaire is a form of survey research which gathers large amounts of data from many respondents in a relatively inexpensive way (Krathwohl, 1998). Respondents choose answers to questions and supply basic personal or demographic data. A rating survey featuring Likert-style responses was used in this study to collect quantitative data.

A cross-sectional rather than a longitudinal design was utilized to collect data about current attitudes, opinions, and beliefs. This is the most popular form of survey design used in education. In a cross-sectional survey design, the researcher collects data at a specific point in time. This design has the advantage of measuring current attitudes or practices and also provides information in a short amount of time (Neumann, 2006).

The survey research methodology utilized in this study allowed for a statistical analysis of the data and enabled the researcher to describe trends about responses to questions and to answer research questions. It was an efficient means of gathering data without introducing threats to reliability that can occur with other collection methods (Suskie, 1996).

**Population**

When designing a survey, defining the population is of critical importance. The researcher must consider such variables as age, gender, race, socioeconomic status, religion, occupation, and education when delineating the characteristics of the population. Survey researchers usually provide some careful rationale for the persons selected for the study (Krathwohl, 1998). The researcher must also decide the geographic boundaries with which to work, and these boundaries must be congruent with the stated objectives (Newman & McNeill, 1998). In order to learn more about the beliefs of kindergarten
teachers regarding professional development, the population of this study consisted of kindergarten teachers employed in public schools in the state of New Jersey.

Convenience sampling, a non-probability sampling method, was used to draw a sample because of availability. A significant criticism about using a convenience sample is the limitation in generalizing the results to any population. Because the sample may not be representative of the entire population, this results in a low external validity of the study. However, convenience sampling is a widely utilized method and proves to be economically effective, time-efficient, simpler to administer, and likely to ensure a high participation rate (Castillo, 2009).

New Jersey is home to 3,408 public school kindergarten teachers. These teachers are employed within 603 New Jersey school districts (N.J. Dept. of Education, 2013). For this survey, the target population was kindergarten teachers from a variety of New Jersey school districts. The sample of convenience was 150 kindergarten teachers from northern, central, and southern New Jersey schools districts who attended a series of New Jersey Department of Education Kindergarten Seminars. About one third of the respondents worked in each of the three regions of the state, representing all District Factor Groups.

Teachers sampled worked in schools with diverse school size and grade level configurations. Most of the teachers (86%) taught in full-day kindergarten programs. Nine percent of the sample population indicated that kindergarten was a half-day program in their schools. There was a wide range of teaching experience, with half of the teachers having 10 years or less experience and one fifth of the teachers having 20 or more years
experience. Considering only kindergarten teaching experience, almost 75% of the respondents have taught kindergarten for less than 10 years.

Teachers provided information pertaining to their level of education: 44% indicated that they had a master’s degree, 44% had a bachelor’s degree, and 12% were working towards a master’s degree. While all of the teachers held elementary school certification, only 24% of the respondents held PreK-3 certification. The PreK-3 certification is designed to provide the formal training necessary for candidates to teach at the PreK-3 level.

Instrumentation

A review of the literature revealed no existing instrumentation designed specifically to gather information regarding kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding professional development in early childhood education. Consequently, a questionnaire was developed by the researcher to obtain this pertinent information (see Appendix B).

The instrument designed for this study, *Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey*, was based on the literature review. During the literature review, specific notes were made of the philosophy and components of PreK-3, research in the field of professional development components, and identified components of effective teaching and areas of core knowledge at the early childhood level. The items utilized in the survey were derived from the literature review with the purpose of revealing the respondents’ opinions of professional development opportunities in early childhood education.

The survey consisted of close-ended questions, wherein the researcher posed a question and provided preset responses for the participant. Close-ended questions were
practical because all individuals would answer the questions using the response options provided. This enabled the researcher to consistently compare responses.

A Likert scale produces interval data that allow for quantitative examinations. A rating survey using a Likert scale was chosen over a ranking survey. Researchers note a rating survey is generally familiar to most people and permits comparisons among respondents. A ranking survey can be tedious to complete, produce incomplete information, and yield data that are difficult to statistically analyze (Suskie, 1996). A rating scale is more useful when a behavior, attitude, or other phenomenon of interest is to be evaluated on a continuum such as “very important” to “not important” and “increased greatly” to “decreased greatly” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). A four-point Likert scale was chosen to encourage respondents to select a response and avoid a neutral position. Survey researchers note that attitudes have two aspects: direction (for or against) and intensity (strongly or weakly held belief or opinion) (Neumann, 2006).

The survey instrument consisted of five main sections. The first section of the instrument enabled the researcher to explore the concept of context, which is the who, or the learner, and the first noted component of professional development. These sections were designed to enable the researcher to gather information encompassing the characteristics of the learners and the educational communities they serve.

The first section consisted of descriptive information questions designed to produce specific demographic data about the kindergarten teachers and their schools, which comprise part of the contextual components of this study. These demographic questions were designed to be ones that participants could easily answer and, in the process of answering, become committed to completing the questionnaire.
Table 1

*Context of Professional Development: Demographics of the Learners and Their Communities*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Area of New Jersey (Northern, Central, Southern) in which respondent’s school district is located</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District Factor Grouping of respondent’s school district</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade Levels in respondent’s school</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Students in respondent’s school</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of Kindergarten Program (Full-time, Part-time, other) in respondent’s school</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Years of Teaching Experience</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Years of Kindergarten Teaching Experience</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Highest Formal Educational Background Status (B.A., M.A., Ed.D.)</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Does respondent hold a P-3 Certificate? (Yes, No)</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent’s Gender (Male, Female)</td>
<td>Demographics of the Learners and their Communities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second section of the questionnaire asked kindergarten teachers to rate their overall degree of satisfaction with current professional development opportunities. Respondents rated their degree of satisfaction using the following four-point scale:

(1) “strongly disagree,” (2) “disagree, (3) “agree,” and (4) “strongly agree.”

In the third section of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to rate the degree to which they believed persons or factors influence or determine the professional development opportunities available to them. This section provided additional information about the context of professional development, providing information about
the learners’ beliefs and the communities they serve. Respondents rated these ten factors using the following four-point scale: (1) “little or no influence,” (2) “some influence,” (3) “a good amount of influence,” and (4) “a great amount of influence.”

Table 2

*Context of Professional Development: Influencers of Professional Development*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Directors</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors/Coordinators</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Union</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Performance</td>
<td>Influencers of Professional Development</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The third section of the instrument asked kindergarten teachers to identify their perceptions regarding professional development related to areas of core knowledge and components of effective instruction for PreK-3. Part 1 of this section of the questionnaire investigating kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their understanding of areas of core knowledge and effective teaching at the early childhood level was adapted for the purposes of this study from Michael Sadowski’s (2006) research on desired PreK-3 core
knowledge areas for effective teaching. These components served as the content area of professional development in Section III of the questionnaire. Respondents rated their knowledge of these 10 components, using the following four-point scale: (1) “little or none,” (2) “some,” (3) “a good amount,” and (4) “a great amount.”

Table 3

Content of Professional Development: Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Child Development</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Methods of Teaching Diverse Children</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Use of Multiple Forms of Assessment</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Organization of the Learning Environment</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum Design that Helps Children Make Connections</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Strategic Use of Resources and Technology</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Family and Parent Outreach</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Reflection for Enhanced Teaching</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Vertical Alignment</td>
<td>Understanding of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices PreK-3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kindergarten teachers were also asked to rate their perceptions of the availability of professional development opportunities in these content areas. This section of the instrument, comprised of three areas, enabled the researcher to explore the concept of content, which is the what, and the second noted component of professional development.
Table 4

Content of Professional Development: Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in Areas of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Child Development</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Methods of Teaching Diverse Children</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Use of Multiple Forms of Assessment</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Organization of the Learning Environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Curriculum Design that Helps Children make Connections</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Strategic Use of Resources and Technology</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Family and Parent Outreach</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Reflection for Enhanced Teaching</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Vertical Alignment</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This section of the questionnaire was designed to enable the researcher to gather information encompassing what the literature review indicated early childhood professionals should know and be able to do. Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the areas in which they would like to see additional professional development opportunities offered to them in these areas of core knowledge and effective practices in early childhood education.
Table 5

*Content of Professional Development: Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in Areas of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices in Early Childhood Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Child Development</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Methods of Teaching Diverse Children</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Use of Multiple Forms of Assessment</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Organization of the Learning Environment</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Reflection for Enhanced Teaching</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Offerings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of Vertical Alignment</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Offerings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The fifth section of the survey instrument asked kindergarten teachers to identify their perceptions of their degree of knowledge of specific professional development format and delivery models. A review of the literature indicated the many ways to organize and facilitate professional development experiences. These components have been explored and defined and served as the process area for this part of the questionnaire; they represent possible ways professional development can be provided to kindergarten teachers. Respondents rated their knowledge of these 13 components, using the following four-point scale: (1) “little or no,” (2) “some,” (3) “a good amount,” and (4) “a great amount.”
Table 6

*Process of Professional Development: Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in Specific Formats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-Session/Whole-District Attendance</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district Workshops</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district Workshops</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level Meetings</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Groups</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line District Courses</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership with Universities</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis/Blogs</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the second area of this section, kindergarten teachers were asked to rate their perceptions of the availability of professional development opportunities in these formats and delivery models.
Table 7

*Process of Professional Development: Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in Specific Formats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-Session/Whole-District Attendance</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district Workshops</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district Workshops</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level Meetings</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Groups</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line District Courses</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership with Universities</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis/Blogs</td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the next area of this section, kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they would like to see additional professional development opportunities offered to them, utilizing specific delivery models and formats. This section of the instrument enabled the researcher to explore the concept of process, which is the *how*, and the third identified component of professional development. This section was
designed to enable the researcher to gather information on kindergarten teachers’ perceptions regarding the organization and facilitation of learning experiences.

Table 8

*Process of Professional Development: Desirability of Professional Development Offerings in Specific Formats*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Process of Professional Development</th>
<th>Professional Development Category Addressed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-Session/Whole-District Attendance</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district Workshops</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district Workshops</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative Consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level Meetings</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study Groups</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Research</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line District Courses</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional Learning Communities</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnership with Universities</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis/Blogs</td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in this Format</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Validity and Reliability of the Survey Instrument

Survey questions should have two important qualities: reliability and validity. A question is reliable if it evokes consistent responses. The validity of a question is determined by whether the question actually measures the concept of interest. Face and construct validity were established by piloting this survey (Rea & Parker, 1998). The draft of the survey was reviewed by a jury of experts for their assessment and feedback. This small cadre of professionals included five of the researchers’ professional colleagues (all administrators at the preschool through third grade levels) and two experts in the field of early childhood who are recognized experts on the PreK-3 learning continuum. They verified the soundness and appropriateness of the survey in terms of the focus of this study. Specific suggestions were made and the researcher amended and modified the questionnaire based on the feedback provided by the jury of experts.

A pilot test of a questionnaire is a procedure in which a researcher makes changes in an instrument based on feedback from a small number of individuals who complete and evaluate the instrument (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This questionnaire was piloted by 10 kindergarten teachers, who were organized into two separate groups comprised of five teachers each. Questionnaire completion time was determined by these 10 volunteer kindergarten teachers who completed the survey under actual conditions. The survey took approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete. The participants in the pilot test provided written comments directly on the survey, which was then modified and changed to reflect these concerns. These groups of kindergarten teachers were interviewed to surmise if there were any ambiguous questions, problems in understanding the questions, threatening or embarrassing questions, or suggestions for revision. The group provided
suggestions regarding wording of questions, survey length, presentation, clarity of
directions and responses, and rating scale vocabulary. The researcher amended the
survey based on the feedback provided by the volunteer field participants. This pilot
group was excluded from the final study.

To determine the reliability of the instrument, internal reliabilities of the items
within the categories comprising the three components of the *Kindergarten Teacher
Professional Development Survey* were determined by calculating Cronbach’s alpha.
Results are indicated on the following page.
Table 9

Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey: Internal Reliability
Cronbach’s Alpha Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Components</th>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Cronbach’s Alpha Values</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Context of Professional Development</td>
<td>Influences of Professional Development</td>
<td>.086</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Content of Professional Development</td>
<td>Knowledge of Core Knowledge and Effective Practices</td>
<td>0.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Opportunities Related to Core Knowledge and Effective Practices</td>
<td>0.94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities Related to Core Knowledge and Effective Practices</td>
<td>0.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Process of Professional Development</td>
<td>Knowledge of Professional Development Formats</td>
<td>0.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Availability of Professional Development Formats</td>
<td>0.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Desired Professional Development Formats</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results indicated that internal consistency for all areas of the instrument ranged from 0.81 to 0.98. Cronbach’s values greater than 0.7 are considered acceptable (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010).
Data Collection

Approval for the study was requested from the Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board in June of 2011 (see Appendix A). The survey was administered to 150 kindergarten teachers during the winter of 2012. This time of year was chosen rather than the summer months when kindergarten teachers were on vacation to ensure a higher rate of return and also to coincide with the scheduled New Jersey Department of Education Kindergarten Seminars for kindergarten teachers.

For this survey, the target population was kindergarten teachers from a variety of New Jersey school districts. The sample was composed of kindergarten teachers participating in the Kindergarten Seminar series sponsored by the Division of Early Childhood Education of the New Jersey Department of Education. The questionnaire was distributed to participants by the researcher at the series’ locations in Parsippany, Perth Amboy, and Clementon, New Jersey.

These kindergarten teachers were addressed by the researcher, who noted her affiliation with Seton Hall University as a doctoral student, explained the nature of the study, and indicated that the kindergarten teachers’ participation was voluntary. Further, participants were assured of the confidentiality of the research records. The researcher explained to the participants that the information from the survey would not be linked to any individual participant or district in any way and that no school personnel would have access to the surveys. The researcher’s telephone number was provided if participants wished to know more or ask questions concerning the study. The researcher urged kindergarten teachers to participate in the study. This process allowed the respondents to ask questions of the researcher and provided a high rate of return.
A pencil and paper copy of the survey was distributed to all participating kindergarten teachers. The researcher verbally invited the groups to participate in the study by completing the survey and returning it to the researcher during the course of the workshop day. Permission for this was granted in advance by Roseann Hansel, Education Program Specialist of the Division of Early Childhood Education of the New Jersey State Board of Education and communicated by her to the group facilitator at each location.

A total of 150 surveys were distributed, and 143 surveys were returned completed to the researcher by workshop participants. Of these, seven surveys did not meet the inclusion criteria and were eliminated from the data pool. These included three surveys from reading teachers and four surveys from kindergarten teachers who indicated they were employed in non-public schools. A total of 136 surveys were analyzed and included in the data. The usable return rate was 91%. The hard data are stored in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s home office. Only the researcher has access to the data. Data will be retained for three years following study completion and then destroyed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

The results of the survey were analyzed to determine kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching for PreK-3 and specific professional development delivery models or formats.

Descriptive statistics were used to answer each of the research questions. Data presentation includes such information as the percentages and proportions of responses.
Mean scores and standard deviations are provided where appropriate. Aggregate data were inspected for patterns and trends and presented in tables, graphs, and narrative format. SPSS, GoogleDocs, and Microsoft Excel were utilized in the data analysis.

The various data collected, including the demographic information and the responses to the scaled-choice items, were used to answer the primary and subsidiary questions in the following manner:

The primary question, What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3, was most directly answered by inspection of the percentages, proportions, means, and standard deviations of the responses to the scaled-choice questions. Inspection of the cumulative responses to the subsidiary questions investigating respondents’ perceptions regarding specific areas of the context, content, and process of professional development provided additional information to answer this question.

**Summary**

This chapter described the methods and procedures utilized to provide insight into the perceptions of kindergarten teachers in a sampling of New Jersey school districts regarding the context, content, and process of professional development in early childhood education. An introduction, the purpose of the study, research questions, research design, population, development of the survey instrument, validity and reliability of the survey instrument, and pilot testing were presented. Additionally, the chapter discussed techniques for data collection and data analyses of the study. The presentation and analysis of the data in Chapter IV address both the primary and
subsidiary research questions as well as present the aggregate teacher and school
demographic information. A summary and discussion of the findings, along with
conclusions, implications for policy and practice, and suggestions for further research
form the content of Chapter V.
CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

Chapter IV presents the research findings and analysis. The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate implementation of the PreK-3 continuum. This was accomplished through an examination of kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching for PreK-3 as well as specific professional development delivery models or formats.

The primary question guiding this study was the following: What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3?

This was examined through the following subsidiary questions: (a) Are kindergarten teachers satisfied with current professional development opportunities? (b) What or whom do kindergarten teachers perceive as key influencers of professional development offerings? (c) What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of the degree of knowledge of identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3? (d) What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of professional development opportunities in the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3? (e) Which professional development opportunities featuring the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3 would
kindergarten teachers like to see offered to them? (f) What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified professional development delivery models and formats? (g) What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of identified professional development delivery models and formats? and (h) Which identified professional development formats and delivery models would kindergarten teachers like to see offered?

**Context of Professional Development**

*The Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey* addressed the first subsidiary question (a): Are kindergarten teachers satisfied with current professional development opportunities? Responses ranging from “strongly disagree” to “disagree” accounted for 33% of the responses. Responses ranging from “agree” to “strongly agree” accounted for 65% of the responses. Results indicate a majority of the kindergarten teachers were satisfied with current professional development offerings. This information is presented in the Table 10 below.

**Table 10**

*Kindergarten Teacher Satisfaction with Professional Development Offerings*

**Response (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Number of Responses</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>55.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The next subsidiary question addressed was (b): What or whom do kindergarten teachers perceive as key influencers of professional development offerings? The stakeholders investigated included teachers, principals, directors of technology, supervisors and coordinators, superintendents, Board of Education members, union representatives, parents, community members, and student performance. “No influence” was assigned a value of 1; “some influence,” a value of 2; “a good amount of influence,” a value of 3; and “a great amount of influence,” a value of 4.

Responses are documented in Tables 11 and 12.

Table 11

*Influencers of Professional Development and Degree of Influence by Percentage*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influencer</th>
<th>None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>43.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Director</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>9.6</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>40.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Ed</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>64.0</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Performance</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data can also be viewed in Table 12 in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 12

*Influencers of Professional Development (Context) by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendents and Assistant Superintendents</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>3.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors and Coordinators</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>3.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Performance</td>
<td>0.81</td>
<td>3.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>2.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors of Technology</td>
<td>0.95</td>
<td>2.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Board of Education Members</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers’ Union</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>1.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Community Members</td>
<td>0.58</td>
<td>1.37</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kindergarten teachers indicated they believed principals had the most influence on professional development offerings for teachers. They also perceived district administrators, supervisors and coordinators, and student performance as key influencers. Kindergarten teachers believed community members, parents and the teachers’ union had
the least amount of influence on professional development offerings for kindergarten teachers.

**Content of Professional Development**

The next question addressed was (c): What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3? This section dealt with qualities of effective instruction at the PreK-3 grade level, comprising the content of professional development offerings. These qualities reflect what effective PreK-3 teachers should know and be able to do and include knowledge of child development, methods of teaching diverse children, use of multiple forms of assessment, organization of the learning environment; curriculum design that helps children make connections, strategic use of resources and technology, family and parent outreach, reflection as a process to enhance teaching, knowledge of the concept of vertical alignment, and collaboration and professional development.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate their current knowledge of each identified factor of quality PreK-3 instruction, using a four-point Likert scale. Responses consisted of (1) indicating little or no knowledge, (2) indicating some knowledge, (3) indicating a good amount of knowledge, and (4) indicating a great amount of knowledge. Their responses are documented in Tables 13 and 14.
Table 13

*Kindergarten Teachers Knowledge of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction by Percentage*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Core Knowledge and Instruction</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse learners</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>30.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of learning environment</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum that helps make connections</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>60.3</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection for enhanced teaching</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>52.9</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vertical alignment</td>
<td>26.5</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data collected for this question are also displayed below in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.
Table 14

Kindergarten Teachers Knowledge of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction PreK-3 (Content) by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of child development</td>
<td>0.50</td>
<td>3.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse children</td>
<td>0.55</td>
<td>3.36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the learning environment</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design that helps children make connections</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>3.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>2.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>0.68</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection as a process to enhanced teaching</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>2.83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the concept of vertical alignment</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>2.21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kindergarten teachers believed vertical alignment, reflection for enhanced practice, and the strategic use of resources and technology were the areas in which they had the least amount of knowledge. Areas in which kindergarten teachers believed they had the most knowledge included knowledge of child development, knowledge of organization of the learning environment, and knowledge of teaching diverse children.

The next section of the Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey explored kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of the availability of professional development workshops in the specific areas of the identified qualities of core knowledge.
and effective instruction for PreK-3. It answered the subsidiary question (d): What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of the availability of professional development opportunities in the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3? Teachers were asked to utilize a four-point Likert scale to indicate this availability in each area using the following categories: (1) little or no availability, (2) some availability, (3) a good amount of availability, and (4) a great amount of availability. Responses are indicated in Table 15.

Table 15

*Availability of Professional Development Opportunities in Areas of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction by Percentages*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses (N=136)</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area of Core Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Little or None</td>
<td>Some</td>
<td>Good Amount</td>
<td>Great Amount</td>
<td>No Response</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse learners</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of learning environment</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum that helps make connections</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>32.4</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>34.6</td>
<td>44.1</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Reflection for enhanced teaching  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>0.85</td>
<td>2.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse children</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>2.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of child development</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>2.40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design that helps children make connections</td>
<td>0.83</td>
<td>2.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the learning environment</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>2.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reflection as a process to enhanced teaching</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>1.89</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of the concept of vertical alignment</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>1.80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kindergarten teachers believed the availability of professional development opportunities was highest in the areas of strategic use of resources and technology, use of multiple forms of assessment, and methods of teaching diverse children. Results
indicated the areas where the fewest opportunities were available for professional development included vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, reflection for enhanced teaching, and organization of the learning environment.

In the next section of the Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey, teachers were asked to rate the desirability of having professional development workshops available to them in the specific areas of the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction for PreK-3. This answered subsidiary question (e): Which professional development opportunities featuring the identified qualities of core knowledge and effective instruction in PreK-3 would kindergarten teachers like to see offered? Teachers were asked to utilize a four-point Likert scale to indicate their desire in each area using the categories: (1) no desire; (2) very little or some desire; (3) a good amount of desire; and (4) a great amount of desire. The responses are documented in Tables 17 and 18.

Table 17

Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in Areas of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction by Percentage

Responses (N=136)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Core Knowledge</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Child development</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>54.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse learners</td>
<td>0.7</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>36.0</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>48.5</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>47.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 18 is displayed in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.  

**Table 18**

*Desirability of Professional Development Opportunities in Areas of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Core Knowledge and Qualities of Effective Instruction</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Curriculum design that helps children make connections</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse children</td>
<td>0.61</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of child development</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>0.64</td>
<td>3.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization of the learning environment</td>
<td>0.73</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>0.69</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Strategic use of resources and technology was identified by kindergarten teachers as the area in which professional development opportunities were most available. Use of multiple forms of assessment and methods of teaching diverse children were also identified as areas in which professional development was more available. The areas in which professional development opportunities were less available included the concept of vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, and reflection as a process to enhance teaching.

Kindergarten teachers indicated they would most like to see professional development opportunities offered to them in the areas of curriculum design that helps children make connections, methods of teaching diverse children, knowledge of child development, and strategic use of resources and technology. The three relatively lowest areas of desirability were vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, and reflection for enhanced teaching.

**Process of Professional Development**

The next section of the *Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey* explored a variety of professional development delivery models and formats derived from the literature review. These included single-session workshop/whole-district attendance, in-district workshops, out-of-district workshops, collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant), grade-level meetings, study groups, action research, on-line
district courses, faculty meetings, professional learning communities, peer coaching, partnerships with universities, and wikis and/or blogs.

The first part answered the subsidiary question (f): What are kindergarten teachers’ perceptions of their degree of knowledge of identified professional development delivery models and formats? Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate their current knowledge of each professional delivery model using a four-point Likert scale. Responses consisted of (1) indicating no knowledge, (2) indicating very little or some knowledge, (3) indicating a good amount of knowledge, and (4) indicating a great amount of knowledge of the professional development delivery model or format. These responses are documented in Tables 19 and 20.

Table 19

Knowledge of Professional Development Delivery Models or Formats (Process) by Percentage

Responses (N=136)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/ whole-district attendance</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>30.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
This data can be viewed in Table 20 in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 20

Knowledge of Professional Development Delivery Models or Format (Process) by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations

Responses (N=136)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>3.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level meetings</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>3.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>3.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/whole-district attendance</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>2.89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kindergarten teachers indicated that they believed they were most knowledgeable of the professional development delivery models of faculty meetings, grade level meetings, and in-district workshops. Wikis and/or blogs, on-line district courses, and study groups were the professional development delivery formats in which they believed they had the least amount of knowledge.

The next part of the survey answered the subsidiary question (g): What are kindergarten teachers’ opinions of the availability of identified professional development delivery models and formats? Kindergarten teachers were asked to rate the availability of each professional delivery model to them. A four-point Likert scale was utilized. Responses consisted of (1) indicating no availability, (2) indicating very little or some availability, (3) indicating a good deal of availability, and (4) indicating a great deal of availability. These responses can be viewed in Tables 21 and 22.
Table 21

Availability of Professional Development Delivery Models or Formats (Process) by Percentage

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/ whole-district attendance</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>19.1</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>12.5</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level meetings</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>28.4</td>
<td>33.1</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>45.6</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>49.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line district courses</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>6.6</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning communities</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>29.4</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer coaching</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with universities</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>23.5</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>11.0</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis and/or blogs</td>
<td>59.6</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 22 presents the data in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 22

*Availability of Professional Development Delivery Models or Formats (Process) by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations.*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>0.92</td>
<td>3.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level meetings</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>3.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/whole-district attendance</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out of district workshops</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2.49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning communities</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>2.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>2.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer coaching</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>2.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with universities</td>
<td>1.05</td>
<td>1.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>0.89</td>
<td>1.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line district courses</td>
<td>0.97</td>
<td>1.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis and/or blogs</td>
<td>0.90</td>
<td>1.61</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Kindergarten teachers indicated that they believed professional development opportunities were most available in the professional development delivery models of
faculty meetings, in-district workshops, and grade-level meeting formats. Wikis and/or blogs, on-line district courses, action research, and partnerships with universities were the professional development delivery formats which they believed were least available to them.

The next part answered the subsidiary question (h): Which identified professional development formats and delivery models would kindergarten teachers like to see offered to them? Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate the extent to which they would like to see each professional development delivery model offered to them. A four-point Likert scale was utilized. Responses consisted of (1) indicating no desire, (2) indicating very little or some desirability, (3) indicating a good amount of desire, and (4) indicating a great amount of desire in being offered the professional development delivery model or format.

Kindergarten teacher responses are documented in Tables 23 and 24.
Table 23

*Desirability of Professional Development Delivery Models or Formats (Process) by Percentage*

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Little or None</th>
<th>Some Good Amount</th>
<th>Great Amount</th>
<th>No Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/whole-district attendance</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>30.9</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>10.3</td>
<td>41.2</td>
<td>45.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
<td>0.0</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>39.0</td>
<td>55.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>40.4</td>
<td>48.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level meetings</td>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>25.0</td>
<td>44.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>14.7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>42.6</td>
<td>16.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line district courses</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>22.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>22.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty meetings</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>17.6</td>
<td>41.9</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning communities</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>14.0</td>
<td>46.3</td>
<td>36.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer coaching</td>
<td>5.9</td>
<td>16.9</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>30.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with universities</td>
<td>5.1</td>
<td>13.2</td>
<td>47.1</td>
<td>33.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis and/or blogs</td>
<td>16.2</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>39.7</td>
<td>21.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

108
The data are presented in Table 24 in terms of mean scores and standard deviations.

Table 24

**Desirability of Professional Development Delivery Models or Formats (Process) by Mean Scores and Standard Deviations**

**Responses (N=136)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery Format</th>
<th>Standard Deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade-level meetings</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>3.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
<td>0.60</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Collaborative consultation (on-going training with a consultant)</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
<td>0.77</td>
<td>3.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional learning communities</td>
<td>0.78</td>
<td>3.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partnerships with universities</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>3.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Faculty Meetings</td>
<td>0.87</td>
<td>3.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer Coaching</td>
<td>0.84</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study groups</td>
<td>0.88</td>
<td>2.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wikis and/or blogs</td>
<td>0.99</td>
<td>2.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-line district courses</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>2.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action research</td>
<td>0.94</td>
<td>2.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Single-session workshop/whole-district attendance</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>2.58</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Kindergarten teachers indicated that they were most interested in being offered the following professional development delivery models: grade-level meetings, out-of-district workshops, and collaborative consultation. Single-session/whole-district workshops, action research, on-line district courses, wikis and/or blogs, and study groups were the professional development delivery formats through which they were least interested in receiving professional development opportunities.

Chapter Summary

The instrument examining the opinions of kindergarten teachers regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities was a survey entitled Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey. This was developed and validated by the researcher following a review of the literature.

The Kindergarten Teacher Professional Development Survey examined the overall level of professional development satisfaction of the kindergarten teacher sample. Teachers were asked to respond to the statement “I am satisfied with the professional development offerings currently available to me.” Teachers were asked to indicate if they strongly disagreed, disagreed, agreed, or strongly agreed with the statement. Results indicate a majority of the kindergarten teachers were satisfied with current professional development offerings.

The next section of the survey explored the context of kindergarten teacher professional development, asking teachers to rate the degree to which they believed identified stakeholders influenced or determined the professional development opportunities available to them. Stakeholders included teachers, principals, directors of technology, supervisors and coordinators, superintendents and assistant superintendents,
members of the local Board of Education, parents, community members, and student performance. Kindergarten teachers believed community members, parents, and the teachers’ union had the least amount of influence on professional development offerings for kindergarten teachers. Key influencers were viewed as the principal, district administrators, supervisors and coordinators, and student performance. Principals were viewed by kindergarten teachers as having the most influence on professional development opportunities.

The next section explored the content of kindergarten teacher professional development. Identified areas of core knowledge and qualities of effective instruction in PreK-3 included knowledge of child development, methods of teaching diverse children, use of multiple forms of assessment, organization of the learning environment, curriculum design that helps children make connections, strategic use of resources and technology, family and parent outreach, reflection as a process to enhance teaching, knowledge of the concept of vertical alignment, and collaboration and professional development.

Part 1 of this section of the survey asked kindergarten teachers to rate their degree of knowledge of identified areas of core knowledge and qualities of effective instruction for PreK-3. Kindergarten teachers believed vertical alignment, reflection for enhanced practice, and the strategic use of resources and technology were the areas in which they had the least amount of knowledge. Areas in which kindergarten teachers believed they had the most knowledge included knowledge of child development, knowledge of organization of the learning environment, and knowledge of teaching diverse children.
Kindergarten teachers rated the availability of professional development opportunities in the areas of identified core knowledge and qualities of effective instruction. Kindergarten teachers believed the availability of professional development opportunities was highest in the areas of strategic use of resources and technology, use of multiple forms of assessment, and methods of teaching diverse children. Results indicated the areas where the fewest opportunities were available for professional development included vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, reflection for enhanced teaching, and organization of the learning environment.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they would like to be offered professional development opportunities in the areas of identified core knowledge and qualities of effective instruction. Kindergarten teachers indicated they would most like to see professional development opportunities offered to them in the areas of curriculum design that helps children make connections, methods of teaching diverse children, knowledge of child development, and strategic use of resources and technology. The three relatively lowest areas of desirability were vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, and reflection for enhanced teaching.

The next section explored the process of kindergarten teacher professional development. The identified professional development delivery models or formats included single-session workshop/whole-district attendance, in-district workshops, out-of-district workshops, collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant), grade-level meetings, study groups, action research, on-line district courses, faculty meetings, professional learning communities, peer coaching, partnerships with universities, and wikis and/or blogs.
Part 1 of this section of the survey asked teachers to rate their degree of knowledge of the identified professional development delivery models and formats. Kindergarten teachers indicated that they believed they were the most knowledgeable of the professional development delivery models of faculty meetings, grade level meetings, and in-district workshops. Wikis and/or blogs, on-line district courses, and study groups were the professional development delivery formats of which they believed they had the least amount of knowledge.

The next part asked kindergarten teachers to indicate the availability of the identified professional development delivery models. Kindergarten teachers indicated that they believed professional development opportunities were most available in the professional development delivery models of faculty meetings, in-district workshops and grade-level meetings formats. Wikis and/or blogs, on-line district courses and action research and partnerships with universities were the professional development delivery formats which they believed were least available to them.

Kindergarten teachers were asked to indicate the degree to which they would like to see the identified professional development delivery models or formats offered to them. Kindergarten teachers indicated that they were most interested in being offered the following professional development delivery models: grade level meetings, out-of-district workshops, and collaborative consultation. Single-session/whole-district workshops, action research, on-line district courses, wikis and/or blogs, and study groups were the professional development delivery formats they were least interested in receiving professional development opportunities.
Chapter IV presented the research findings and analysis of the study. Chapter V presents the summary, conclusions, and recommendations for further research.
CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the entire study. It begins with a restatement of the purpose, followed by a summary and discussion of the study and implications of the findings in relation to the literature reviewed. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research, practice, and policy.

The purpose of this study was to examine kindergarten teachers’ perceptions regarding professional development opportunities in early childhood education which may help facilitate and support implementation of the PreK-3 continuum. A survey was conducted to explore kindergarten teachers’ beliefs regarding the context, content, and process of professional development opportunities in identified areas of core knowledge and research based on best teaching practices for PreK-3 and specific professional development delivery models or formats.

The survey was used to collect data from a convenience sample of 150 kindergarten teachers from northern, central, and southern New Jersey school districts who attended a series of New Jersey Department of Education Kindergarten seminars.

Summary of Findings and Discussion

The study was based on the premise that teacher professional development was an important factor in establishing and maintaining a coordinated Grades K-3 education program continuum. Considering first the context of professional development, the study explored who or what teachers perceived as having the most influence on kindergarten teacher professional development opportunities. Key influencers were considered the
principal, district administrators, supervisors, and coordinators. Kindergarten teachers viewed principals as having the most influence on teacher professional development opportunities, followed by superintendents and assistant superintendents. This underscores the importance of the role of the principal in planning and coordinating professional development activities for kindergarten teachers and in implementing the PreK-3 learning continuum. This result was consistent with the research literature emphasizing the important role of the principal in providing meaningful professional development for teachers (Blasé, 1998; Ellis, 1986; Maeroff, 2006; Mead, 2011; McCall, 1997; NAESP, 2005, 2006; Rice & Costanza, 2011; Rutherford, 1989). Existing literature (Aarons, 2010; Rice, 2007) also indicated that while teachers felt principals were “generally supportive, they often lacked expertise in early childhood and were unable to provide meaningful supervision for kindergarten teachers and for coordinating the early years” (Donovan, 2010, p. 3).

While principals were viewed as having the most influence on professional development, student achievement was viewed as having a moderate influence on professional development. Research (Bredekamp & Copple, 1997; Buysse et al., 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2006; Goldstein, 2007; Rice & Lesaux, 2012) indicates the need for student performance to be a prime influence on professional development activities for teachers. Perhaps as uniform guidelines and standards as well as projected mandated state-wide testing are implemented in grades kindergarten through second and student achievement plays an increasingly significant role in teacher evaluation processes at these grade levels, teachers will perceive student performance as an increasingly important factor.
A majority of the kindergarten teachers (84%) indicated they were satisfied with current professional development offerings. This contrasted with a previous finding exploring the responses verbalized in a series of kindergarten teacher focus groups sponsored by Advocates for Children of New Jersey as part of an examination of kindergarten programs throughout the state. Within these focus groups, held in northern, central, and southern New Jersey, kindergarten teachers indicated dissatisfaction with current professional development opportunities and the desire for more meaningful training to become more effective in their classrooms (Donovan, 2010).

Exploring the content of professional development, areas in which kindergarten teachers believed they had the most knowledge included knowledge of child development, knowledge of organization of the learning environment, and knowledge of teaching diverse children. Child development and organization of the learning environment, areas in which teachers believed they had the highest degree of knowledge, are often viewed as “traditional” components of early childhood education.

Vertical alignment and reflection for enhanced teaching, critical newer and less traditional components of the PreK-3 continuum, were the areas of the survey in which teachers indicated they have the least amount of knowledge. Research indicates the importance of alignment (Bogard & Takanishi, 2005; Kauerz. 2006; Kauerz & Coffman, 2013; Sadowski, 2006) as a critical element in establishing effective PreK-3 learning environments and the deciding factor in differentiating a PreK-3 approach from a randomly implemented mixture of isolated components (Bogard, 2005; Graves, 2006; Kagan &Kauerz, 2007; Maeroff, 2006). In education, reflective practice refers to the process of the educator studying his or her own teaching methods and determining what
works best for the students. Research (Dewey, 1933; Larrivee, 2000; Schön, 1983) indicates the importance of reflective practices embodied in the everyday activities of the educational practitioner.

Technology and resources were also viewed as areas in which teachers believe they have a lesser amount of knowledge. Technology is ever changing and increasingly integrated into classrooms and curricula at all educational levels. A growing body of literature indicates modern technology broadens children’s learning opportunities as well as assists in communication and classroom organization and management (Kleiman, 2000; NAEYC, 2012; Sadowski, 2006; Van Scoter & Ellis, 2000). Resources include an ever-expanding knowledge base affecting children’s educational experiences and curriculum enhancements as well as financial considerations in this age of increased budgetary monitoring and accountability. Research indicates kindergarten teachers must be knowledgeable in both areas of technology and resources (NAEYC, 2012; Sadowski, 2006). Interestingly, while teachers viewed the area of strategic use of resources and technology as one in which there was a great availability of workshops, they also viewed themselves as having the least amount of knowledge in these areas. This suggests that there may be a need for follow-up to the professional development training offerings through strategies such as in-class coaching.

Kindergarten teachers rated the availability of professional development opportunities in the areas of identified core knowledge and qualities of effective instruction. Kindergarten teachers believed the availability of professional development opportunities was highest in the areas of strategic use of resources and technology, use of multiple forms of assessment, and methods of teaching diverse children. Results
indicated the areas where the fewest opportunities were available for professional
development included vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, reflection for
enhanced teaching, and organization of the learning environment.

Kindergarten teachers indicated they would most like to see professional
development opportunities offered to them in the areas of curriculum design that helps
children make connections, methods of teaching diverse children, knowledge of child
development, and strategic use of resources and technology. The three comparatively
lowest areas of desirability were vertical alignment, family and parent outreach, and
reflection for enhanced teaching. It is clear that educational administrators must be sure
teachers understand the meaning of these three terms and the need for their
implementation.

To explore the process of professional development, the study dealt with a variety
of professional development delivery models and formats including single-session
workshop/whole-district attendance, in-district workshops, out-of-district workshops,
collaborative consultation (ongoing training with a consultant), grade-level meetings,
study groups, action research, online district courses, faculty meetings, professional
learning communities, peer coaching, partnerships with universities, and wikis and/or
blogs.

Kindergarten teachers indicated they believed they were most knowledgeable of
the professional development delivery models of faculty meetings, grade level meetings
and in-district workshops. Newer delivery models such as wikis and/or blogs, on-line
district courses and study groups were the professional development delivery format
areas of which teachers believed they had the least amount of knowledge.
Results of the study indicated that the traditional professional development delivery formats of in-district workshops, faculty meetings, and grade level meetings are most available to kindergarten teachers. These were also the formats most familiar to the teachers.

When asked what professional delivery models they would like to see offered, kindergarten teachers were most interested in grade-level meetings, a professional development delivery model which research indicates provides an excellent opportunity for collaboration and horizontal alignment (Maeroff, 2006; Rice, 2007). They were also interested in opportunities to attend out-of-district workshops and to have opportunities for collaborative consultation models, which has been identified in the literature as an excellent model to expand the local expert pool and provide support and collegiality among participants (Smith, 2011). Single-session in-district workshops were not comparatively desired, nor were technology-based workshop delivery models such as online district courses and wikis and/or blogs. Study groups and action research opportunities were also comparatively less desired choices.

An awareness and analysis of the three variables of context, content, and process when planning professional development opportunities can help principals evaluate their potential effectiveness in providing teachers with meaningful learning experiences. The context of staff development helps determine the specific needs of schools and individuals. The content identifies the substance comprising the staff development initiatives, and the process identifies the strategies planned and implemented to effect change. The principal becomes the catalyst, or change agent, through whom effective and
meaningful professional development occurs, which affects teacher performance as well as student achievement.

**Recommendations for Policy**

As nationwide awareness of the importance of the PreK-3 continuum continues to grow, policies reflective of the earliest years of schooling must be developed at the federal, state, and local levels as part of a supportive administrative infrastructure. The development, integration, and alignment of federal policy, regulation, and funding can enable states and communities to build a coherent system of PreK-3. Ensuring the components of PreK-3 systems are supported in code indicates both a national and state commitment to this concept.

States should establish regulatory language mandating professional development and ongoing accountability for PreK-3 educators. New Jersey’s definitions of professional development and professional learning, adopted on June 5, 2013 (N.J.A.C. 6A:9-15.2-3), are intended to guide the development of relevant and valuable professional learning opportunities which are essential to the professional growth of educators. The focus is on identifying professional learning practices that increase educational effectiveness and promote positive results for students. They are meant to inform districts on the essential content, conditions, and attributes for effective professional learning and should be reflected in updated district policies.

A common language for early childhood education is necessary at all levels. It was evident in the review of research studies as well as indicated by the focus groups and teacher survey responses in this study that terms such as *PreK-3, vertical and horizontal alignment*, and *teacher reflection* mean different things to different participants. A
common language is needed to work toward common goals. The need to know and understand the common language of early childhood education should be clarified through state guidelines and codes as well as policy.

The New Jersey Department of Education has designated the Division of Early Childhood Education responsible for Grades PreK-3. As the State of New Jersey continues to establish policy for early childhood education, provisions must be included for direct support and services to schools, including professional development opportunities. Resources and information should be readily available on the New Jersey Department of Education website.

State policy should provide an integrated system of professional development that crosses early childhood sectors. Integrated policies promote building and support for efficient cross-sector systems that decrease duplication of efforts and increase sustainability.

**Recommendations for Practice**

New Jersey school districts must develop seamless, well-coordinated early learning experiences for young children in Grades PreK-3. To accomplish this, both state and local school districts must make a conscious decision to implement an aligned PreK-3 approach and utilize strategic planning to set goals and visions.

Educational leaders must advocate for state and federal funding and support districts in identifying funding streams and grants such as national and local foundations. Both state and local educational leaders must play an important role in the implementation of practices supportive of the PreK-3 educational continuum. State educational leaders should identify school districts successfully implementing PreK-3
best practices and professional development models. This information should be disseminated to all districts. Identifying and promoting these district models opens the door for inter-district collaboration, observation, and discussion.

The role of the principal has become increasingly important in implementing PreK-3. Indeed, kindergarten teachers in this study viewed principals as having the most influence on professional development. Elementary principals must have a strong knowledge of PreK-3 components as well as an understanding of developmentally appropriate practices and existent best practices. Principals should become familiar with early childhood research and resources such as the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC), New Jersey Department of Education Division of Early Childhood Education, Foundation for Child Development, Advocates for Children of New Jersey, and relevant federal and state laws, guidelines, and regulations. The principal must be an instructional leader rather than just a building manager, spending time observing and evaluating classroom practice. This may require new strategies in how districts recruit, select, and support principals.

Principals need to create a PreK-3 culture in their schools to enable stakeholders to view kindergarten as a fundamental part of the school system’s mission. Principals must utilize their power to transform the use of time within their buildings. Regularly scheduled team planning meetings should be held at both inter- and intra-grade levels to assure both vertical and horizontal alignment of curriculum, content, educational practices, expectations, and assessment. Common teacher planning times should be incorporated into the main schedule.
The study indicated a lack of understanding of vertical alignment, an integral concept of the PreK-3 curriculum. Districts need to align curriculum with clear behavioral and performance expectations at each grade level as well as involving teachers in curriculum mapping and the development of scope and sequence.

Districts should explore ways to provide kindergarten-specific (PreK-3) professional development activities to staff based on demonstrated needs. Districts can utilize existing Department of Education kindergarten resources and Kindergarten Guidelines as part of professional development programs geared specifically for kindergarten teachers. They should consider combining resources and pairing with other districts.

Two important components of PreK-3 teaching are reflection and vertical alignment. These were ranked the two lowest items on the kindergarten teacher survey in terms of current teacher knowledge and availability, as well as desirability. Teacher reflection should be modeled through use of reflective questions and encouraging teachers to examine their own instructional practice. Research has suggested that reflection is at the heart of effective educational practice (Danielson, 2009). Reflection helps early childhood educators to gain a better understanding about what they are doing, how they are doing it, and why they are doing it.

In terms of professional development delivery models and formats, single-session/whole-district workshops should be avoided. Rather, professional development should be individualized at the school level through the use of technology and other resources. Non-traditional methods of professional development such as wikis and/or blogs, online district courses, action research, and study groups should be considered.
Collaboration is necessary between professional organizations such as the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA), New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), and New Jersey Association of Kindergarten Educators (NJAKE) to enable them to pool time, talent, and resources to ensure that educational professionals have access to meaningful professional development activities without unnecessary duplication of services.

District personnel, principals, and teachers should jointly review PreK-3 assessments currently in use. Under the guidelines of PreK-3 components, they must identify and understand trends and patterns at each grade level and map results for classroom practice. They must see assessment not merely as a compliance mechanism but as a means to support teaching and learning and strengthen state guidelines and codes to support the development of PreK-3 early learning systems. Principals should regularly review data with teachers and support them in collecting and using data to monitor student progress and evaluate and improve instructional approaches.

Recently mandated teacher evaluation systems have received a great deal of attention. Relevant to both policy and practice, districts must integrate professional development with formal teacher evaluation programs and the use of observation tools to categorize better teaching and learning opportunities. Principals should suggest improvements for teachers’ practice based on their individual strengths and weaknesses that translate into better and improved learning for students. Evaluation needs to be coupled with rigorous, focused professional development to provide opportunities for teachers to develop increased knowledge and pedagogy skills.
Principals should consider pursuing school accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) as a mechanism to facilitate changes at the pre-kindergarten through second grade level. This is a well-respected achievement which can motivate staff to embrace nationally recognized PreK-3 standards and practices.

Professional development should be viewed as a system designed to improve the knowledge, skills, and behaviors of professionals in early childhood education. Professional development should be evidence-based, structured to promote linkages between research and practices, responsive to the learner, and supported to ensure accessibility for all.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

In kindergarten teacher focus groups sponsored by Advocates for Children of New Jersey (ACNJ) held throughout the state prior to this study, participants strongly indicated that they were not satisfied with available professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers. This was not reflected in the results of this study. A mixed-method follow-up study utilizing focus groups as well as a written survey administered to the same group could be utilized to obtain both qualitative and quantitative data.

Since this study was conducted, there have been major changes in New Jersey public schools, including new teacher evaluation systems and student growth objectives. Considering these new initiatives, an increased sample sized study of kindergarten teachers could be conducted to compare study outcomes based on changed work
environments. Researchers may also want to explore if the newly implemented teacher evaluation programs correlate with identified exemplary PreK-3 teaching practices.

Implementation of the PreK-3 learning continuum indicates the importance of the role of the principal as educational leader. A similar survey could be administered to school principals to assess their understanding of the identified areas of core knowledge and effective teaching practices for PreK-3 and to explore the relationship of principal knowledge and teacher professional development satisfaction.

The use of technology as a professional development tool is rapidly growing, changing, and expanding. Survey results suggest kindergarten teachers are comfortable with what they know and may be reluctant to try new things. A subsequent in-depth study of the use and availability of new and currently evolving technology-based professional development opportunities for kindergarten teachers could be conducted.

The kindergarten teacher survey instrument could be administered to teachers in pre-kindergarten through second grade. Results could be analyzed to explore grade level differentials and vertical alignment within both schools and districts.

Summary

This study presented findings which add to the body of research on the PreK-3 continuum as well as professional development. Given its role as the foundation for all future learning and success in school, the need for quality early learning is critical. We must question if teachers and leaders are ready for children, not merely if children are ready for school.
As New Jersey adapts its kindergarten practices to ensure they are aligned with high standards, meaningful professional development will help ensure that young learners are on the path to school success.

Only consistent, high quality learning experiences will ensure that all children reach grade-level standards by third grade. It is important for school leaders to develop a comprehensive understanding of the PreK-3 continuum reflective of research and early childhood best practices. It is essential to focus on instructional improvement through effective professional development and purposeful supervision.

Professional development must be supported with appropriate time and resources to ensure that teachers have adequate opportunities to access and apply knowledge, skills, and practices. The principal must be an instructional leader who fosters a continuous approach to learning for both teachers and students. Standards and assessments aligned to help teachers enrich and build upon their students’ learning year after year must be in place.

Professional development should be aligned with student learning and educator needs and embedded in educators’ daily work. The updated standards for professional development and the components of PreK-3 provide the framework for designing effective professional learning systems. School leaders should use these standards to help design high quality professional learning that can impact student achievement and support continuous improvement of the PreK-3 learning continuum.

New developments in teacher performance expectations and effectiveness play a key role in state and national policy agendas. The goal must be to ensure that teachers have opportunities to improve their craft and are given the tools with which to do so. The
impact of high quality early learning experiences is well established. Good teaching matters. Research confirms that an effective teacher can do more to improve achievement than any other factor in the educational setting. How our young children learn and develop in the early years during their PreK-3 educational experiences will impact their lives forever. Administrators and teachers must be ready for this challenge.
REFERENCES


June 14, 2011

Deborah Fitzpatrick
26 Appleton Place
Glen Ridge, NJ 07028

Dear Ms. Fitzpatrick,

The Seton Hall University Institutional Review Board has reviewed your research proposal entitled “The Perceptions of Kindergarten Teachers Regarding Professional Development Opportunities in New Jersey’s Public Schools” and has approved it as submitted under exempt status.

Enclosed for your records is the signed Request for Approval form and stamped Letter of Solicitation.

Please note that, where applicable, subjects must sign and must be given a copy of the Seton Hall University current stamped Letter of Solicitation or Consent Form before the subjects’ participation. All data, as well as the investigator’s copies of the signed Consent Forms, must be retained by the principal investigator for a period of at least three years following the termination of the project.

Should you wish to make changes to the IRB approved procedures, the following materials must be submitted for IRB review and be approved by the IRB prior to being instituted:

- Description of proposed revisions;
- If applicable, any new or revised materials, such as recruitment fliers, letters to subjects, or consent documents; and
- If applicable, updated letters of approval from cooperating institutions and IRBs.

At the present time, there is no need for further action on your part with the IRB.

In harmony with federal regulations, none of the investigators or research staff involved in the study took part in the final decision.

Sincerely,

Mary F. Ruzicka, Ph.D.
Professor
Director, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Barbara Strobert
The Prekindergarten through Third Grade (P-3) educational continuum is one of critical importance. Kindergarten continues to be the point of entry for the majority of New Jersey’s public school districts. One of the most important elements in the success of any P-3 program is the quality of teaching that occurs every day in every classroom. Sustaining effective teachers and meeting their professional development needs is one of the greatest challenges facing today’s educational leaders.

**Directions:**
You are requested to participate in a survey given to kindergarten teachers. This survey asks for information on topics related to both the format and content of the professional development opportunities you are currently offered in your teaching position as well as those you would like to see implemented. Demographic information is also requested. Your participation is strictly voluntary. Survey results will be anonymous. Your responses will be utilized as part of the research for a doctoral dissertation at Seton Hall University investigating Staff Perceptions of Professional Development for Kindergarten Teachers. Thank you for your time.

**Kindergarten Teacher Demographics**

Please respond to the following questions:

1. Indicate the area of N.J. in which your school district is located:
   _____ Northern (Bergen, Essex, Hudson, Morris, Passaic, Sussex, Union, and Warren)
   _____ Central (Hunterdon, Middlesex, Mercer, Monmouth, Somerset, and Ocean)
   _____ Southern (Atlantic, Burlington, Camden, Cape May, Cumberland, Gloucester, and Salem)

2. Indicate the District Factor Group (DFG) ranking of your school district:
   _____AB   _____CD   _____EF   _____GH   _____IJ

3. What grade levels are in your school? _________________________________

4. How many students are in your school? _______________________________

5. Is the kindergarten program at your school: ___________________________
______ Full-time ______ Part-time ______ Other (please explain)__________

6. How many years have you been teaching? ______________

7. How many years have you taught kindergarten? ______________

8. What is your current highest formal educational background status?
   ______ B.A./B.S.
   ______ working toward M.A./M.S.
   ______ M.A./M.S.
   ______ working toward Ed.D/Ph.D.
   ______ Ed.D./Ph.D.

9. Do you hold a P-3 certificate? (est. 2000) ___Yes ___No

10. Gender ___ Male ___ Female

II. Professional Development Survey

1. I am satisfied with the professional development offerings available to me:
   ______ Strongly Disagree
   ______ Disagree
   ______ Agree
   ______ Strongly Agree

2.) Please rate the degree to which you believe each of the following influences/determines the professional development offerings available to you by circling the number corresponding to your response:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Influence</th>
<th>Degree of Influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>None 1</td>
<td>Very Little 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principals</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology Directors</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervisors/Coordinators</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Superintendent/Assistant Superintendent</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Board of Education</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher’s Union</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Members</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Performance</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Research has identified the following factors as qualities of effective instruction at the prekindergarten through third grade level (Sadowski, FCD, 2006). Following each factor, please rate your personal knowledge of each specific factor; the extent to which you believe professional development opportunities are available to you concerning that factor; and the extent to which you would like to see additional professional development offered to you on a specific factor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3.) Qualities of Effective Instruction for PreK-3:</th>
<th>How knowledgeable are you:</th>
<th>Availability of professional development opportunities:</th>
<th>Extent to which you would like to see this offered to you:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>Very Little</td>
<td>Somewhat</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge of child development</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methods of teaching diverse children</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Use of multiple forms of assessment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Organization of Learning Environment</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Curriculum design that helps children make connections</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic use of resources and technology</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family and parent outreach</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
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</table>
**Reflection for Enhanced Teaching**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Vertical Alignment</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
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<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Professional Development can be delivered in a variety of formats or delivery models. Following each listed format, please rate your knowledge of the specific professional development delivery model; the extent to which you believe professional development opportunities are currently available to you in that format or delivery model; and the extent to which you would like to see additional professional development offered to you utilizing that format or delivery model.

**4.) Professional Development Formats:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Format</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some - what</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some - what</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>Very Little</th>
<th>Some - what</th>
<th>A great deal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Single-session/whole-district attendance</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>In-district workshops</td>
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<td>Out-of-district workshops</td>
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<td>Collaborative Consultation (ongoing training with a consultant)</td>
<td>1</td>
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Thank you for completing this survey!