A CASE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
PROFESIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES WITH TAP –
THE SYSTEM FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT
ADVANCEMENT

DISSERTATION

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by

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San Marcos, Texas

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COPYWRIGHT

by

Damaris I. Womack

2011

DEDICATION

This work in dedicated to parents, Doris V. Mayers and Evans Dawkins (deceased) who instilled in me the values of dedication and perseverance.
Gene, Vanessa, and Alex, this work is also dedicated to you in retribution of the countless family moments I was absent.
I also dedicate this research to my aunt Evelina Perel, my aunt Janet Stanford, and my godmother Yvonne Cumberbatch all of whom nurtured and supported me in many ways from my youth throughout adulthood.

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ABSTRACT

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This research was undertaken to understand the experiences of teachers using The

System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP) professional development (PD)

methods. The study focused on the perceptions of experienced teachers in their first year

in a TAP system school. Five teachers were interviewed and observed in the professional

development, (TAP/PD) - meetings during the study. This research provides insight into

experiences with a professional development model within a new school improvement

system in order to contribute to the literature about professional development. This

research addresses the following major questions: a) How did TAP/PD come to be

adopted at the selected middle school, and b) What are the perceptions of teachers at a selected middle school of their professional development experiences with TAP/PD?

This qualitative study included multiple data collection strategies. Through this case study, teachers were observed during their TAP/PD meetings. They were asked to participate in two to three follow-up interviews after the observations to understand the nature of their experiences with TAP/PD and how professional development in this model compared with their previous experiences with professional development. They were also asked about their perception of the influence of using the TAP/PD learning on their classroom practice, their professional growth, and on their students' achievement. Regular visits to the school community also allowed for the collection of artifacts before, during, and after the author concluded the interview stage at the site. The qualitative analysis of the teachers' experiences of their professional development during their first year of implementation as a TAP system school involved open and axial coding, drawing on all the data sources as well as analytic memos.

The findings revealed a) limited administrator participation in TAP/PD meetings or involvement as instructional leaders; b) unclear roles of mentor teachers; c) coaching support that focused mainly on first year teachers, limiting the impact on more experienced teachers such as the study participants; d) blurring of the focus on instructional support by master teachers due to their many duties; e) increased time participating in professional development compared to other models; f) valuable strategies and rubrics supported school-wide learning; and, g) teachers' increased levels of reflection on their classroom practice.

Key Words: Teacher Professional Development, School Improvement Systems, TAP
System

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

The demand for highly qualified teachers has never been as great. Evidence of this fact is one of the largest ever created educational initiative signed into law on February 17, 2009 by President Barack Obama, which supports the Race-To-the-Top (RTTT) Funding, according to report provided by the United States Department of Education (USDOE, 2009a). The RTTT seeks to improve the areas of teacher evaluations, high school standards, and college competencies. Teachers who can prepare future generations for jobs that are not yet created are finding the teaching field to be a more competitive environment than existed a few years ago. Teachers today find that more than just knowing their teaching content, they are called upon to learn 21st century skills and to have more decision-making power (Ingersoll, 2007) in order to model and teach needed skills to their students.

In the old isolationist teaching system there was a belief "that the varying interpretation of curriculum could lead to a sense of competition, with teachers feeling that some may do a better job than others" (Fiszer, 2004, p. 43). Moreover, Booher-Jennings (2005) cautions that, "when each teacher competes as an individual, the idea of a professional community becomes endangered" (p. 257). Teachers who continue working on curriculum and instruction behind closed doors are not benefiting from the many advantages of collaboration among peers (Wong, 2003). This limits the timeliness

of learning and applying new education research theories and strategies to improve our students' skills in this ever-changing job market (Kessels & Powell, 2004). Furthermore, the isolationist system creates insecurities among teachers to a point where they may "becom [e] cynical and defensive" (Trorey & Cullingford, 2002, p. 115). Yet, one of the most difficult tendencies to change is teacher isolation (Bezzina, 2006).

On the other hand, in a collaborative environment, teachers trust each other to support their learning and improve their practices. Diaz-Maggioli (2004) asserts, "professional teams are instrumental to help teachers make the necessary transition from a culture of isolation to one of cooperation" (p. 25). What is even more promising about overcoming isolation is that "teacher collaboration and collegiality [...] have also emerged as characteristics of schools that nurture teacher innovation" (Richardson & Anders, 1994, p. 141). In this age of accountability, teachers need to know that they are not alone in their attempts to improve a student's learning. The school's objectives and goals should make provisions to ensure the collaboration amongst all staff members exists (Fiszer, 2004).

Arguably, the most important factor in student performance is teacher effectiveness, also referred to in the literature as teacher quality (Hord, 2009). Since teacher performance must be assured, the school community must provide the appropriate setting to encourage, support, and develop good teaching practices. Today, many school districts are now envisioning developing the best teachers to deliver effective instruction for their students. As an analysis of the introduction of Senge's (1990) "Fifth Discipline" suggests, schools, more than any other organization, should become laboratories for learning (Wagner, 2008) and the lead scientists, the teachers, must shift their frame of

thought to a more pragmatic and research based practice (Bezzina & Testa, 2005;

Calabrese, 2002; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Thornton, Shepperson, & Canavero, 2006).

Efforts are now made to restructure the secondary schools while creating a pool of

expert teachers to support and train others in their schools (Boles & Troen, 2007). This

collaboration must be ongoing, embedded within the teacher's schedule, and supportive

of the teachers. Such support can meet the teachers' needs at any point in their learning

stage (Gordon, 2004). There have been some attempts to systematize professional

development effectively to link various elements of a school improvement system. One

approach is the System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP) created by the

Milken Family Foundation in 1999 that has been touted as one of the leading

comprehensive school improvement plans in the nation to increase student achievement

through teacher proficiency (Springer, Ballou, & Peng, 2008). It was formerly known as

the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) and it links professional development (PD) to

student achievement and teacher performance. According to a report produced by the

Center for American Progress (Craig, 2009), TAP schools continue to report significant

gains in student achievement after a period of ten years. Under the TAP umbrella – are

the following four components:

a) *Ongoing Applied Professional Growth*: is the in-house professional
development component of the TAP system. Teachers meet in groups
called "clusters." Cluster meetings usually meet for one hour on a weekly
basis. They are lead by master teachers and supported by their mentor
teachers. The clusters may organize by subject, grade, or other type of
grouping. In many schools, clusters are content based. There is no set

standard for organizing clusters. This component of TAP is the primary focus of this study and from here on it will be referred to as TAP/PD.

b) *Instructionally Focused Accountability*: is the evaluative component of the TAP. Teachers are observed throughout the year (Sawchuk, 2009). Over the course of multiple observations, trained observers (i.e. the principal, mentor teachers, and master teachers) collect data and provide different types of teacher support. In addition, these observers complete at least three formal evaluations per teacher each year. The observations are done based on instruments called TAP rubrics, which identify multiple elements to measure a teacher's proficiency.

c) *Performance-Based Compensation*: is the wage provided to those teachers whose students show value-added growth in their learning based on a standardized assessment. Boles and Troen (2007), among others, equate merit pay to performance pay, but the TAP system and the Committee for Economic Development (CED, 2009) make a distinction between *merit and performance*. Solmon (2004) suggests a performance pay system should reward teachers based on a number of factors, including participating in professional development meetings, positive evaluations, valued added measurement of student achievement, and school-wide students' achievement scores.

d) *Multiple Career Paths*: is a transitional approach for high performing classroom teachers to become mentor teachers or master teachers.

Teachers must demonstrate to be effective based on students' scores and evaluations (Solmon, 2005).

The focus of this research is on the teacher's perception of their experiences with the TAP/PD, one of the four components of the TAP system. The professional development is known in the TAP system as "cluster meeting". During the weekly cluster meetings, teams of teachers meet to talk about their students' data. They learn strategies to improve their students' learning and share common data about their students. After the cluster meeting, career teachers are expected to implement what they learned. Mentors and master teachers are expected to provide support and to act as coaches to those teachers during the implementation. Master teachers in particular, are also called to co-teach or offer model lessons for other teachers to implement.

The TAP system links teacher professional development to teacher evaluation, student value added performance, and performance pay. All of these links are reported to be crucial aspects of modern school improvement efforts. Some authors have done research investigating these different components (Dispenzieri, 2009; Holmberg, 2006; White, 2009). Yet, it is challenging to separate individual elements completely within the educational system. Leedy and Ormrod (2010) discussed the flaws of such an approach when they stated that qualitative researchers "recognize that the issue they are studying has many dimensions and layers, and so they try to portray the issue in its multifaceted form" (p. 135). Although all the components of the TAP system are interconnected, this research will use a birds-eye view to ascertain information mainly about the TAP/PD.

Background of the Study

In this section, I will provide historical background data that drives changes in professional development. I seek to show the reader how political, sociological, financial, and social issues impel the school community to seek changes to increase student achievement (Durden, 2008). In addition, this section will explain how these forces create the need for change in the traditional models of professional development thereby transforming the teacher-learning environment from a system of teacher isolation to a system of teacher collaboration (Cantrell & Cantrell, 2003).

Sociological and Cultural

There are many broad sociological implications that may influence a school. Today, issues related to diversity and accountability for each student in the classroom may require differentiated instruction (Santrock, 2001). There are many populations of students including those identified as fitting special categories such as English Language Learners (ELLs), gifted, economically disadvantaged, and special education students. Teachers must also provide individualized instruction to meet the needs of students from a broad range of backgrounds and abilities (Dantas, 2007). Guerra and Nelson (2007) explain that, "The diverse composition of today's classrooms demands that schools and educators be culturally proficient (p. 59). Therefore, pedagogical preparation for working with the diverse needs of children in schools today must extend far beyond initial certification and pre-service training.

Education Policy

Teachers today are responsible for many tasks and for teaching differently from before (Ferguson, 2007). However, the most important of all teacher obligations has

been and continues to be improving student learning (Hord, 2009). In order to make sure that teachers are effective in their teaching, school administrators have traditionally attempted to provide teachers with professional development support that helps to meet the needs of their students. Until recently, there were not many guidelines about how to conduct professional development. The Learning Forward organization, formerly known as the National Staff Development Council (NSDC), established the first guidelines in 1995 (NSDC, 2011). These guidelines recommend that school systems should spend at least 10% of their budgets on staff development. The plan also suggests that not less than 25% of an educator's work time be used for learning and collaborating with their colleagues. Learning Forward reported that teachers spend close to 29% of the daily schedule time on other teaching duties. Current reports from the same organization as well as other reports estimate that teachers spend about 76% of their time doing classroom instruction, 10-12% for independent planning, and some for "duties like lunchroom or hall duty, leaving very little for collaboration to improve curriculum and instruction" (Wei, Darling-Hammond, Andree, Richardson, & Orphanos, 2009, p. 40).

According to the Texas Education Code 21.451, amended in the 78th Texas legislature of 2003, chapter 495, staff development must be: a) "conducted in accordance with standards developed by the district; and designed to improve education in the district," and, b) "predominantly campus-based, related to achieving campus performance objectives [...], and developed and approved by the campus-level committee" and "through the district-level decision process under section 11.251," (TEX ED, 2003). Providing local staff development ensures compliance with the ruling of the 80th Texas legislature, which stated, "(b) The training under this section shall include training

relating to implementing curriculum and instruction that is aligned with the foundation curriculum described by Section 28.002," (TEX ED, 2007). These proclamations by the legislature unequivocally indicate the intention of the state to support professional development that is driven by campus needs.

Financial

When schools have to provide more time for staff development, they increase their associated costs such as time to pay for substitute teachers, materials, and expert staff developers. A study conducted by Richardson (1997) about the connection between school funds and the need to fund teacher staff development found that, "if time is money, then supporters of staff development will ultimately have to translate any changes in school schedules into dollars and cents and show the connection to student learning" (p. 47). Over ten years after this affirmation, this accountability measure is imperative in the face of dwindling educational resources resulting from an unstable economy.

The Teacher Incentive Fund (TIF) was created in 2006 by the USDOE. According to the Learning Point Associates, this program seeks to increase student performance and student achievement in high-needs schools by supporting performance-based teacher compensation-pay. At a local level, the Texas 79th Legislature (2006) created the Governor's Educator Excellence Grant Program (GEEP) and the Texas Educator Excellence Grant (TEEG) to award teachers who improve student achievement (Springer et al., 2007; TEA, 2009a). In 2009, the District Award for Teacher Excellence (DATE) replaced the (GEEP) and the (TEEG) grant (TEA, 2009a).

In addition, to help support teachers in Texas, the 80th Legislature (2007) stipulated that professional development should not exceed $2.5 million each year.

However, the commissioner may develop and award grants for establishing and providing technical assistance as well as professional development activities in the staff development training of public school teachers and administrators. Richardson (1997) asserts that the increase in activities listed under professional development varies proportionately to the increase in cost to the schools. In essence, there are guidelines and support to create and implement plans at the campus level, using campus monies, to address campus specific professional development needs.

Sociological concerns in education also explain students and teachers' behaviors as well as how these behaviors affect the school culture. Educational policies and finance reach far beyond individual schools; most are either at the state or at the national level. All are factors that can affect educational institutions with repercussions that lead directly into the classroom.

Statement of the Problem

Schools around the world are undergoing educational reforms and are looking at teacher professional development as a key element of teacher quality in student achievement (Choy, Chen, & Bugarin, 2006). Teachers must be the ones to prepare students for jobs that have not yet been created (Hargreaves & Fink, 1998). This means that teachers also need to learn new teaching methodologies and skills. Some experts observe that these changes may bring about revolutionary "norms" (Richardson & Anders, 1994), which depart from traditional views in the business of teaching and learning. Further information gleaned from multiple sources, including educators themselves, points to an urgent interest in changing teacher professional development in schools due to students' low performance on various assessments. For this reason, school

districts across the nation continue to do research to enhance teacher performance and student achievement (Duncan, 2010).

Changes in teacher professional development are being implemented in schools, mostly with a shift to more localized settings. This is as a result of research and learning from the field. Some of the major changes in education today involve comprehensive school improvement reforms. The TAP system is a school reform model that includes many elements among which it links teacher professional development with evaluation and performance pay; hence it is purported to attract, develop, and retain teachers who are said to be the most powerful influence on student achievement (Keller, 2008).

At the time I conducted this study, I did not find any research that focused on secondary schools career teachers' perceptions of professional development experiences during the implementation stage of the TAP system. My interest was to capture and report first hand experiences of secondary school teachers given that this school level is generally more challenging by nature. This research should prove to be of major relevance given that previous research studies reported about the TAP system are either addressing teacher performance-pay or addressing the TAP system in elementary schools.

It is no longer "business as usual" in the education field. The Race-To-the-Top is not a simple term for a school improvement initiative. Rather, the name conjures a sense of reality and urgency about the state of our education system on the global stage. Can a comprehensive system like TAP provide some clues to professional development needed for these changing times?

Significance of the Study

In the Race-To-the-Top funding, schools become the center stage in an effort to develop an educated citizenry capable of maintaining a global advantage, or to remain competitive, in our fast paced world. For this reason, school communities are seeking the best practices that can be replicated to support the diverse needs of students (Ingersoll, 2007). Further, since teachers are the ones in charge with facilitating the best practices for student learning, then effective teacher preparation is essential. School dynamics and learning in our classrooms today call for teachers to meet the minimum *highly qualified* federal guidelines by 1) holding a bachelor's degree, 2) holding a certificate also known as a license, and 3) demonstrating competency in the core subject taught or to be taught (USDOE, 2004b). Studies and reports related to how teacher quality influences student performance (USDOE, 2004b) in a new school improvement system, such as the TAP, may prove to be vital in the Race-to-the-Top era.

The TAP system has reported successes in many schools in which it has been implemented (Solmon, 2005). Originally, TAP was mostly implemented to meet the educational needs of students at the elementary school levels, but it later expanded to allow for its implementation in secondary schools (Solmon, 2005). In addition, performance pay, for example, is used with some degree of variation at the TAP system elementary school compared to the secondary schools, evidently supported by results from the needs assessment at the secondary schools level.

The Milken Family Foundation (MFF) or since 2005, the National Institute for Excellence in Teaching (NIET), funded most of the studies I uncovered about the TAP system. Only one independent study of a qualitative nature focusing on the TAP system

was located (Springer et al., 2008). No independent research about the Texas TAP system has been reported at the local level. Consequently, as one of few independently conducted studies of the TAP/PD system, this study will fill an important void. The importance of carrying out this study is that this research may present initial perspectives of the TAP model implementation in secondary schools. Findings from this study will inform policy-makers and help them implement core elements of professional development that are aligned with the current needs of the schools (Guskey, 2009). Results of this study may also offer insight to school administrators to understand the dynamics of school-base professional development model. These findings will also add to the general literature on teacher professional development and could also contribute to further clarify the questions that other researchers and educators may have regarding teacher perceptions of the TAP system professional development.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate and describe the first year experiences of teachers' using TAP/PD, one of the four components of the TAP system. Many factors influence the success of the students, but the most influential is the teacher quality (Hord, 2009). Historically, teachers were called to learn their content and teach students using traditional methods (Chicoine, 2004) that are now outdated instructional methodologies and do not serve students' needs. As a result, instructional programs that support teacher learning are being researched and implemented in many school districts nation-wide. For this reason, this research will also present findings related to teachers' perceived strengths and weaknesses of this system regarding instructional methodologies.

Moreover, the research will also glean information about the extent to which teachers believe their TAP/PD experiences influence their classroom practice and their students' achievements. From this study, I will present information from participants' perspective that may assist schools attempting to find an educational system that integrates professional development in its school improvement plan to gain a deeper understanding of how to enhance the experiences of teachers. Schools that are considering implementing the TAP system to address the needs of their teachers and students may also find this study useful.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

In an attempt to understand and explain middle school teachers' experiences in this study, I will now explain the theoretical framework. The social constructivist theory and the situated cognition theory are presented below. These frameworks will help me structure the study, since they provide a more "substantive theory" (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 42) such as these may bring more clarity to this study. In other words, social constructivist and situated cognition theories are "the structure, the scaffolding, [and] the frame," (Merriam, 1998, p. 45) of this study.

Social Constructivism in Professional Development

Traditionally, professional development has been characterized by *static* formats in which the teacher obtains information about a theory of teaching or a new learning strategy and is then expected to apply this new theory to improve student performance. Hansman (2001) refers to this type of learning as "lecture-style classes to indoctrinate us…. [as we] listened to recommendations from others about how to teach" (p. 43). Today, changes in the way we learn and teach require differentiated modalities that allow

the learner to create and apply knowledge in different areas. The ability to construct

learning and meaning are subsumed under the constructivist theory. Santrock (2001)

explains, "constructivism emphasizes individuals actively construct knowledge and

understanding" (p. 112). Many of the sources that inform this study support the

constructivist approach.

First, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) assert that, "staff development must model

constructivist practices for teachers if those teachers are expected to be convinced of the

validity of those practices and to understand them sufficiently well to make them an

integrated part of their classroom repertoires" (p. 11). Next, Chalmers and Keown (2006)

added, "the constructivist model we use with secondary teachers is well suited to many

forms of lifelong learning" (p. 154).

In secondary schools students acquire a body of knowledge about different

content areas. It is expected that the knowledge and skills gained in secondary schools

will transfer into different life scenarios and into higher learning. Regardless of whether

student learning is transferred into a craft or a into a college education it is crucial to

prepare students with transferable skills. Caine, Caine, and McClintic (2002) explained

that instruction must be aligned with what students learn. In other words, teachers must

provide learning models for their students. Savoie-Zajc and Descamps-Bednarz (2007)

alleged that school improvement "reform is promoting a socio-constructivist paradigm

that sees the student as an active learner, in interaction with other learners" (p. 581).

From the instructional standpoint, constructivism requires collaboration (Hord,

2009) because adult learning "has always valued learning from experience and

collaboration" (Hansman, 2001, p. 44). Cornu (2005) observes that participants become

involved in their learning and work as "co-learners as they engage in professional dialogue with one another" (p. 358). This way, in such a professional group setting, teachers receive more support to abandon the isolated 'planning for planning sake' for development in a culture of collaboration (Diaz-Maggioli, 2004). Open discussions in these collaborations tend "to cause temporary discomfort until the benefits of the change effort are obvious to the staff and become part of the normal routine" (Fiszer, 2004, p. 13). Indeed the collaboration is not limited to the classroom teachers. The collaborating learner may be at times a mentor, instructional leader, or principal. In the past, these learners were seen as distant and unapproachable for matters directly related to instruction. Today, these partners, though still responsible for school improvement leadership, are now more than ever involved in the instructional focus.

Some constructivist theorists such as Vygotsky believe that learning is by nature a social and developmental experience (Hansman, 2001). Vygotsky (1978) expounds on the social element of learning as he asserts that an *able peer* is present in the social constructivist framework. The learning with an able peer is then shaped based on each individual's culture and experiences (Hansman, 2001).

Palmer (1998) asserts that we teach how we were taught - our beings are not static, and teachers who have the attitude, disposition, and respect for their pupils will be effective in this setting. However, new curriculums call for a different learning and teaching approach. Richardson and Anders (1994) assert, "we need a more constructivist approach, one that would bring teachers in a school together to examine school norms, share beliefs, examine new knowledge...and allow us to work individually with teachers as they examine their premises and practices" (p. 204).

A forward way of thinking about learning for all in today's educational institutions call for a focus on how students' learn and what teachers need to help students construct or co-create their knowledge. Through real life application, students will gain the ability to construct knowledge, gain in depth learning, and apply the new learning. Construction of learning assumes that the learner will gradually develop to a point of intellectual independence. Constructivism is a continuous evolving method that promotes both higher levels and multiple ways of thinking. Chan and Pang (2006) further believes that the "evolution in the theories of teaching and learning, from knowledge transmission to social-constructivism, is guiding current reform efforts" (p. 2). Reforming the current educational systems means taking a critical look at the sub-systems to deconstruct outdated practices, using a constructivist approach to build new ones, in a collaborative instructional setting (Imantis, Sleegers, & Witziers, 2001).

Situated Cognition in Professional Development

Social constructivism also lies at the heart of *situated cognition,* a theoretical framework that has been discussed in relation to adult learning in the workplace setting. Hansman (2001) explains, "The core idea in situated cognition is that learning is inherently social in nature" (p. 45). Further, Brown, Collins, and Duguid (1989) support the notion that "learning and cognition…are fundamentally situated" (p. 32). Situations, they said, "might be said to co-produce knowledge through activity" (p. 32). This is significant because teachers might be able to support diverse ways of learning in the classroom, which is a natural social setting.

One dimension of *situated cognition* is the cognitive apprenticeship. Brown et al. (1989) make the distinction between the broad definition of apprenticeship and the

cognitive apprenticeship, as they explain, "*cognitive* emphasizes that apprenticeship techniques actually reach well beyond…to the kinds of cognitive skills more normally associated with conventional schooling" (p. 39). Brown et al. further talk about the learner becoming a practitioner to solve authentic problems.

Brown et al. (1989) caution, "[that] by ignoring the situated nature of cognition, education defeats its own goal of providing useable, robust knowledge" (p. 32). I would add that teachers are to model to their students what they expect from them. Hence, teachers must also put themselves in the place of their students to better understand the steps in the processes of learning. Cognitive apprenticeship or a supportive community of practice (Wenger, 2006) may facilitate the construction of knowledge in teachers' professional development meetings.

Research Questions

The literature review reveals there is a gap in the research examining professional development models that include teacher collaboration, specifically research on TAP professional development at the secondary school level. As teacher quality has been intricately linked to student achievement, I posit that a theory-based approach to professional development could provide great insight into the implications of use of this approach in student achievement. In order to obtain insight about a theory-based approach to professional development, I will conduct a study from the teachers' perspective about their experiences using the TAP system. The main guiding questions driving this study are:

1. How did TAP come to be adopted at Juan Bosco Middle School?

a. What factors do secondary school teachers believe influenced the decision to adopt the TAP system?

b. How do teachers describe the TAP system adoption process?

2. What are the perceptions of teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School of their experiences with the PD component of TAP?

a. How do these teachers describe their personal experiences with TAP PD?

b. What do teachers see as strengths and weaknesses of the TAP/PD model, relative to other professional development models they have experienced?

c. How do teachers believe their TAP/PD experiences influenced their professional growth or students' achievement?

Delimitations of the Study

The study only focuses on the TAP/PD element, one of four core components of the TAP system. Although all the components of the TAP system are related, the primary focus of this study is the TAP/PD and its practical application and influence from the vantage point of the teacher participants. This study looks at TAP/PD as an input component and at the other three TAP components: accountability, performance pay, and career ladder as output components. For example, this author agrees with the assertion that "Teacher evaluations pay much larger dividends when they also play a role in improving teaching," (Toch & Rothman, 2008a, p. 32). Figure 1 illustrates the premise that TAP/PD influences the other three TAP system components.

This research was carried out with secondary school teachers recognizing there are more variables to consider in educating students at this level. Teachers' perceptions at other educational levels implementing the TAP/PD will not be taken into consideration.

The study site was in its first year of implementation of the TAP system. Furthermore, only teachers new to the TAP/PD model who have at least two years of experience in non-TAP schools will participate. This criterion ensured study information from participants with more grounded experience in the classroom. The intent in selecting participants with these characteristics was to glean first year perceptions of experienced teachers during and immediately after the completion of the first half of the implementation phase of the TAP system.
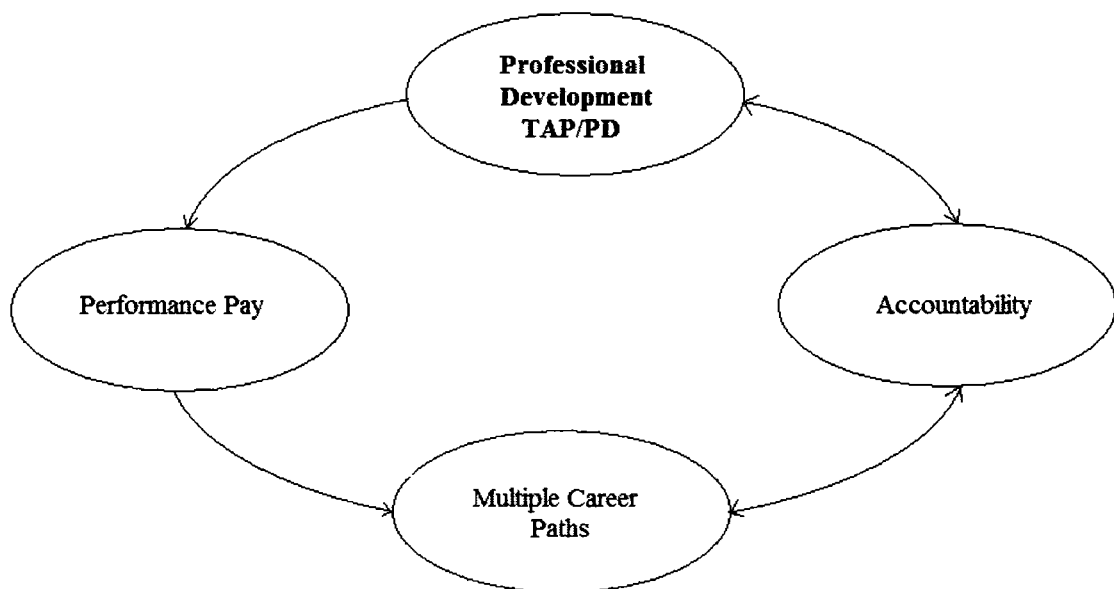
Figure 1 – TAP System Elements

Note. In the TAP system, the creaters do not label one of these school improvements elements over the other.

During this research, I did not ask any of my interview questions to non-participants. While visiting the campus, I did interact with many school community members. However, no information from Juan Bosco Middle School students, administrators, non-participant teachers, or parents of students on campus was included in this study.

The findings obtained in this research cannot be generalized to all secondary schools using this model because all schools have their own characteristics and set of dynamics that make them distinctive from one another. Still, this research is intended to uncover multiple teacher perceptions and provide valuable information regarding the transfer of learning theories into classroom practices.

Research Subjectivities

I have been a K-12 educator for ten years. During this period of time, I have experienced both sides of the professional development and evaluation systems. As a teacher, I have attended many professional development sessions. As a teacher leader and department head, I have facilitated many professional development sessions as well.

After leaving my former district, I accepted a position as a master teacher at a high school in its second year of implementing the System for Teacher and Student Advancement Program. Because of this experience, I regularly hear informal opinions from teachers with experiences within the TAP system. As a master teacher, I often wondered about the questions the teachers had during the first year of implementation. Increased curiosity deepened my interest in understanding the events and dynamics that may take place when a school improvement comprehensive system is under implementation.

As a result of my experiences, it is my opinion that professional development serves to add to teachers' base knowledge. In addition, I believed teachers who found professional development useful would fully participate in the learning activities. My preliminary interest about professional development and my conversations about the TAP system led me to investigate further how teachers perceived their TAP/PD experiences. I

decided to delve deeper into multiple sources of information to answer questions regarding secondary school teachers and TAP/PD professional development model. Consequently, I uncovered much information regarding teachers' experiences and perceptions of the impact of TAP/PD.

My experiences may have influenced the information gleaned during the data analysis process and may provide an added insight, taking on the role as an "instrument" in this research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010; Patton, 2002). At the same time, I employed numerous procedures intended to ensure that my own experiences did not unduly influence my ability to interpret the expression of the participants accurately. These procedures included analytic memos, member checks, and peer review of data analysis.

Outline of the Study

In the following sections, I will provide a body of research to support the need for and the findings of the study. Chapter II will highlight important themes I uncovered in the education literature which lead to the need for the study. This chapter will also provide a framework to understand the TAP/PD. Chapter III will explain my methodological process for selecting the research site and the participants. In addition, it provides detailed description and rationale for how I conducted the study. Chapter IV presents the participants' perceptions regarding the adoption process, and in Chapter V I present the participants' perceptions of their experiences during the implementation year. In Chapter VI, I provide a body of literature to explain the important findings as reported by the participants. Lastly, I provide some recommendations derived from the findings and the literature.

Definition of Key Terms

1. *A Nation at Risk* (1983): study that reported the United States educational

    lagged in core areas such as mathematics and science among other areas of

    educational concern as compared to other developed countries (Kowalski,

    2006; USDOE, 1983).

2. *Career Teacher:* in the TAP systems, career teacher is the term used to

    indicate a classroom teacher.

3. *Cluster*: a cohort of professional teachers who collaborate using their own

    student data, to analyze trends of learning weaknesses and strengths in the

    data. Once a learning need has been identified, the master teacher

    researches various strategies and tests them with smaller groups of

    students. The strategy that proves to be effective is then shared with the

    teacher to implement in the classroom. In this study, the terms cluster

    meeting and TAP/PD meeting are used synonymously.

4. *Master Teacher*: an expert facilitator who performs leadership and

    administrative duties in the TAP system. They generally facilitate the

    TAP Leadership Team (TLT) meetings. Master teachers in most TAP

    system schools, do not have their own classes; and, in the few cases where

    they do, they have only a few classes.

5. *Mentor Teacher*: provides mentoring support to career teachers. They also

    observe and evaluate teachers. The mentor teachers also have full-time

    teaching duties. They are generally allotted time to perform the additional

    TAP duties.

6. *No Child Left Behind*: Education Act of 2001, signed in 2002, by which

    school districts are mandated to close the achievement gap between

    students of certain groups with respect to students of other groups by

    ensuring all students will succeed as demonstrated by their scores on state

    standardized tests (USDOE, 2009b). NCLB of 2001 re-authorized the

    Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) of 1965. In 2010, the

    current administration revealed their plan for re-authorizing the act

    (USDOE, 2010).

7. *Principal:* refers to the leader(s) of the school. This definition includes

    people in assistant principal positions per Section 2102(6) of the USDOE

    (2006).

8. *Professional Development*: learning activities and actions targeted at

    improving teacher quality to promote student learning. All areas that may

    influence directly or indirectly any aspect of student learning is included.

    Previously, professional development had emphasized science and math.

    Today's professional development is available to all core and elective

    subjects, although there is still an emphasis on those two subjects.

    Evidence of this change is demonstrated in the grant guidelines in the

    ESEA Title II, Part A, Section 9101(34) of 2006 for improving teacher

    quality. See appendix F for definition of high-quality professional

    development.

9. *Race-to-the-Top Funding:* support educational reform through

    collaboration for better teacher evaluation, college ready competencies,

and other school improvement efforts. According to Duncan (2010), this will support the role of education as the "foundation for a foundation for a strong economy" (p. 2).

10. *Secondary Schools*: grades 7-12 in the U.S. encompass middle school, junior high school, and high schools. The Texas Education Agency (2008) reports that grades 7-12 are defined as secondary campuses; and that 6th grade is considered a primary grade even if at a secondary campus. Each student has multiple classes and multiple teachers. In general, a secondary school is intended to provide students with a broad-based knowledge in different subjects as well as prepare them to enter college.

11. *TAP Leadership Team (TLT)*: leads and manages the TAP system at the campus level.

12. *Teacher Quality*: refers to the ability of teachers to effectively facilitate instruction that improves student learning.

13. *Value-added Score*: represents the growth in student learning from one year to the next. The score is determined by equations that utilize multiple factors including but not limited to standardized tests, whole school scores, and other scores. The term value-added is now used in many formal or informal conversations regarding school improvement, and not only regarding students' scores.

Summary

This chapter introduced the reader to the research. First, the chapter began by providing the purpose of the research as well as the rationale. It used previous studies to

examine the historical and current perspectives of the education system in this country. Secondly, it presented the purpose of the research and the questions on which the research is based. Thirdly, it provided the reader the assumptions and limitations of this study followed by a list of terms and their definitions.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter provides a review of the literature related to professional development. It explains how I identified the need for the research. Separate sections address reforms and changes regarding professional development in secondary and low performing schools. It also presents information regarding the TAP system, features of professional development within it, and a limited literature on secondary schools using the TAP system.

Educational Reforms and Changes in Professional Development

A sounding alarm that initiated the most recent movement in school improvement was *A Nation at Risk* (1983). This report by the National Commission on Excellence in Education presented findings on the state of the education system in the United States regarding content, expectation, time, and teaching. As a result, many studies began to focus on the quality of instruction, hence the quality of the teachers in American classrooms (Ingersoll, 2007). By 1987, the National Board of Professional Teaching Standards delineated the common trends in curriculum and instruction nationwide to remedy some of these concerns. Yinger and Hendricks-Lee (2000) concluded that:

Teacher educators and practitioners must learn to conceive of, learn to speak in, and learn to assess their work in terms of emerging standards. Doing so will develop the cognitive and social jurisdiction for teaching mentioned earlier. More important, standards-based teacher preparation and professional development will continue the documented trend of better teachers, and teaching promoting higher student learning and achievement. (p. 105)

At the turn of the 21st century, new reforms began raising the bar for teacher quality. More than ever, teachers must achieve "a certain level of expertise in an area of study and are expected to keep current within the field" (Fiszer, 2004, p. ix). In addition, accountability for teachers and students affect every classroom and make teachers' jobs more complicated. The movement for accountability has had an impact in various parts of the world, particularly in the U.S., as evidenced by the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001. Among other provisions of the act, teachers must meet qualification standards. A highly qualified classroom teacher must demonstrate subject matter competency in the core academic subjects taught (USDOE, 2004b). Schools must comply with these rulings to continue receiving federal funding, although when compared to local funding, this is a minimal percentage of a school's budget.

Teachers today must be able to work in very diverse environments. Flexibility is required of all teachers in order to provide culturally responsive instruction (Durden, 2008) in diverse classrooms, plan coordinated lessons with other colleagues, understand the data on the classroom and school report card, and modify instruction based on research-based learning practices. Given these educational reforms, it is becoming increasingly obvious that basic entry requirements for the teaching profession are not

enough preparation for teachers to meet all of the demands of the current school environment.

School improvement mandates now add to an already difficult situation, as teacher shortages in this country remain a concern. For example, teacher turnover rates in high poverty schools are an even more complex problem, with the exit rates being as much as 20% to 50% higher than in more affluent school settings (Ingersoll, 2001). Ingersoll (2002) also reported that teacher shortage is largely a retention problem.

In order for teachers to continue to be effective, the appropriate environment must be provided through increased decentralization and additional local involvement. Kowalski (2006) explains how this recent practice now even "Defines the current context of superintendents' practice" (Preface, p. xiv). By providing professional development based on a needs assessment, teachers may gain the knowledge and find opportunities to practice the skills needed to provide students with the most effective instruction. It has been documented that teachers want the autonomy and opportunity to share their insights, reflect on their practices, and collectively enforce high standards for effective change (Down, Chadbourne, & Hogan, 2000). Further, Glatthorn and Fox (1996) believe these learning communities are the ideal work environment for growth and development in a school.

Another reason for changes is that traditional teacher professional development is "not aligned with" (Fiszer, 2004, p. ix) what is known about adult learning. By collaborating with others in the learning community, teachers may find that once the parameters of collaboration are established, teachers report positive experiences with their peers (Achinstein, 2002). Lastly, Bezzina and Testa (2005) report that change

promoted by educators through reflection and communication about issues important to them may bring about positive improvement in their practices.

The Changing Needs of Teachers' Roles

Practices leading to isolation among teachers must be abandoned and replaced with cohorts where teachers collaborate and discuss effective teaching strategies that have produced positive results in student learning. This collaboration is needed to keep current with today's changing education system in this competitive world. Today, teachers test students' knowledge and skills, create lesson plans, provide instruction, evaluate and implement the state's curriculum, monitor student progress, sponsor student activities, communicate with parents, provide classroom management and organization, and perform school-related duties, among other activities (Ingersoll, 2007). Given this complexity, professional development should evolve as a result of teacher and staff communicating about their concerns for pupil development and teacher professional competency needs (Choy et al., 2006). Gordon (2004) clarifies that teachers' professional needs may also vary according to teaching assignment and the teacher's background.

Gordon (2004) acknowledges the importance of teacher leaders, mentors, and teachers in other facilitating roles in professional development. When teachers communicate with each other, talk about their anxieties, share their ideas, and support each other, true development occurs. This true development must be facilitated by the school administration. Some ways in which schools have tried to support teachers have been through facilitating teachers attending other teachers' classes, facilitating their networking, ensuring common planning periods, and by supporting teachers' learning and

application of this learning in their classrooms (Kessels & Powell, 2004). These needs now redefine the nature of professional development.

Professional Development and the Professionalization of Teaching

Ingersoll (2007) explains that teachers need to have a certain amount of control over decisions that affect the school, their instruction, their curriculum, and their students. He further asserts that in general, teaching professionals are not afforded the luxury of making these important decisions pertaining to their profession, thereby limiting "the degree of professionalization" of teaching in K-12 school systems (p. 21). If there is any doubt about the importance of improving the teaching profession by including teachers in all aspect of the school improvement process, one only has to begin reviewing the literature to see the need for further research in this area.

Troen and Boles (2005a) believe that "the most important component of professionalization of teaching is the creation of a career ladder" (p. 1). The career ladder can be a motivator for teachers to improve their quality of work as well as their quality of life through personal satisfaction and perhaps even a higher economical status. Effective professional development may well provide support for teachers to become more proficient in the art and science of teaching, even as they are found to be proficient by many standards. Evaluations and other performance indicators determine which teachers who are less effective in improving student learning. Struggling teachers are on the other end of the professionalization continuum. These teachers may need additional support to become more effective professionals. Thus, professional development is beneficial to teachers on both sides of the professionalization continuum.

In addition, Greenlee and Brown (2009) reported that professional development could potentially be a factor in retaining teachers in some schools. However, Weisberg, Sexton, Mulhern, and Keeling (2009) conducted a study about performance evaluation in twelve school districts within four states. This study uncovered that performance data for teachers in need of support was used for dismissal and remediation but not to inform professional development for those teachers.

Professional Development and Teacher Quality

It is necessary to consider the historical perspective of teacher professional development changes in order to understand where we are today and what characteristics in professional development are producing results and changes in student learning. Professional development is at the heart of school improvement (Gordon, 2004). In itself, school reform requires adherence to many norms and standards as well as extensive coordination and collaboration efforts, yet none of these changes can effectively take place without sustained professional development.

Wenglinsky (2000) conducted a study to assess eight graders performance in math and science while considering their teacher's professional background, professional development, and classroom practices. This study identified cases in which the students of teachers who received professional development outperformed other students at a grade level by 40% or higher. The Milken Family Foundation, using data from the NAEP, funded this middle school study.

Teachers require support to become more proficient, but Gordon (2004) cautions "Effective professional development is not taking place in most schools" (p. 8). The school community should ensure the appropriate environment conducive to teacher's

learning as well as students. As schools struggle to improve learning we need to focus on

three goals 1) identifying effective professional development (Gordon, 2004; Guskey,

2009), 2) providing differentiated professional development (Tomlinson, Brimijoin, &

Narvaez, 2008), and 3) tying professional development to teacher quality and ultimately

student achievement (Wenglinsky, 2000). On the journey to school improvement,

collaborative and supportive features must be included within educator professional

development.

Coaching

One strategy that has been linked to effective professional development is that of

coaching. In exploring the literature about coaching in education, I found its origins in

the work of Garmston (1987) and Joyce and Showers (1980). Joyce and Showers (1996a)

explained that,

> Many believe that the essence of the coaching transaction is to offer advice to
>
> teachers following observations. Not so. Rather, teachers learn from one another
>
> while planning instruction, developing support materials, watching one another
>
> work with students, and thinking together about the impact of their behavior on
>
> their students' learning. (p. 15)

Joyce and Showers (1996a) clarify that coaching "must operate in a context of

training, implementation, and general school improvement," (p. 13). Joyce and Showers

(1996b) then expand the coaching concept from strictly peer-coaching to include other

members of the school community by saying, "Each teacher and administrator is a

member of a two- or three-person coaching team....Each team is then linked to one or

two other teams," (p. 4). Knight (2009) uses the more modern view of the coaching

relationship where the coaches "recognize collaborating teachers as equal partners, and they truly believe that each teacher's thoughts and beliefs are valuable," (p. 32). Killion (2009) explains that coaches "allocate" time and resources depending on the experience level of teachers, thus creating differentiating coaching techniques.

Collaboration

Many authors have elaborated on the importance of collaboration in professional development (Achinstein, 2002; Chan & Pang, 2006). True collaboration should lead to reflections conducive to authentic change. The changes derived from teachers' collaborating may then improve teacher practice.

Collaboration and Reflection. Teachers are typically busy; hence, they have difficulty finding time to engage in meaningful reflective practices due to their workload and unsupportive organizational systems (Hargreaves, 1997). However, there should be established time for this dialogue and reflection to take place, since teachers value the opportunity to share with their colleagues (Gordon, 2004). Teachers' dialogue and reflection should be intentional and should not only happen in the teachers' lounge or in the hallway (Fiszer, 2004; Gordon, 2004). Even though technology today allows us to create social media networks electronically, these venues cannot substitute for meaningful, face-to-face, and out-loud interactions. Fiszer (2004) states, "The sharing of expertise through dialogue needs to be embedded into the system as new strategies are implemented" (p. 16). Gordon (2004) asserts that teachers, who are at the highest levels of competence use metacognitive strategies to analyze their lessons, have the flexibility to anticipate changes in their environment, and ultimately "articulate their own teaching"

(p. 37). In addition, DuFour (2003) confirms similar benefits derive from high quality

reflections in professional learning communities.

Collaboration and Teacher Professional Quality. Teachers often depend on

each other more in the beginning phases of a learning activity because the skills and

knowledge are unfamiliar at first (Fiszer, 2004). Through a normal process of change

and development, some constraints may arise because of teachers being at different

stages of competence and development (Glatthorn & Fox, 1996; Joyce & Showers,

2002). Engagement in open discussion may be difficult at first (Fiszer, 2004). When the

whole faculty and staff in a school are involved in a learning goal, the transfer rate of

training into classroom practice is very high (Joyce & Showers, 1995 as seen in Fiszer,

2004). Further, Guskey (2009) confirms that "professional development remains key to

educators' progress and professional growth" (p. 226), and teacher collaboration is an

important element in professional development (Chan & Pang, 2006; Richardson, 2003a).

Collaboration and Student Achievement. Santrock (2001) calls for the need to

make changes in school curriculum, especially at the secondary school level. Today,

students in the middle and high school levels need to develop higher levels of learning,

thinking, and problem solving skills to be prepared for future jobs (Santrock,

2001). Santrock further explains that "adolescents who do not reach their full potential,

who are destined to make fewer contributions to society than society needs, and who do

not take their place as productive adults diminish that society's future" (p. 491).

The teacher is charged with the providing quality instruction that promotes

learning for a diverse body of students (Chan & Pang, 2006). Sharing ideas to promote

student learning may prove to be a good tactic. In this light, Schnellert, Butler, and

Higginson (2008) believe that when teachers create meaning through the co-construction of their learning and have the opportunity to collaborate and support each other using their own data for local assessment, they cultivate student achievement. These findings second the need for supportive methods on teaching and learning through staff development. Indeed, Sparks and Hirsh (1997) confirmed, "staff development is an essential component of school improvement and that its ultimate goal is increased student success" (p. 28) and conclude that "ultimately, systemic change efforts must be judged by their contribution to student learning" (p. 41).

Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) researched findings from previous studies to establish how professional development has an impact on student learning. Although the study did find evidence of the effect of professional development on student achievement, they found very few studies that reported credible findings of this link. Due to multiple factors that influence a school community, it is possible that similar studies will yield similar results (Guskey, 2009).

Principles learned in professional development can lead to classroom practice aimed at increasing learning. Nevertheless, students are not the only beneficiaries of teacher professional development participation. Teachers themselves increasingly learn the science of teaching through certification, classes, and professional development. Later, they transform their experiences into an art, based on their own perceptions, to share with their students.

Although more and more studies attempt to link the effectiveness of professional development to student learning (Wenglinsky, 2000), Guskey (2009) cautions that "professional development characteristics that help improve student learning are scarce

[...which] underscores the fact that dedicated efforts to enhance that body of evidence are sorely needed" (p. 226). Further, the complexity of the systems within any school community blurs the lines that distinguish effective professional development practices from those that do not produce many positive results (Guskey, 2009).

Low Performing Schools

The very foundation on which the NCLB (2001) was created was to ensure that all students had the opportunity to learn regardless of the challenges on each campus. However, we have heard of some shortcomings of this mandate from those with a stake in the future of education. Cochran-Smith and Power (2010) fault NCLB for narrowly viewing curriculum, assessment, and teacher education as a silver bullet that will "overcome the effects of low socioeconomic status" in academically unacceptable schools (p. 12). As a result, Cochran-Smith and Power (2010) supports a modern and differentiated view parting from the premise of the NCLB (2001) expecting all students to make the same gains, stating:

> Advocates of reducing the quality gap argue that all students have the civil right to high-quality educational opportunities. This is dramatically different from simply claiming that all students must achieve to the same high standards despite unequal opportunities. (p. 8)

Many school districts are concerned about safety, particularly in the secondary schools, as student discipline "can emerge as a serious problem," (Huang, 2001, p. 161). Safety has become an area of concern seen by some as being as important as the quality of education that students receive (Ingersoll, 2007). In fact, a study conducted by Huang (2001) reported:

Teaches from high-performing schools reported a greater academic emphasis, a

greater use of innovative instructional strategies, and better facilities and

resources than their counterparts from low-performing schools. On the other hand,

teachers in low-performing schools reported more discipline problems. (p. 161)

It is not uncommon to hear students complain that school lessons are boring, and

thus they become engaged in off-task behaviors (Huang, 2001). The increased incidence

of these comportments in schools today support the notion that students are now

motivated to learn with different instructional methods rather than the traditional ones

seen in most educational settings. Research now points to the importance of providing

professional development to help teachers to increase student engagement and

participation in class, thereby reducing (Emmer & Stough, 2001) the number of

behavioral incidences. Professional development that maintain this focus may help

increase teacher efficiency, not only in terms of value-added performance, but also of the

ability of the schools to respond to the demands of the No Child Left Behind Education

Act (NCLB, 2001) and other school improvement efforts (Durden, 2008; Thornton et al.,

2006). This type of professional development geared to increase students' engagement

may also contribute to alleviate the teachers supply issue, as some studies have found that

student behavior concerns influence teacher retention and attrition (Ingersoll, 2007;

Ingersoll & Smith, 2003). Ingersoll (2007) reported,

Almost one in five teachers in schools with a low level of teacher control over

student discipline issues were expected to depart, whereas only one in 20 were

expected to depart from schools with a high level of teacher control over such

issues. (p. 23)

The National Partnership for Teaching in At Risk Schools (NPTARS) also said that "a system in which teachers with the least experience are given the hardest teaching assignments is not serving the needs of students" (2005, p. 3). Furthermore, Cantrell and Cantrell (2003) state:

> Today's teachers must be better equipped to cope with the...disintegration of American family, various social issues in the population, lack of funding, and general mistrust of public education exacerbated by politicians who use it as an issue at election time and the media. (p. 93)

The requirements of NCLB and more current research-based practices go beyond the teaching and learning processes within the classroom walls, to include what school leaders and district officials do to coordinate internal and data specific school improvement plans. For this reason, administrators in low performing school must also be well prepared to work with teachers and students who face more challenges in their school communities (Wagner, 2008). Yet, the literature indicates that many schools that have greater needs also have inexperienced and ill-prepared administrators (Wagner, 2008).

Secondary Schools

Secondary schools possess certain characteristics that make improvement efforts more difficult to manage than in elementary schools (Schiff, as seen in Keller, 2008). The mere fact that secondary school schedules are practically inflexible makes it difficult for changes to take place. Therefore, arranging in-school professional development can be especially challenging (Thomas, 2005). Teachers at these levels teach at many different periods, and finding a common "off period" can be very daunting.

Educators themselves exercise care in planning their lessons and activities to fit within the allowable timeframe.

However, ensuring quality teachers professional development on campus could prove to be beneficial for all involved. Until recently, it has been difficult to evaluate the extent to which in-house professional development in secondary schools achieves the learning goals. Gordon (2004) explains seven characteristics present in effective school-based professional development: leadership and support, collegiality and collaboration, data-based development, program integration, developmental perspective; relevant learning activities, and professional development as a way of life (p. 16). Professional development resulting in teacher expertise as well as classroom instruction resulting in student achievement uplifts the whole learning community.

TAP - The System for Teacher and Student Advancement

An initiative of the Milken Family Foundation (MFF) named the Teacher Advancement Program (TAP) was created in 1999 in response to the need for school improvement, especially in the areas of student learning, teacher quality, and teacher retention (NIET, 2011). By 2009, TAP was renamed as The System for Teacher and Student Advancement (TAP), now serving school districts in over fourteen states. The states where TAP has been most widely adopted are South Carolina, Arizona, Illinois, and Louisiana. Texas is among the other states that more recently, in 2005, have implemented the TAP system (NIET, 2011). At the time this study began, there were thirty-six TAP system schools in the state of Texas (Eckert, 2010), mostly at the elementary school level. By the end of the study, more secondary schools in the state of Texas became TAP system schools.

The TAP System Elements

The TAP system professional development claims to support teacher's roles and responsibilities by promoting collaboration among school members guided by collectively defined common goals. Springer et al. (2008) describe the TAP systems as comprehensive. Following are the four TAP system elements:

1. *Ongoing Applied Professional Growth*: the in-house professional development. In clusters, usually content-based, master teachers with support of mentor teachers help teachers understand the vision of the TAP system. Master teachers and mentor teachers are also expected to support teachers in the implementation of the TAP system rubrics in the classroom based on their training and understanding of the TAP/PD model. The three main rubrics address *the instruction, the designing and planning* of instruction, and the *learning environment*. A fourth TAP system rubric is the *responsibilities* rubric (Solmon, 2005). These rubrics are used both in the professional development and the evaluation component of the TAP system. TAP/PD maps out what is expected in the different modules of the system and how the actions may fulfill the NCLB and state testing requirements for student achievement.

2. *Instructionally Focused Accountability*: the evaluative component of the TAP whereby teachers are observed throughout the year. Over the course of multiple observations, trained observers (the principal, mentor teachers, and master teachers) collect data and provide multiple teacher support. In addition, these observers complete many formal observations per teacher each year, based on the same rubrics introduced in professional development meetings (Schacter, et al.,

2002; Solmon, White, Cohen, & Woo, 2007). First-year teachers are evaluated at least four times during the year and returning TAP system teachers are evaluated at least three times during the same period. Before an evaluation, there is a recommended pre-conference to establish the parameters of the observation as well as to clarify questions the teachers may have about the evaluation. Some TAP system schools have made the pre-conference meetings mandatory for all teachers, and others have done so only for first year teachers. During the evaluation, a member of the TLT visits the classroom for a period of approximately an hour to take notes about the classroom and learning environment, the instruction, the teachers, and the students. At the end of each evaluation, teachers must also complete a self-evaluation. A mandatory post-conference meeting then takes place. The teacher and the evaluator meet to talk about the teacher's self-evaluation and the observer's report about the class observed. During this meeting, the conversation revolves around areas that show growth and areas that need improvement. This system differs from the one used in many other teacher evaluative systems that are done once a year or fewer times for more experienced teachers (Weisberg et al., 2009).

3. *Performance-Based Compensation*: the remuneration provided to teachers who meet evaluation criteria or whose students show value-added gain based on a standardized assessment. It is the most controversial element of the TAP system. In general, there has been heavy opposition to paying teachers on separate pay scales based on certain performance criteria (Troen & Boles, 2005b). As a result, most school districts typically continue to use a mandatory step or annual pay

increase to compensate teachers. Until recently, there has not been much discussion about compensating teachers (Cochran-Smith & Power, 2010) for attempting to positively influence student improvement, attending more specialized professional development, using certain strategies to increase student learning. At the most, there have been districts that reward teachers obtaining a graduate degree, although at least one study reports there is no correlation between improved student learning and teachers who obtain a graduate degree or national teaching certification (Boles & Troen, 2007). Solmon et al. (2007) explains that in TAP system schools a student value-added score or growth score is measured from pre to post test, typically in a year. In the value-added measure, "Teachers don't get rewarded for having a class of high achievers or penalized for teaching low-performers" (Toch & Rothman, 2008b, p. 4). This TAP component links the outcome of the professional development through evaluations, student value-added scores, or/and school-wide scores (Springer, Ballou, & Peng, 2008). In addition, mentor and master teachers also receive an annual remuneration in addition to their regular salary (Craig, 2009; Schacter, 2003). Springer et al. (2008) explained performance-based compensation might be a "potential lever to enhance teacher effectiveness and school productivity (p. 1).

4. *Multiple Career Paths*: is a structure that provides distinct roles for educators. Within this system, teachers who prefer to maintain close ties with students, the classroom, and the teaching field (Solmon, 2005; White, 2006) have the opportunity for career improvement, rather than becoming administrators. The professionalization of the teaching career has opened areas of specialization,

promotion, and advancement in the teaching field that were not present twenty years ago. Traditionally, if a teacher wants to move up the career ladder within a school district, a principal position or a district level position has been the only alternative. These jobs remove teachers from the classroom and even from ties directly connected to the everyday school life. For some teachers who want to remain in touch with the daily activities of teachers and students, these alternatives are not very appealing. The TAP system is said to attract teachers who seek career advancement in areas that until recently led to a career as an administrator (Solmon, 2005). Boles and Troen (2007) hold the career ladder concept as key to their Millennium Schools model.

The TAP system decentralizes the structure of the organization (Schacter, Thum, Reifsneider, & Schiff, 2004) and places the core of the instructional and curriculum efforts in the hands of the teachers who collaborate at multiple levels to support and enhance all teachers' effectiveness (Schacter, 2003).

The TAP System at the School Level

At the school level, the TAP Leadership Team (TLT) is composed of a principal or assistant principal, master teachers, and mentor teachers. A key mission of the TAP Leadership Team (TLT) is to ensure quality teacher professional development. This team provides clarity of the guidelines concerning what is expected for all partners, while allowing local discretion in tailoring the instructional process to the needs and requirements of the campus based on student performance data.

TAP system policy implementation at the school level recommends having faculty and staff buy-in. The general recommendation is 75% approval vote from the

faculty (Glazerman, Mckie, & Carey, 2009). In the TAP system, teachers may have the opportunity to move up the professional career ladder from classroom teachers to become mentor or master teachers. TAP/PD builds local capacity with educators in the secondary schools. Mentor and master teachers in the TAP system become members of the instructional leadership team on campus, thereby allowing principals to spend more time visiting classrooms (Seaton, Emmett, Welsh, & Petrossian, 2008). In addition, the central office cohort must be also engaged in the school learning process (Joyce, 2004) to work on areas of school improvement that may help close the student achievement gap.

Additional Research Regarding the TAP System

The purpose of this study is to understand teacher perceptions of their experience of the TAP/PD model. While exploring published research that discusses the TAP, few sources addressing the teacher perception of the program in their own words were discovered. An independent study conducted by Springer et al. (2008) focused on the impact of the TAP system on students' test scores in mathematics at the elementary and secondary school levels. The study uncovered positive effects in the elementary school levels and weaker effects at the secondary school levels.

The MFF and NIET have sponsored studies of the TAP system. For example, Solmon et al. (2007) compared student achievement gains of individual teachers in TAP schools studied compared to their non-TAP schools counterparts in six states. The study found that "fewer TAP teachers had students scoring below average" and three of the states had a "higher percentage of TAP teachers who were statistically significantly more effective at raising their students' scores than control teachers (p. 9). They also reported "one of the

major attitudinal themes of TAP is that the program provides teachers with high-quality professional development and strong teacher collaboration and support" (p. 17).

Schacter et al. (2002) studied student achievement in TAP and non-TAP system elementary schools in Arizona, as well as the effect of the TAP system on teacher attitudes and satisfaction. This study also measured teacher support for the TAP system principles, as well as feelings of collegiality and support from others in the school. The findings revealed that TAP system schools showed gains in student learning when compared to non-TAP system schools.

Schacter et al. (2004) analyzed TAP system data from Arizona and South Carolina. In Arizona, six out of seven schools participated, of which over half were at the elementary school level. In South Carolina, three out of six schools were also at the elementary school level. Part of this unequal distribution among grade levels may be attributed to the timing of this study, given that the TAP system was founded in 1999, at which time most TAP schools were at the elementary school level and fewer were at the middle and high school level. Teachers in Arizona rated TAP professional development the highest among the components of the TAP system during all three years of the study from 2001-2003. In South Carolina, the professional development component of the TAP system went from being ranked the lowest in 2001 to become the highest rated TAP system component for teachers. Further, Schacter et al. (2004) also reported teacher support for two other TAP system elements: career paths, and performance-based accountability. In addition, teachers in this latter study "reported high levels [of] collegiality and teamwork" (p. 22).

Additionally, three dissertations and one study of a school in the District of Columbia focused on the TAP system model have been identified. Performance pay was either partly or mainly the issue of focus in these studies. The first dissertation (Holmberg, 2006) compared an alternative compensation program to the TAP system compensation element in the state of Minnesota. The alternative compensation portion of the study was conducted in five schools, whereas the TAP system compensation portion was implemented in two schools. Holmberg (2006) reported that the schools using an alternative compensation program showed improvement in measures related to student achievement or teacher evaluation compared to the TAP system schools. This study also found that the alternative program allowed more individual choice and local flexibility.

Another dissertation reports findings of a study conducted at a parochial elementary school in a metropolitan area of the Midwest. It explored elementary school teachers' perceptions of the impact of TAP on student achievement (Dispenzieri, 2009). Student achievement is an elusive measure of teacher quality because there are many factors that may affect student performance, especially on a single measure like a standardized test.

A dissertation by White (2006) addressed the relationship between the principals' TAP score and the schools' value-added achievement. The study investigated the relationship between these two scores in seventy-four TAP schools in fourteen states across the nation.

Another report investigated how a middle school preparatory program in the northeast, the DC Prep, decided to implement the TAP system (NewSchools Venture Fund, 2007). Based on this school implementation, the report examined the elements to

consider before implementing the TAP system. It also provided an overview of the TAP performance pay system. In addition, Glazerman et al. (2009) provide an impact report based on data from the Chicago Public Schools using the TAP system at the end of their 2007-2008 school year.

More recently, Daley and Kim (2010) reported findings about the distribution of TAP system teacher evaluations and related to student achievement. Most studies identified in this literature review were conducted in elementary schools and virtually no information about secondary schools was found, and even fewer studies pertained to TAP/PD in secondary schools. This research will also provide information regarding school improvement as a result of TAP/PD.

Gap in Literature Regarding TAP Professional Development in Secondary Schools

The literature reviewed for this study reveals gaps. Most studies done about the TAP system do not address the need for research examining teacher perceptions of their experiences in this model. Given the demand for school improvement efforts, there is a crucial need to identify professional development that may support teachers with the ever-changing demands of the profession. The complexity of the secondary school systems presents more challenges for scheduling and planning professional development, so it is evident that this body of research needs to be further developed. Many studies about TAP focus on the performance pay, yet do not address the strategic support needed for teachers to be successful in this model in terms of their development. Performance pay cannot be a stand-alone school improvement activity; rather, it must be connected to other elements such as teacher professional development (CED, 2009; NPTARS, 2005; Slotnik, 2009).

As an instructional leader and former teacher, I am very aware of the importance of the role of continuous improvement and lifelong learning in this era of accountability and globalization (Dantas, 2007). In view of the gap in the literature, I have the opportunity to conduct research to elicit secondary teacher responses to first experiences with a professional development model some believe may hold promise for school improvement. Additional information is needed to inform how teacher practitioners may obtain valued support through ongoing collaboration for student and teacher achievement. Findings from this study may bring to light some considerations for new approaches to professional development that are tied to other perceived key elements to make our schools better.

Based on the research presented in this literature review, I identified a gap in the literature about teachers' perceptions of their professional development experiences under the TAP system professional development model, which became the focus for the current investigation. In the midst of comprehensive systems of educational reform, striving for quality professional development for teachers to improve instruction is crucial. The compensation, career improvement, and evaluation portions of any model of school improvement system cannot be promoted without the focus on professional development of teachers. A system that attempts any incentive for the purpose of recruiting and retaining qualified teachers must also include a continuous development element.

Are teacher perceptions of their experiences in TAP/PD more or less encouraging because of its features? Studying the first year experiences of secondary school teachers in a TAP/PD system may reveal information about a professional development in a

comprehensive system and may provide information in a different light about general professional development. For this reason, in the next chapter, I will explain the methodology for my research to address the gap in the literature about professional development for this study.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Chapter III provides an overview of this study's methods. The first part of this chapter will describe the purpose and questions on which this study is based. The second part will discuss the qualitative research methods used to conduct this study. This chapter will also describe the interview protocol used for both consistency and adequate flexibility. Further, I describe how classroom observations and field-notes were used to triangulate data obtained through interviews. Following is an explanation of the data analysis process and means of enhancing the trustworthiness of study findings. Finally, there is description of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) process and the methods used to preserve the confidentiality of the individuals who participated in the study (Yin, 2009).

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine secondary school teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the TAP/PD model during their first year of participation in this program. The research also investigated how these teachers compared TAP/PD to their earlier professional development experiences and the impact they believe TAP is having on their classroom practice. Through this study, teachers also reported what they perceive as strengths and weaknesses of the TAP/PD model.

Research Questions

The literature review revealed a gap in the research about the professional development component of the TAP system implemented in secondary schools as a means to improve teacher quality. Teacher quality has been linked to students' achievement; therefore, investigating a theory-based approach to professional development could provide great insight into the application of this approach. The questions driving this study were:

1. How did TAP come to be adopted at Juan Bosco Middle School?

    a. What factors do secondary school teachers believe influence the decision to adopt the TAP system?

    b. How do teachers describe the TAP system adoption process?

2. What are the perceptions of teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School of their experiences with the PD component of TAP?

    a. How do these teachers describe their personal experiences with TAP PD?

    b. What do teachers see as strengths and weaknesses of the TAP/PD model, relative to other professional development models they have experienced?

    c. How do teachers believe their TAP/PD experiences influence professional growth or students' achievement?

Methodological Design

This study was designed with a case study approach to qualitative research. A case study, said Willig (2008), is "not characterized by the methods used to collect and analyse data, but rather by its focus upon a particular unit of analysis: the *case*" (p. 74). For this research, TAP system teachers within their first year in using the TAP/PD

methods provided the opportunity to "approach" the site-based professional development in a new professional learning community. Willig (2008) also added that a case study provides understanding of a case, overtime, within a context, using triangulation to generate insight (p. 74). Hence, conducting this study of Juan Bosco Middle School, while conducting interviews and observations and collecting additional data from the school community over a period of time, qualifies as a case study.

This research was based on a constructivist epistemology, seeking to understand how meaning is constructed. It used qualitative research procedures to collect data, analyze information, and report findings. Careful consideration was given to recruiting participants, methods of data collection, and data analysis of this study. Teachers were the main source of information as they reported on their experiences in the TAP/PD program at their school.

Campus Selection

I explored TAP secondary school campuses in the state of Texas. At the time of the study, there were 32 TAP system schools within nine school districts in the state of Texas. Of these 32 schools, six were secondary school campuses. These sites included public and charter schools. The site selection was purposeful. The criteria for the campus selection were 1) secondary campus, 2) TAP school in year one of implementation of the TAP system, and 3) 5 to 10 potential participants for a study limited to teachers who are beyond their first year of teaching.

The selected school was identified as a middle school in a suburban district with a high teacher turnover, a high proportion of students in poverty, and a high percentage of students of color. The number of students who qualify for free/reduced lunch determines

the proportion of students said to be in poverty. This school should provide valuable information given its similar characteristic to inner city and large school districts that face similar issues. In addition, since this school was in its first year of implementation of the TAP system, which is a school-wide initiative, there could potentially be many participants available to talk about TAP/PD as they initially experienced it. Ensuring an appropriate number of participants for this research about first year experiences in the TAP/PD was intended to provide a rich quality and quantity of data to contribute to this research.

Access and Entry

I began to plan how to ensure access (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005) as soon as I possibly could. In order to gain entry into the school, I informally met with the assistant superintendent of the district to express my interest in conducting research at a particular school. I explained my research questions and the rationale for conducting the study. She responded positively to my intent and indicated support for my research. The assistant superintendent signed the letter of assurance, in Appendix A, providing me access at the district level.

Next, I met with the principal of the campus to discuss my research goals for him to consider the feasibility of conducting the research on his campus and to answer any questions he might have. At the end of the meeting, the principal approved my request for research at his campus and accepted my written request for entry and access authorized by the superintendent. I also assured the principal, as well as the superintendent when I met with her, that my research would in no way interfere with

classroom instruction and that I would closely follow IRB procedures required to formally conduct my research.

Establishing Rapport

My next step was to visit the master teachers to explain my interest and to propose a tentative schedule for conducting research. They, too, were supportive and offered a list of participants to interview. The master teacher provided a list of all the teachers in the school detailing the number of years of experience each teacher had. From this list, I randomly selected those teachers that met the minimum qualification for my research regardless of the master teachers' recommendations as to which teachers to interview.

The in-person communication allowed me the opportunity for establishing rapport with the teachers. I communicated my research purpose and method with the teachers, and used my background and experience as an educator to connect with them. To me, these are important elements in establishing rapport and are confirmed by Merriam (1998) who reminds us "empathy is the foundation of rapport" (p. 23).

In preparation for this research, I familiarized myself with the school community and the potential participants. Periodically throughout the months of November 2009 through February 2010, I began to informally visit the site during one of their three lunch breaks. I would drive to the site to observe the students, the culture, and the dynamics among different members of the school community. For example, I visited TAP/PD meetings and observed that the master teachers concluded the introduction to the TAP system rubrics a few weeks after my initial visit. Part of the process of introducing the TAP/PD is to ensure that the teachers throughout the school understand the TAP rubrics,

and the expectations for teacher participation. This informal experience allowed me the opportunity to observe, listen, and gain preliminary information on the teachers' views on teaching and learning.

Participants

I anticipated collecting data from about 5-10 participants. Patton (2002) suggests, "There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 244). An analysis was made about what I wanted to find out through this study (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005; Patton, 2002) to decide on the appropriate sample size. My intention was to interview approximately four teachers after observing them three different times in their professional development meetings. Given my experience with research and in education settings, I anticipated that sometimes schedule conflict, teacher workload, and personal situations would interfere with carrying out this design as planned.

In order to obtain a clear and in-depth picture of the effect of TAP/PD on teacher perception, I selected purposive sampling (Krathwohl, 1998; McMillan, 2000; Patton, 2002). Once the inclusion criteria were established, I identified about ten teachers with previous experience in non-TAP school systems that were now in their first year as teachers in the TAP model, as potential participants. I approached nine teachers to invite them to participate in this study by explaining the nature of the research as well as the interviews and observations. Seven immediately responded favorable to the invitation; however, when I tried to schedule the interviews, I faced schedule conflicts with two of the teachers. Therefore, I observed and interviewed five of the teachers who accepted to participate.

These teachers provided information that was crucial to understand the scope of the impact of a newly implemented TAP/PD model at their school through interviews and classroom observations. Other staff members such as non-participant teachers, mentor teachers, master teachers, and principals indirectly contributed information through their everyday activities and participation in TAP/PD cluster meetings. That information added depth to the voices of the participants in this study.

Using a sample strategy sometimes referred to as maximum variation (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002), I selected a sample of teachers who varied in years of experience, certification path, and content area. Table 1 shows the participants' years of teaching experience. Some teachers were from the core (math, social studies, English Language Arts, or science) and others were from elective content areas. I purposely selected this variety of teachers, who met the key criteria, to allow for the representation of diverse contributions for a richer, broader set of data for this research. By attempting to engage teachers from multiple subject areas, I also interviewed participants who were representative of the school community (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). Teachers in core content areas, who are typically perceived as the ones under most pressure to show improvement in students' learning, composed the majority of the participants. The rest of the group was composed of teachers from elective classes. I anticipated that responses from elective teachers might vary to some extent from the responses of core content teachers given they are differentially impacted by accountability standards. Most elective classes are application classes that use the skills acquired in reading, writing, science, and social studies core classes. Though elective teachers influence students' learning as well,

these teachers are usually not put under as much pressure regarding students'

performance in high-stakes testing situations.

Table 1

Participants' Years of Teaching Experience

Teacher's Name	Years of Experience (Not counting current year)
Mary	2
Natalie	10+
Alison	2
Clarissa	2
Sara	2

Juan Bosco Middle School, 2008-2009

The participants had been confirmed as meeting the established criteria for

selection. After reviewing my study intention, I obtained their written consent to

participate. Appendix B provides a sample of the consent form. The participating

teachers were assigned a pseudonym and were referred to by their pseudonym only. In

addition, only selected demographic characteristics have been reported in an effort to

shield participant identities. For example, certification area has not been shared. See

Table 1 for information regarding teachers' years of teaching experience. This will

preserve the anonymity of the participants and increase the confidentiality of the data

collected (Yin, 2009). The teachers who participated in the interviews did so on a

voluntary basis and understood that they could withdraw from this research at any time.

Appendix C contains the interview protocol for this study.

Data Collection

Patton (2002) provides valuable information to sequence the collection and analysis of data. Primary data were collected and information was analyzed and summarized using interviews, researcher's log, and observations. After conversations about entry and access with the district leaders and school principals, I talked with mentors and master teachers, and visited a few areas and classrooms to obtain general information about this TAP system school. The data collection process took two semesters. My weekly campus visits lasted between 2 to 8 hours. I visited the campus to establish and maintain communication with potential participants.

Interviews

The interviews were conducted in the district during the months of March, April, May, and June near the end of the teachers' first year in the TAP/PD experience. I summarized the information at the end of each interview. The data were collected during the second half of the first year to allow teachers to reflect and glean insight about their experiences during the first year of experience under this professional development model. In an attempt to preserve the fidelity of the participants' responses, I shared the interview summary to immediately clarify the information obtained from the initial interview.

Interview Protocol. The purpose of the interview was to obtain first hand in-depth information from the teachers about their experiences in the TAP/PD model. Using an interview protocol increases the consistency of the data collected. Merriam (1998) suggests interview protocols are the data-gathering method most widely used in qualitative research in the field of education. The wording of the questions is a very

important consideration during the creation of an interview protocol (Merriam, 1998). For this reason, I consulted with my research peers to pilot-test my interview protocol (Merriam, 1998). I tested the interview questions with my peer research team to elicit information about the wording and the connotation. For example, my team provided feedback about questions needing clarification, specificity, phrasing the question differently, and other information that helped me evaluate the interview protocol alignment with my research goal (Merriam, 1998).

This research interview used open-ended questions to allow the participants to provide detailed, unrestrictive narration of their experiences (Krathwohl & Smith 2005; Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). In addition, this semi-structured interview format began with general guiding questions for the participants, but these were modified for clarity as appropriate (Merriam, 1998). For example, I asked some questions to ensure I understood the participant's response to a question. I also asked additional questions of the participants that allowed me to elicit information to capture their views while going deeper (Yin, 2009) into the participants' stories. In addition, since the same questions yielded completely different responses, at times, I asked additional questions to clarify answers provided by the participants to ensure I understood their answer to the question. To this extent, the interview protocol served as a semi-structured guide during the interview process (Merriam, 1998). In general, during an interview, the participant did "most of the talking and the researcher [did] most of the listening" (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010, p. 141) allowing the participant to broadly define the essence of their experience.

Interview Process. I conducted interviews with teachers at a mutually agreeable location. With their permission, I recorded the interview using a digital recorder and

made notes regarding nuances I observed as they related their experiences (Patton, 2002). In order to accurately maintain the validity of the information provided by the participant, I used a continual discovery method through which I asked questions of the respondents to either clarify or provide additional information. I anticipated these interviews would last between 30-40 minutes.

Once the interviews were completed, I transcribed the recorded information using digital media, allowing for verbatim-recorded interviews. I then forwarded the transcription to the participant for validity checks (Merriam, 1998) to ensure I had captured the teacher's message. A second interview was scheduled ahead of time with each participant for additional cluster follow-up questions and clarification of other questions that may have arisen during the transcription or as the interviews continue. The second interview was also expected to last between 30-40 minutes. One last interview was conducted following the same structure and duration of the first two interviews. I anticipated these interviews would take place in person in teachers' classrooms, during the day on their off period or after-school. Conducting interviews in the teachers' classrooms offers the advantage of gathering additional contextual data (Willig, 2008) regarding the teachers' experiences. Further, it allows for opportunities to casually observe teacher-student interactions. Although Yin (2009) asserts that multiple interviews with the same participant will more accurately describe her as an *informant* (p. 107), I have decided to use the term participant in this study.

The first interviews were conducted in person. However, I demonstrated flexibility (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) to collect data during second interviews or member checks anticipating teachers would choose to respond through teleconferencing or

email. After the first and second interviews, I printed the transcript and personally

delivered it to teachers who asked for that method of communication. I also sent

transcripts by email to the three other participants who were comfortable using electronic

communication for this purpose. When I visited them for the next interview, I discussed

the changes and asked if I had adequately captured their words.

I continued to face schedule conflicts. I interviewed two teachers only two times;

one teacher ended-up leaving the school due to personal reasons. The other one was

interviewed over the telephone – making it difficult to take notes about the setting or her

impressions or reactions when talking. This interview was also recorded. I completed

three interviews with three teachers. All first interviews went as scheduled, after a

professional development meeting. The second and third interviews did not always go as

planned, as they did not always immediately follow my TAP/PD meeting observations.

One of the interviews was two days before the end of class. Table 2 shows the data

collection plan through observations and interviews.

Table 2
Planned and Actual Data Collection through Observations and Interviews

Original Design	Final Design
TAP/PD Observation 1 – Interview 1	TAP/PD Observation 1 – Interview 1
TAP/PD Observation 2 – Interview 2	TAP/PD Observation 2 –
TAP/PD Observation 3 – Interview 3	TAP/PD Observation 3 – {Interview 2}
	Interview 3

I continued to inquire, gather data, and add new information to the original

transcripts until patterns were observed (Patton, 2002), or in the case until the participant

was no longer available. Table 3 shows the number of times I interviewed each

participant.

Table 3
Interview Log Summary Report

Teacher's Name	Number of Times Interviewed	Member Checks
Mary	3	Yes
Natalie	3	Yes
Alison	3	Yes
Clarissa	2	Yes
Sara	2	No

Professional Development Meeting Observations

I collected broad knowledge information about the professional development in

this setting by talking to school staff, master teachers, mentors, and TAP system

representatives. I conducted observations of the teachers' professional development

meetings to obtain additional, supportive data regarding the participants' experiences

(Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in the professional development meetings. These observations

began before I started interviewing. According to Rossman and Rallis (2003), the

advantage of doing observations first is to clarify questions asked during the interviews.

I used open narratives to document specific observations about the nuances of this

professional development setting to inform my research. I voice-recorded some cluster

meetings and annotated my observations during or right after TAP/PD meetings. I asked

clarifying questions about the cluster learning when needed. In this way, the

observations were meant to provide a richer context, setting, and background to add to

the data gathered from the participants' interviews (Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I observed

multiple professional development meetings during five days after my study proposal

was approved. During those five days, I observed professional development in different

meetings attended by study participants. The observations and field-notes documented

multiple sources of information to allow for a triangulation method of data collection and

analysis. Table 2 shows the plan for conducting the observations and interviews

compared to the actual sequence in which the observations and interviews unfolded.

Institutional Artifacts/Documents

Artifacts in the form of rubrics, graphic organizers, and other documents provided

additional information about the setting of the participants' experiences (Merriam,

1998). Some of the most important documents in the TAP /PD program are the

rubrics. Since the common language of the cluster is provided through vocabulary

contained in the four TAP system rubrics that guide the professional development

meetings, I referred to these rubrics during my findings and discussions. Given my

experience as a master teacher and my familiarity with the TAP/PD rubrics, I did not

need to spend as much time examining these documents for understanding, but I did need

to examine them closely for their potential value to this research. I also used the rubrics

to compare my observation to inform the learning in cluster to teachers' narration of their

experiences.

During my observations of the TAP/PD meeting process, I obtained copies of the

TAP/PD meeting plan. This plan also serves as a meeting record that provides other data

and other information for the meeting. I provide samples of these meeting records in

Appendix D.

Another document I examined was the school Campus Improvement Plan. I also examined the district and campus' Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) on the Texas Education Agency webpage. Information from this source will be discussed in chapter four, as it shows data teachers' reported to have contributed to the adoption of the TAP system at Juan Bosco Middle School.

In addition, I examined other documents that were particular to this site. For example, I visited their science laboratories, school counselor offices, and library to observe the setting. I came across other data in the form of documents and interactions not directly related to the research, but provided more background about the setting. I also obtained data about other documents teachers need to complete in addition to the ones provided by the TAP system. I analyzed these documents acknowledging that these documents could potentially lead to important information to consider for this study regarding JBMS teachers and students. Merriam (1998) concurs that "the data can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development, and so on" (p. 126). All of these artifacts help describe the setting and add depth to the findings derived from the teachers' experiences.

Researcher's Log

This method of data collection helped me document my reactions or thoughts about my observations of the issues pertaining to the teachers in the TAP system. I used my researcher log to collect data as I conducted interviews, sat in professional development meetings, or simply as I observed the environment at the Juan Bosco Middle School. Yin (2009) suggests that these informal visits to the "natural setting"

allow the researcher to observe "relevant behavioral or environmental conditions…

during which other evidence, such as that from interviews" emerge (p. 109).

As I continued the process to identify information relevant to this research, I

remained in my role as a research instrument (Krathwohl & Smith, 2005; Merriam

1998). This role as an instrument in the research allowed me to control the amount and

quality of information that I used in my findings. My annotations supported

opportunities for reflections about my comments, feelings, and reactions pertaining to my

observations and the interviews. Reflectively thinking about these annotations also

heightened awareness of my treatment of the data during the analysis stage (Corbin &

Strauss, 2008; Merriam, 1998).

Data Analysis

Transcription occurred as the data were collected from the participants (Merriam,

1998; Patton, 2002; Rossman & Rallis, 2003). I deconstructed the information (Merriam,

1998) as experienced by first year teachers in the TAP model in order to understand their

perceptions of the professional development program in meeting the needs of their

students (Patton, 2002). Teachers selected for observation at Juan Bosco Middle School

served as *key informants* (Patton, 2002, p. 321) to provide the primary data for my

research. In addition, my observations and researcher log annotations added information

to complement the participants' responses and might indicate consistency in responses.

Willig (2008) highlight the importance of ensuring a "reliability of analysis… by using

triangulation…to show how different perspectives converge" (p. 154).

I thoroughly read all of the research data collected from the participants. Then, I

carefully read each interview while annotating possible codes that emerged, using an

open-coding method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). According to Corbin and Strauss, this allows the researcher to "enter vicariously into the life of participants, feel what they are experiencing and listen" (p. 163). Corbin and Strauss also suggest using this method to allow the researcher to be receptive to the information that may emerge from the data. The open-coding method allowed me to analyze the data to find patterns. Further, I conducted word-searches in the word-processing to confirm the amount of times some of these key words appeared in each interview and across interviews to support my potential coding system.

For example, at the beginning of the conversation, I asked the participants about TAP/PD at this school. Hence one of my first codes became TAP HERE. I went to all interview transcripts to extract any information under this code as well as which participants did mentioned it. I went to the transcripts again to read and annotate the specific lines where the participants had mentioned something related to TAP HERE. When I noticed there were other sub-categories emerging under TAP HERE, such as adoption, then a secondary code became ADOPT. I went back into the data to find line numbers where the participants referred to the adoption process. At this time, I also identified two other smaller categories of data, as I noticed favorable remarks then those comments were coded on under TH ADOP PRO or under TH ADOPT CON. Again, I went into the transcripts to identify the exact comments from the participants. I went back into my researcher notes for other codes. I coded the information under the topics that consistently appeared in the interviews. I also color-coded the data to help me distinguish the emerging themes to identify and classify the data more clearly. Patton (2002) and Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest the use of this method as an aid to make

sense of the data. The data coding assisted me in understanding the relevance of the data. An excerpt of this process can be found in Appendix E.

This cross-analysis of coded categories and sub-categories led to the development of themes. I analyzed the data based on the themes as they emerged from the data collected during the interviews (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002) and the coding process. Further examinations of these themes presented a base of data to explain the experiences of the participant teachers in this research.

Trustworthiness

I achieved trustworthiness using several methods. I documented field notes collected from my observations in my researcher log as I immersed in the data garnered from the study setting and participants. My researcher log contains information recorded by source and identifying page reference so that I could to "track" my data back to its original source. Patton (2002) emphasizes the importance of mapping the data to "maximize accuracy" and increase confirmability (p. 93) to improve the data collection method. Lincoln & Guba (1985) assert that "transferability [is] dependent on local contextual factors," (p. 205). Yet, the researcher is charged with reporting the study's information in a way that allows for transferability *judgments*, (p. 359).

I incorporated data from teacher interviews, researcher field-notes, and observations (Rossman & Rallis, 2003) in all three phases of the research. The participants answered my interview questions by providing in-depth, primary information. My researcher log added complementary information of the setting and the participants' observation. In addition, observing the participants during their professional development provided rich description of the teachers' behavior, actions, and

responses. All these sources of data collection ensured the investigation to be "as close as possible to what is really going on" (Patton, 2002, p. 93). Moreover, I ensured the triangulation of the data source, the data analysis, and the findings (Merriam, 1998; Patton, 2002; Willig, 2008).

During data collection and analysis, I was mindful of the importance of validity factors. In this research, using a semi-structured interview protocol with a standard vocabulary to convey the same questions to each participant increased the validity of the research. I provided opportunities for member checks, although not all participants provided feedback after each transcript was sent for review. These findings, of course, were triangulated to increase the level of internal validity, which is the extent to which this research's findings closely match the participant's experiences (Merriam, 1998).

Ethical Considerations

This qualitative analysis of data brought to light the perspective of teachers regarding their need to support student learning and their professional selves. Throughout this study I was mindful of the various ethical issues regarding data management, triangulation and confidentiality (Merriam, 1998). For example, all data collected during this research including the researcher's log were used to help me document, validate, and support interviews were not connected in any way to participants. The interview responses were not shared with anyone else other than the participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010) until I had submitted the interview for member-checks. I carefully ensured the proper and private handling of the data collected so as to maintain confidentiality of the sources.

Moreover, I closely adhered to stipulations of the Institutional Review Board (IRB). IRB guidelines were followed during the whole research as I ensured the rights of the participants as voluntary contributors were clearly communicated as well as my intent for maintaining transparency throughout this study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Merriam, 1998). Subsequently, careful consideration and sensitivity (Merriam, 1998) were also observed to leave the research site in a friendly manner. Krathwohl and Smith (2005) suggest offering the participants some type of assistance with their workload or finding other ways to compensate them for their performance. Further, my exit strategy was thoughtfully crafted in a way that allowed this forged relationship to potentially serve as a venue for future research.

Summary

This research attempts to answer the question, "what are secondary school teachers' perceptions of experiences with the TAP system professional development?" I devised a plan to collect data. I also designed an interview protocol. I conducted interviews during the second semester of the first year of the TAP system implementation. Further, I conducted observations to gain a more complete picture of the setting and of the implementation of the TAP/PD for an in-depth study to contribute to the data provided during the interviews. I inductively analyzed the data from all sources beginning with open coding and continuing with axial coding to establish key themes. In later chapters, I will share the perspectives of all the participants to present thick, rich descriptions of the teachers' TAP professional development experiences.

CHAPTER IV

INFLUENCING FACTORS AND PROCESS OF THE TAP SYSTEM ADOPTION

In this section, I describe teachers' perceptions of the influence of the school culture on the decision to adopt the TAP system to improve the campus. Then I analyze how each of the key school community groups played a part in the school context in which TAP system was selected for implementation at Juan Bosco Middle School. I also explain the process through which the school community eventually decided to adopt the TAP system. This chapter responds to the first research question: How did the TAP system come to be adopted at Juan Bosco Middle School?

Factors that Influenced the Decision to Adopt

Teachers explained how Juan Bosco Middle School became a TAP system school. They identified internal and external factors that may have influenced this decision. The external factors relate to accountability and performance expectations at the state and federal levels. The internal factors relate to the stakeholders at the school and district levels.

Judging by Scores

The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is the state's largest governing educational entity. This agency rates districts and campuses based on their students' performance on the state's standardized assessments. TEA has identified five labels to report the performance levels of districts or campuses. Districts or campuses can be rated

Exemplary, Recognized, Academically Acceptable, Academically Unacceptable, or Not

Rated.

For the 2008-2009 school year, the Texas Education Agency stipulated that 95%

of the students on a campus must achieve a passing rate in reading, writing, social studies,

and mathematics as well as the required sub-populations to obtain an exemplary

rating. The requirements for the recognized rating in the same categories listed above are

for a 75% passing rate in all categories and in all sub-populations. Table 4 is an excerpt

from the 2008-2009 State Accountability Manual. It indicates that 70% of the student

body must pass the social studies TAKS test; 70% of the students in the school must pass

the reading, English Language Arts (ELA) and writing; 55% of the students in the school

must pass the mathematics portion of the test and 50% of the total student body must pass

the science test for the school to be rated as an academically acceptable campus. The

requirements for the acceptable, recognized and exemplary ratings are indicated below.

Table 4
Accountability Standards

	Subject/ Content	% Academically Acceptable	% Recognized	% Exemplary
All students in	Reading/ELA	70%	75%	95%
each student	Writing	70%	75%	95%
group meeting	Social Studies	70%	75%	95%
minimum size	Mathematics	55%	75%	95%
	Science	50%	75%	95%

Note. Data obtained from Table 7 of the Texas Education Agency (TEA)
Accountability Manual 2008 – 2009

Further, the table does not list, but it implicitly suggests the rating for schools not achieving the minimum acceptable standards detailed. These low-performing schools or districts are labeled academically unacceptable (AU) under the Texas Education Agency Accountability System. Juan Bosco Middle School did not achieve the minimum performance standard to be academically acceptable; hence, it was labeled an AU campus.

The TEA provides reports based on campuses and districts' performance assessment data on administered tests by sub-categories of students. The report reflects the performance on the state standardize test of all Juan Bosco Middle School student populations, including those student groups meeting the minimum size. Typically, student groups for African Americans, Hispanics, Whites, and the Economically Disadvantaged students' data meet the minimum size and thus are reported as student populations on the state accountability test. A student population is determined by having at least 30 students who fall under a category, or 10% of the population in smaller schools (TEA, 2009b). However, categories with lower numbers of students are typically not counted in separate groups; rather they are added to the total number of students.

The preliminary TAKS results are reported in the month of May. Table 5 is an excerpt of these results for Juan Bosco. This table shows that during 2008-2009 school year, sixth-grade students met the reading standards, as the required score was 70% of all students in that category. The trend continues in the seventh-grade and the eight-grade in the same content. Sixth-grade students are lagging behind all other students in the school on the mathematics test. Sixty-four percent of seventh-grade students did well that same year. Eight-graders performed relatively the same as other students in the school on the mathematics with 61% of the students passing that test. Alison summarized the influence

of this accountability data on the rest of the campus by stating: "I know there is more

concern for math and science."

Table 5

Juan Bosco Middle School TAKS Met Standards

Grade Level	JBMS %	District %	Comparison% School
6th Reading/	74%	81%	87%
6th Math	48%	58%	67%
7th Reading	74%	76%	78%
7th Math	64%	65%	66%
7th Writing	83%	86%	89%
8th Reading	81%	87%	91%
8th Math	61%	65%	68%
8th Science	52%	57%	62%
8th Social Studies	78%	85%	91%

Note. Data obtained from Texas Education Agency (TEA) 2008 – 2009

Students considered at-risk are those under the age of 21 years who fulfill one of

thirteen additional criteria as stipulated by the Texas Education Code, 70th Legislature

(TEA, 2008). At risk students percentage is calculated as the total number of students

coded as *at risk,* divided by the *total number of students who attend the school.* Based on

the information on Table 6, of the 586 students registered on this campus for the year

2008-2009, 56% of them were identified as at risk of dropping-out of school.

The proportion of English Language Learners (ELL) at JBMS, referred to as

Limited English Proficient (LEP) students on the accountability data, was three percent

higher than the average proportion of ELLs in the district and 50% higher than the

comparison middle school in the district. ELLs are students whose home language

includes another language in conjunction with or other than English. A student may also

be identified as ELL if his or her dominant language is one other than the English

language, regardless if they were born in this country (TEA, 2008). Sara's opinion

speaks to a perceived need of the campus: "I have a very mixed group of kids. My

challenge has been really the differentiation; so, it would be nice to have [a mentor] that

could really [have] a large ESL background."

Table 6
Juan Bosco Middle School Student Demographic Data

	Students	LEP %	Economically Disadvantaged %	At Risk %
JBMS	586	32%	82%	56%
Comparison School	706	16%	72%	50%
District	1292	29%	75%	58%

Note. Data obtained from TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)
Accountability Report for Research Site, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

During the year 2008-2009, 82% of the total student population at this site was

identified as economically disadvantaged. A student who is eligible for free or reduced

lunch is identified as economically disadvantaged and counted as a sub-population for

Texas Assessment of Knowledge and Skills (TAKS) purpose. This designation is based

on the National School Lunch Program and Child Nutrition Program or other public

assistance (TEA, 2008). In addition to meeting the standards for the general student

population, campuses and districts must also meet the standards for the subpopulations.

Some responses provided by the participants from this school indicate that the

major reason for the adoption of TAP at this research site was due to the campus'

unacceptable academic status. Alison comments support a widely perceived reason

TAP/PD was needed at this campus:

> There is a lot of pressure because we are AU and we have to hear it all the time.
>
> Not so much anymore, but we did all year long from our former principal. We
>
> heard it last year. Even before the kids were AU, we heard it. There was a good
>
> chance that we might not do well. The kids were burned out and the teachers
>
> were burned out because of all this stuff. That is not good, how are you supposed
>
> to succeed?

Natalie also felt that Juan Bosco Middle was under scrutiny due to their campus

performance, as she drew similarities with her previous teaching job at another low

performing school: "I guess because I was working at an AU school, we were constantly

under the microscope, so there are a lot of things that we got professional development on;

it is not called TAP, but another district did that."

Clarissa's perspective was similar indicating that while her acceptance of TAP

was largely based on a desire to provide improved instruction, she felt the primary reason

TAP was adopted was due to the schools AU status:

> I felt that at this school it was something we had to buy into because of our status
>
> as AU. I was interested in it because my main goal is [that] I want to be the best
>
> for my kids. Any resource that is going to help me be the best for them giving…
>
> I would go into it. To me this was almost as if the PD that I felt was going to be
>
> here more available, easily accessible but for me to give to my kids, I wanted it to
>
> be for them, whatever capacity that it could be. However, it does not matter what
>
> program would have been offered. I would have accepted it. I would have

wanted it only because I would have felt whatever we could obtain, [would be] to become better for our kids.

Most participants shared the idea that the TEA labeling of the school was primarily the reason the district proposed that the school adopt improvement programs. The TAP system was one of the programs considered for Juan Bosco Middle School to help develop teacher proficiency and student learning.

Influence of the School Culture

How did Juan Bosco Middle come to understand there was a need for change? It would be difficult to say it was only the school scores. Evidently, the score do paint a picture of glaring systems that need improvement. Yet, naming a single cause for the shift to better provide for the different needs would be erroneous.

Administrators. There is no denying the role of educators has evolved. So has the role of the leaders in educational settings. Today principals, also known as school directors, must have a certain level of instructional expertise as well as the skills to help teachers develop. At the same time, there is evidence of how difficult it is to find school leaders with these characteristics. Indeed, the NPTARS (2005) reported, "The quality of principals in hard-to-staff schools is reportedly low," (p. 12). The same report cautions that low performing schools may experience larger turnover rates due to inexperienced administrators. A participant in this study told me,

As far as the curriculum or instruction, I never talk to them [principals] about it. They [principals] come into my class - one of them did anyway to observe me at the beginning of the year. We had a post-conference, and that is about it.

In addition to the instructional needs in this school, there is a call for leaders who can successfully encourage positive behaviors of adults and children by establishing and maintaining a culture of respect and high expectations. Sara, an inclusion teacher, perceived a leadership deficit on the part of the previous principal:

Last year when I worked in the classroom, teachers didn't put in any lesson plans ever. I never knew what they were doing. If they did, it would be the first part of the lesson plan, nothing below when you scrolled down. Teachers were not showing up for trainings – some teachers didn't do anything. It was the first year of the school and a lot of them were not held accountable because there was nobody to check on them.

Moreover, according to participants' responses, administrators are afraid to say "no" to children, thereby allowing excuses for the students' behaviors while not holding them accountable for their actions. For example, Natalie recalls a conversation about the students that indicates her perception that the administration could make changes in their expectations of students,

We were told [by administrators], "Why fight the battle of pencil and paper? - Just give it to them." There are no consequences for students who are consistently coming to classes without materials, and you are told that is a battle you don't want to deal with. Well, you know, that is part of being a successful student. So how is that helping them to be successful? Even though it is a minor point, why would you want to do that?

A concern now raised here is the possibility that some of the students may actually not have the pencils or may not have the paper because they may have ran out of

them and their parents may not be able to afford to purchase new supplies. Given their challenging population, as described by the participant teachers, they struggle with what they perceived as lack of student engagement at many grade levels. To her surprise, while visiting another campus in the district, Natalie became aware of a difference between that school and the study site. Although she admitted that at her school some students try hard in spite of their challenges, students seemed much more engaged in the school she visited. She related,

> I visited another middle school yesterday and visited a few classes. These kids – they all had their backpacks. The teacher said, "Take out your paper" - they all took out paper. They had pencils. They didn't come in and say, "I don't have anything." I don't know if the expectations were given over there.

Natalie perceived that these students seemed more prepared to learn than the students at her school seemed. In later comments, she also attributed this difference to teacher expectations, along with strong administrative support. It had been her experience working at a previous AU campus, that an administrator once asked her to overlook certain behaviors as she did not understand the culture of that AU campus – to which she retorted "Morals…what are you trying to say about Latinos and African Americans?" She came to find similar administration comportment at this school, pointing to this element as a factor of their AU status. Judging from this and other responses about the perception of TAP/PD roles, discipline, it appears, kept administrators busy.

Teachers. The data suggest that teachers care and want their students to learn and succeed. This idea comes to life in the words of Natalie: "I take it personal when my

students don't get it." Yet, in the mind of some who mostly value the school

performance data before delving into understanding the particular school community, the

assertions may blur in an AU campus situation, as participants reported their challenges

to be very daunting.

I introduce the figures below with excerpts from pages of this Campus Academic

Excellence Indicator report for the school year 2008-2009, as published by the Texas

Education Agency. Figure 2 indicates the average years of teacher experience at Juan

Bosco Middle School (3 years) was half of the average years of experience district wide

(6 years).
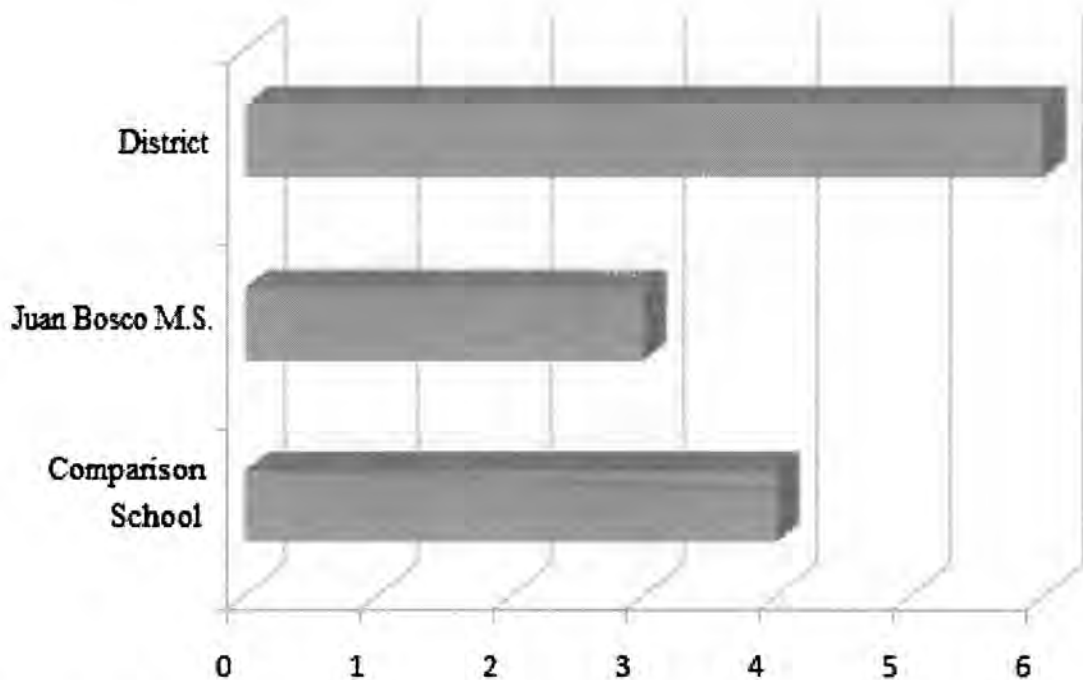
Figure 2 - Teacher Years of Experience

Note. Data obtained from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS)
Accountability Report for JBMS, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

Figure 3 shows the percentage of first year teachers at the research site, some of whom were still in the process of completing their teaching certification requirements at the time I was visiting the site. It also compares the number of teachers at the research site to a comparison middle school in the district, as well as to schools district-wide.
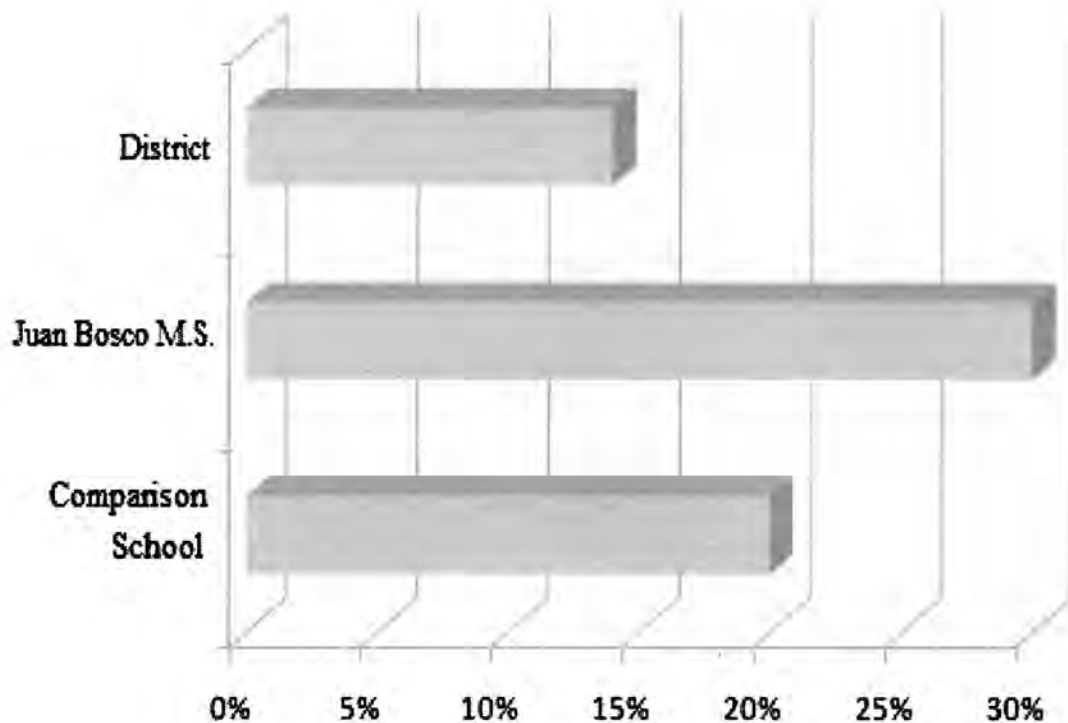
Figure 3 – Percentage of First Year Teachers

Note. Data obtained from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Accountability Report for JBMS, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

More than 80% of teachers at Juan Bosco had five or fewer years of experience. Figure 3 also shows that almost 30% of teachers at this school were in their first year. This rate of first year teachers is compared to 14% of first year teachers in the entire district. Some participants attributed the low performing designation to a) this high proportion of inexperienced teachers the school is a low performing school, and b) having

a first year principal who was unable to connect with some of the teachers and staff. In fact, these data are consistent with reports from the NPTARS (2005) that "20 percent of teachers in high-poverty schools have three or fewer years of teaching experience, compared with 11 percent of teachers in low-poverty schools" (p. 3). Cochran-Smith and Power (2010) made the comment that,

> The argument here is that schools with large numbers of poor and minority students are most likely to have teachers who are inexperienced, teaching in areas outside their fields, or otherwise unqualified. Thus, the teacher-quality gap exacerbates the achievement gap. (p. 8)

In addition, research about teachers in low-performing schools highlights teacher experience and teacher routes to certification. The value of alternative versus traditional routes to teacher certification remains an ongoing debate in the teacher quality literature. According to Feistritzer (2009), alternative certification programs (ACP) are present in every state of this nation, while accounting for at least 30% of the new teaching force today. Table 7 below shows the route to certification for each participant in this study.

Table 7
Teacher Certification Paths

Teacher's Name	Certification Path
Mary	Traditional
Natalie	Traditional
Alison	Alternative
Clarissa	Alternative
Sara	Alternative

The ACP rhetoric is concerned with the degree to which alternatively certified teachers are placed in low performing schools. However, it is mostly concerned with the preparation each teacher receives in the traditional compared to the alternative certification programs. Alison recounts her experience through the alternative certification placement:

> I went through alternative certification. My first year I was told, "Do everything the way this teacher does it, and don't deviate." I had to teach a concept which, which I knew nothing about – the same way this other teacher does it. And here I was, I was a first year teacher and I had all these ideas, and I couldn't be creative. I really had a hard time and I was punished because I wasn't doing well following her lead, you know, but I wasn't being taught how to ...I wasn't encouraged to be creative.

> Alison eventually left the school where she first started working before coming to Juan Bosco Middle School, as she felt unsupported. She reported finding opportunities for professional development in this new district. Clarissa, who is also an alternative certified teacher, reported having had a positive experience with her "ACP mentor teacher." However, a recurrent viewpoint in the literature is aligned with the perception of another teacher participant, who went through a traditional university certification program, and believes that some alternative certified teachers need a lot of support to effectively "go about presenting the concepts [they] are teaching." Moreover, Wenglinsky (2000) found students performed at higher rates when their teachers "majored or minored in the subject they are teaching," (p. 7).

Another concern some participants in this study raised is that teachers were unfairly held responsible for students' inappropriate behaviors. Clarissa had experienced relative success with managing her classes, but expressed her confusion with the way some administrators responded to teachers who appeared to face some challenges in this area:

> I saw fellow teachers being fired, losing their jobs, and being reprimanded because they were not being more lenient, and more tolerant of misbehaviors....The teacher was being blamed immediately; and, these were students I knew their prior year behavior. To me it was very, very frustrating.

NPTARS (2005) makes the point regarding teachers in low-performing schools that: "Even when qualified new teachers are hired, schools do not provide adequate support to help these teachers adjust, grow, and develop relationships with students who are often very different from themselves" (p. 8). Table 8 provides the gender and ethnicity distribution of teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School during the 2008-2009 school year.

Table 8
Teacher Distribution by Ethnicity and Gender

	African American %	Hispanic %	White %	Native American %	Asian/Pac. Islander %	Males %	Females %
JBMS	16.6%	28.4%	53.9%	2.2%	2.5%	42.3%	57.7%
CMS*	12.5%	9.9%	75.4%	0.2%	2.0%	33.2%	66.8%
District	10.9%	21.1%	65.9%	0.4%	1.7%	26.0%	74.0%

Note. Data obtained from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Accountability Report for Research Site, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

*CMS – Comparison Middle School

Students. Participants sometimes identified students' apathy for learning and succeeding in school as another factor for their school's AU status. Teachers in the study sometimes perceived that some students' home life might be riddled with challenges stemming from lack of resources to support their physical or emotional needs. Guerra and Nelson (2007) and the NPTARS (2005) caution against *deficit thinking*, in other words, blaming of the student, their family or their social background for their school performance. For instance, parents' job responsibilities or parents' English language proficiency are seen as limiting regular communication with the school, especially at the secondary level, placing more responsibility on the student. Thus, as Gordon (2004) asserts, "It is parents who most often are left out of school empowerment efforts" (p. 14). Evidently, at times, the school is not adequately meeting the differentiated needs that ensure each student success. The three key links-parents, students, and teachers - must come together for the students' success. If one of the key links in the relationship is weakened, this may impede the flow of vital information (medical appointments, absences) from reaching the school. Conversely, the fracture between school, parents, and students may slow or halt the delivery of grades, meetings, report cards, assignments, and other similar information to parents. Student success is strongly supported by the communication link between the school, family, and student. Some of these scenarios are not uncharacteristic of some students in low performing schools. Clarissa shared her perception:

> I think we are a more challenging population to serve and our hearts are in the
>
> right place, 'cause I wouldn't want to be anywhere else. I don't know how to put
>
> it. I don't want it to sound biased or prejudiced or anything, but I feel that there is

something lost about our students that in some degree should be measured, [but]

that just doesn't measure them by their race or their population. To me it would

be meaningful to know how many of our students are being raised by a relative, or

by a single-adult; or what percentage of our population whose immediate family

member who has a higher level of education – [those] kind[s] of things. I think

that's something to be spoken for - not to be ashamed about or to be hidden. I

think that's a plus for our campus and that should reflect on the challenges that

our teachers are [having] not only presenting the academic material, but also

helping in teaching life-lessons and helping nurture that along as well. That is

valuable and there is no value added to that. That's not measured in TAP or

anywhere else and to me that is something I value in our families, I value in our

children, and I value it in any of the teachers.

Clarissa felt that challenges like this are not routinely encountered in non-AU schools.

Those campuses "have different situations," she added.

Student misbehavior was also seen as an indicator of student disengagement.

Natalie was concerned about the lack of administrative support in the schools where she

had worked. She asserted that in an environment of high expectations, students should

strive because "Manners and ethics don't have color, don't have culture." Table 9 shows

the ethnic distribution of students at Juan Bosco Middle School at the time the school

became a low performing school.

A concern raised by these responses is that teachers at this school appeared to be

in need of culturally responsive strategies to support their students. It could be argued

that some of the challenges may stem from the fact that the student body was much more

ethnically diverse than the teachers were, as reported in Table 8. While teachers at Juan

Bosco are more ethnically diverse from the teachers in the district, overall, they were not

as diverse as the student population at Juan Bosco. Ultimately, the school community

must find ways to collaboratively prepare teachers to effectively engage students from all

backgrounds and improve learning.

Table 9
Student Distribution by Ethnicity

	African American %	Hispanic %	White %	Native American %	Asian/Pac. Islander %
JBMS	27.0%	62.3%	8.9%	0.0%	1.9%
Comparison School	29.5%	52.5%	16.9%	0.1%	1.0%
District	24.5%	57.1%	14.0%	0.3%	3.8%

Note. Data obtained from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Accountability Report for Research Site, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

Teachers felt that some students were not aware about many important aspects of

their education. Some even expressed concern for what they saw as students' perceptions

of the school system and their responsibilities as students. For example, Natalie further

recalled conversations with a few students. She said one student stated, "I don't have to

work hard because I didn't pass the TAKS in [the] grade...and I am still getting

promoted, [to next grade level] so why should I really study hard?" She explained that

there was no effort on the students' part to go onto the next grade level, as some students

soon learned that there were no adverse consequences if they did not do well on their

schoolwork. Table 10 shows students' performance on the state standardized test by

ethnicity. Natalie continued to explain that many students from AU schools eventually

do drop out in high school:

> You don't understand why all these kids are dropping out? It is because they are
>
> so confused – you haven't held them accountable, you haven't said to them: "You
>
> know what, this is important, if you don't do it we are going to hold you back to
>
> learn again."

Consequently, the teachers perceived that this lack of student accountability perpetuated

an environment of low expectations and high disengagement of students.

Table 10

Juan Bosco TAKS Met Standards by Student Ethnicity

Grade Level	African American %	Hispanic %	White %	Native American %	Asian/Pac. Islander %
6th Reading	78%	72%	77%	*	*
6th Math	44%	46%	69%	*	*
7th Reading	67%	74%	79%	>99%	*
7th Math	54%	66%	67%	>99%	*
7th Writing	78%	82%	95%	>99%	*
8th Reading	80%	80%	85%	*	*
8th Math	53%	60%	85%	*	*
8th Science	45%	49%	79%	*	*
8th Social Studies	76%	75%	>99%	*	*

Note. Data obtained from the TEA Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) Accountability Report for Research Site, Texas Education Agency 2008 – 2009

Adoption Decision-Making Process

Participants explained the TAP system adoption process as this campus. From

their reports, I distinguished four distinct stages undertaken before Juan Bosco began the

TAP system implementation. These teachers reported their perceptions during each

phase as well as the steps taken by administration that they perceived as pivotal for the campus to adopt this new program.

The Hook

Representatives from an elementary school visited Juan Bosco Middle School to explain their experiences with the TAP system. Clarissa shared that during this meeting the elementary school staff explained that, in their experience, the implementation year was going to be overwhelming. At the same time, the elementary school visiting staff attributed their increase in students' scores to their school's adoption of the TAP system.

After bringing up the possibility of adopting the TAP system at this site, a meeting was held near the end of the school year to promote and explain the TAP system, as well as a tentative adoption plan. A TAP system representative, the district superintendent, and a master teacher from one of the district's high schools met with the faculty and staff.

The Hope

Most participants in this study reported being optimistic about the potential benefits at the onset of the TAP system, in particular the TAP/PD at this school. For instance, Natalie believed it would help teachers guide students to become more responsible. Mary, believed that TAP was going to "give ideas to teach our kids," supported by her impression that "TAP provides good thinking practices, period." Clarissa talked about "learning the secrets" of good teaching to help her students succeed. She continues to describe how she envisioned the school community growing professionally as a result applying the learning from the TAP on a broader scope. Encouraged by these perceptions of the TAP system, Natalie and Mary said their hope

was to become better professionals. Alison was more inclined to favor the adoption for the evaluation component of the TAP system.

The Hype

Still, some teachers were uncertain about the adoption. Some believed they were pressured into adopting the system due to occurrences during a voting process conducted at the end of the school year to decide if the school would adopt TAP. For example, a participant explained that the administrative staff knew how individual teachers voted and that some teachers who voted against the adoption were called to meet with an administrator.

At the end of the school year, the decision was made to adopt the new system. Given the high turnover of teachers at this school, as in other low performing schools, many teachers were not returning. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that some teachers who favored the adoption left after they voted for it.

The Hold

This final stage in the adoption process took place during the summer. New teachers were interviewed during the months preceding the implementation of the TAP system at this school. One teacher from the site became a master teacher and two others were hired from outside of the school district. Teachers who had successfully contributed to school improvement could apply for higher positions based on the multiple career paths component of the TAP system. Mentor teachers were all internal applicants from the staff at the school the previous year. The principals, including assistant principals, had to be a part of the decision making team. These members now made-up the TAP leadership team (TLT) at this school. The TLT is responsible for using the TAP system

to manage and coordinate activities to reach the goals of the school for which the program was adopted.

Summary

The findings regarding adoption indicate the campus had many needs that could have justified the adoption of this system. Participants provided information regarding students, teachers, and administrators at the time the decision was made to adopt TAP. One key driving factor seemed to be the school's designation as a low performing campus, and the assumption that TAP could help to address this reality. They also described the mood of the campus at important moments in the TAP system adoption at JBMS. Some participants explained how some teachers were hopeful while other teachers did not support the adoption of the TAP system. Teachers identified several steps in the process that contributed to the teachers' perceptions of TAP/PD during the implementation year.

CHAPTER V

TAP PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

The purpose of this study was to investigate how experienced secondary school teachers explain their perceptions of the TAP professional development model during their first year of participation. Procedures for data collection and analysis have been described in the previous chapters. This chapter will present the findings resulting from inductive analysis of triangulated data gathered from participants, professional development observations, and other school data. Findings are organized based on themes uncovered in this study provided participants' responses to the second overarching research questions:

2. What are the perceptions of teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School of their experiences with PD component of TAP?

   a. How do these teachers describe their personal experiences with TAP PD?

   b. What do teachers see as strengths and weaknesses of the TAP/PD model, relative to other professional development models they have experienced?

   c. How do teachers believe their TAP/PD experiences influence professional growth or students' achievement?

Participants in this study differ in their years of teaching experience and the subjects they teach. Some of the participants became certified through the traditional methods of certification while others took an alternative route to certification. Eighty percent of the participants worked at other schools before working at this school, and they all had at least two years of teaching experience when I talked with them.

The Setting

The professional development room at Juan Bosco Middle School was located on the first floor towards the end of the west side of a new two-story building. Most classes were held on that side of the building, except for a few classrooms towards the center of the building where the administrative offices, the cafeteria, library, teachers' lounge, music room were located. On the east side of the building were the coaches' offices and the theater. The new principal would make announcements during the 2nd period. While in cluster, I observed that teachers listened attentively.

There were six cluster meetings held once per week with a make-up meeting on Fridays for teachers who missed a cluster meeting during the week. There are three master teachers and five mentor teachers at this site. Master teachers are responsible for planning, organizing, and coordinating all activities to take place during the cluster meetings. In general, the same presentation was delivered for each cluster. "Sometimes the mentor teacher runs the cluster," explained Alison. There is a mentor teacher at most of the cluster meetings.

Teachers at this school were grouped into interdisciplinary teams (Gordon, 2004). Mary explained the composition of the TAP/PD meetings:

At the beginning of the year, it was by teams. They have since changed it to where we meet by departments. We had one social studies, one ELA, one math, and one science teacher in the meeting. They focus anywhere from objectives like classroom management to lesson planning.

Each team of teachers shared the same students. There is also another team track – advanced and regular. One team served the students who were in advanced placement classes, and the other group of teachers served the students who were in the regular track, as indicated by Figure 4 below. During the school day, members of these teams had the same planning period in order to collaborate and plan for their students. Teachers were expected to attend their meetings with their team teachers. The elective subject teachers had to come in an hour earlier for their professional development meetings.
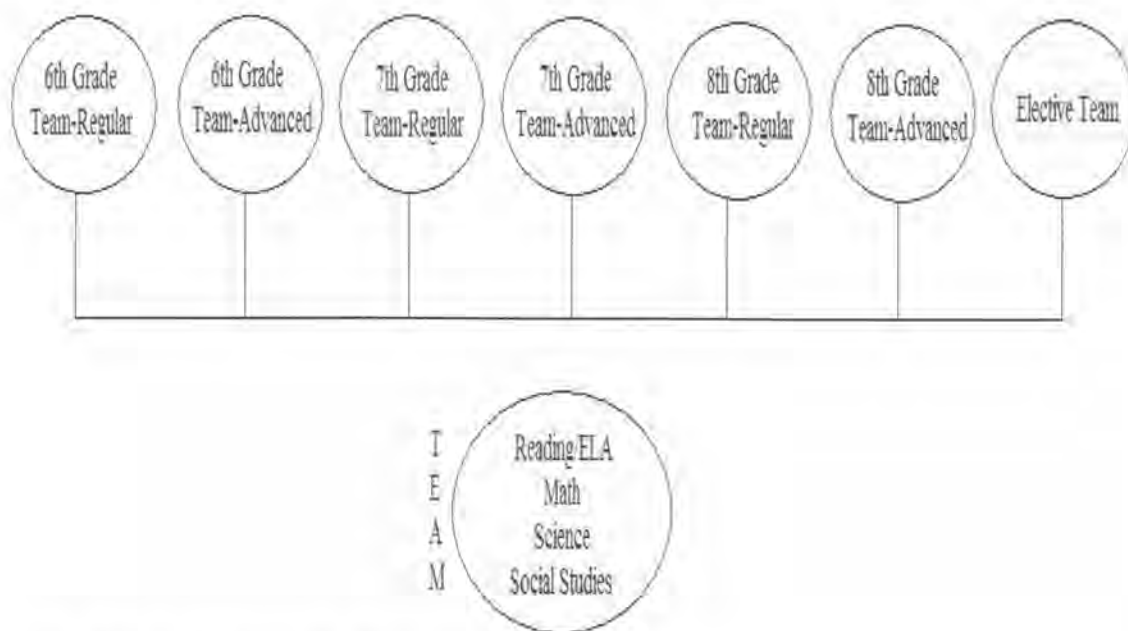
Figure 4 - Original Cluster Configuration

How Do Teachers Describe Their Experiences with the TAP/PD Model?

Teachers described their experiences of the TAP/PD model at this middle school during different stages of the implementation. They explained their first impressions about TAP when it was first introduced and voted for implementation. They also discussed their mid-year experiences as they were modifying their approach to the TAP/PD system while their school was undergoing different changes. Finally, towards the end of their first year of use of the TAP/PD model at Juan Bosco Middle School, the participants explained their first hand perspective based on their whole year experience.

A Culture in Turmoil

Theories regarding change explain how difficult it may be to modify current practices for new research-based applications (Kritsonis, 2005). The participants in this study explained that the group of visiting teachers from another school in the district had already forewarned them at the end of the previous summer about the "overwhelming" challenges they themselves had faced with the adoption of the TAP system at their school. Hence, some of these teacher participants knew to expect challenges with the adoption of the TAP system at Juan Bosco Middle School.

Despite some participants' positive perceptions of the TAP "promise," at this site, they also reported common challenges. For example, at the beginning of the first year of TAP adoption, teachers felt the pressure to attend the professional development meetings on time to avoid negative consequences:

> If you arrived 5 minutes late or if you arrived late at all, period, you were locked-out. You simply didn't get credit and then you had to come on a Friday after-school to make-up. Then it turned out where people were realizing, *WOW, Friday*

after school, it only takes 15 minutes to do this 1 hour class, so people were

picking-up on that. I was seeing others who were getting locked-out. I felt I was

not treated professionally. I was being bullied, and I didn't like it. I didn't like to

see others being bullied. And to me it was demoralizing, and yet it was supposed

to be embracing and encouraging and it wasn't.

Another possible contributing factor to some of the challenges was some teachers'

perceptions about one particular master teacher. According to Alison:

I think that one of the master teachers in particular has been very unapproachable.

In the beginning, that [...] made it hard for people. Whether they were right in

their opinions or not, that [rather] set the stage for the attitudes and how TAP was

going to go.

One participant, Clarissa, provides for insight about the extent to which the cluster,

along with all the other initiatives, was affecting the members of the school:

All this year until the end of January, I was really just drowning. It was so

hard...I figured I just have to manage it. I wasn't sleeping. So many brand new

things that were hit at one time that I felt that everybody was just managing. I

didn't manage it well, and I felt that I was the worst instructor.

In another instance, a participant provides insight about the cluster meetings from

an elective teachers' perspective:

At the beginning, all the elective teachers had to meet at 7:00 in the morning until

7:55. Just knowing the anxiety and the time restrictions that all of the other

elective teachers are facing, to me it was more challenging than the regular

schedule teachers just because they still had a conference time that they could

make up for whatever it is that they were missing; whereas, we didn't. We just had to go *bang* right back into the class.

Teachers openly talked about how a large number of the new and returning staff indicated feeling "forced" into TAP. Indeed Alison also stated, "I know a lot of people still weren't crazy about it." During the TAP system implementation year at JBMS, about 80% of teachers had between 0-5 years of teaching experience. As a result of having so many new inexperienced teachers, allocating support for them created another challenge at this AU campus.

The first principal was no longer in his position at the end of the first semester of the year, just after TAP was adopted. NPTARS (2005) explained, "These schools are more likely to have weak leadership, yet research shows that an important element in teachers' decisions about teaching in particular schools is their confidence in the principal and other leaders (p. 8).

Participants explained the TAP system was not the only initiative the school incorporated this past year. In addition, teachers were also mandated to attend a Thursday professional development session prepared by the district staff and delivered in the campus TAP/PD meeting room. In addition, "TAP requires so much focus. But to do like TAP...then to do the CATCH curriculum... to do PBMS meetings, and to do all the other stuff is so much work," lamented Alison. Guskey (2009) confirms this finding by asserting, "Schools rarely apply innovations one at a time; instead, they implement multiple innovations simultaneously" (p. 226).

As told by a participant, "The locking-out of people... might have [ended] in November-December – but it was only because the morale was going downhill." Some

other challenges mentioned about being in a TAP school were time limitations, busy

mentors, and busy master teachers. By the end of the first semester as a TAP campus,

this school culture was experiencing serious turmoil, as recounted by the participant

teachers. At this time, teachers and staff were exhausted physically and mentally by the

many changes the principal had instituted this year in the school.

New Culture of Meetings

The campus underwent a transformation, starting with new leadership. According

to participants, an interim principal was appointed at the end of the first semester. One

participant, who felt the stress of the first days of implementation of the TAP system was

difficult for all teachers, recalls feeling changes in the school atmosphere:

It was after Mr. Campbell came on board, and I don't know if he was pro-TAP or

not. But it felt like he saw... he made some changes because then it just felt clear

and it was on task – and I [thought]: *Uh, why is this now, why is everybody all of*

a sudden a different person. I felt my burden, my anxiety, and my stress were

lifted after the interim principal when something just snapped in me – but not

until the end of January.

As evidenced by Alison, it seems this new leadership appointment was a welcome

strategy by teachers. She narrates her perception of the new leader as she is says:

Mr. Campbell came in here, and he is so happy and positive (smiles). He speaks

to all of us. The principal last year would sometimes walk-away if he saw you

and knew you had a question. Even if he [new principal] speaks to you about

something, that maybe he wants to find out if you want him to help you fix

something, it is never intimidating because he knows that he might not have the

correct information. He may not understand what is going on, or he might need some clarification. He is just so nice. He is just so professional. That made a big difference in the professional atmosphere this year.

Next, the leadership team composed of the new principal, assistant principals, master teachers, and mentor teachers decided to make some changes on the campus. One of the most evident changes was the make-up of the cluster teams. Ideally, cluster will be designed with consideration of teacher needs. Mary explained how the new clusters are "specific to [her] content level." Figure 5 shows how the clusters were reconfigured during the second semester with the new principal.
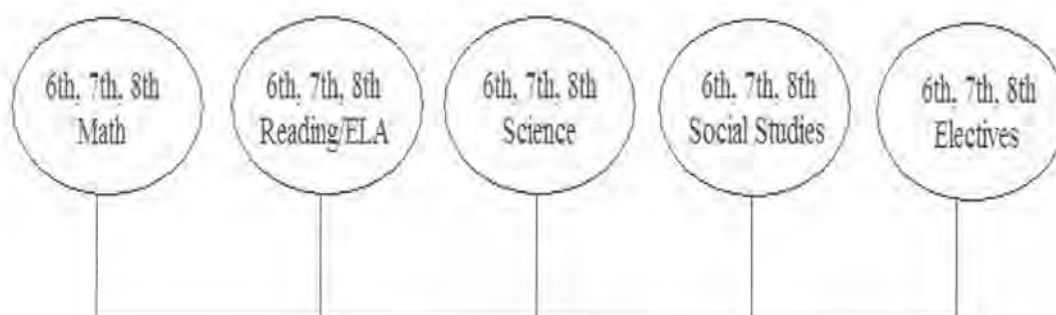
Figure 5 - Cluster Re-configuration

Meeting Process

During the second semester of 2009-2010, I observed TAP/PD meetings at Juan Bosco Middle School. The purpose of the observations was to add thick, rich description of the TAP/PD dynamics to my research. I sought to understand, within the context of a cluster, how teachers were learning the TAP/PD processes, rubrics, and strategies. The professional development meetings observed during this study were conducted in-house.

Cantrell and Cantrell (2003) explain how professional development has traditionally been an outside activity from the school day:

> Typically, many current professional development programs do not allow time to be built into the school day where teachers can participate in collaborative activities such as research, understanding and practicing new skills, and writing curriculum or discussion groups focused on professional articles and books. (p. 107)

At Juan Bosco Middle School, the TAP professional development meetings occurred on Wednesdays. There are seven class periods in the day. Teachers teach five periods and prepare lesson plans during their sixth period called conference period. Their 7th period, also called planning and preparation (prep) period, was used on Wednesday for cluster and the other two days for department planning. During each period on Wednesdays, a different cluster meeting composed of teachers who taught the same subject met; the social studies cluster met during the 2nd period; the math cluster met during the 3rd period; reading and ELA met during the 4th and 5th periods; science met during 6th period; and those who taught electives met after school. Teachers attended cluster meetings during their common department planning period; however, due to conflicts in schedule, a few regular and elective teachers attended meetings at other times.

Master teachers welcomed and allowed me to visit their cluster meetings. At the beginning of the second semester, I began to visit cluster meetings to familiarize myself with the activities that occurred before each meeting as well as become familiar with the

faces and names of the members of each cluster. After a few informal visits, a master teacher introduced me to cluster members as a master teacher and as a researcher.

As I observed the professional development environment, I noted some transitional routines during each cluster. Teachers signed in, collected handouts, and grabbed snacks or drinks. An outline was provided at the beginning of each cluster.

During clusters, master teachers presented a variety of research-based tools and strategies to improve instruction. They explained how teachers should use the strategies, tools, and rubrics with their students, to either plan or instruct; and they provided opportunities for teachers to practice using them while in the professional development sessions (Cantrell & Cantrell, 2003).

The TAP system includes a set of parameters and guidelines as part of the implementation process. Clarissa observed that, "The meetings are very scripted." Mary elaborated on the format of the cluster meetings saying:

> There is usually some kind of introductory activity, then like a warm-up and then they'll go into teaching us strategies and things to try out in the classroom. Then, usually they'll give us homework to try in the classroom and then come back with anything that we have learned.

Sara provides additional insight into the meeting structure, explaining that:

> At this school, they spend a lot of time working with the teachers to really understand different teaching methodologies in order to enhance classroom performance. We go in there once a week and they have a different lesson. It is modeling what we are supposed to do for the kids, but the teaching.

Following is an explanation of some tools used in the TAP/PD to assist teachers in delivering instructions.

Elements of the TAP/PD

Figure 6 is intended to provide information about the elements within this professional development model that are intended to support teachers' development. Based on teachers' reports and my observations of their professional development meetings, coaching, collaboration, and reflection were important elements. Presumably, these elements also meant to support teachers outside of TAP/PD meetings.
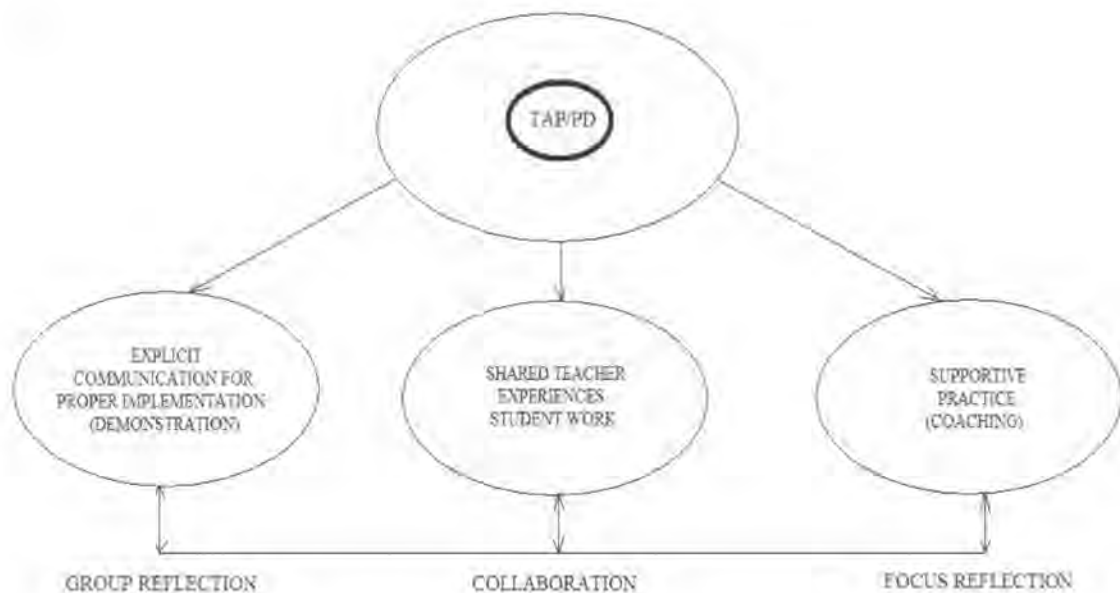
Figure 6 – Elements of TAP/PD Process

Intended Collaboration. During their professional development sessions, teachers perceived varying degrees of support from other teachers, their mentors, their master teachers, and their principals. For example, Alice mentioned that her master teacher was "amazing," which is in agreement with other participants' responses.

Outside of TAP/PD meetings, teachers at this campus are organized in teams. Each team has a social studies teacher, a math teacher, a science teacher, and a language arts teacher. Some teams have most students in advanced academics classes, while others have students mostly in regular classes. Teams have the same off-periods; hence, they have at times planned lessons or discussed students they share. To some extent, unlike many schools today where teachers seldom interact for planning and collaborating, teachers at this school were already participating in some form of collaboration through these teams.

Traditionally, informal teams by different team arrangements (i.e. department, content, or grade) are not driven by carefully collected quantitative or stringent qualitative data. Teachers may report data and other teachers may offer opinions. Usually, there is no further connection of these data to any other data. In addition, how these data are used to decide how to improve future professional development is not clear nor does it occur. Evidently, more intentional communication and collaboration must take place. Most participants did not consider the effectiveness of traditional teams of teachers compared to more structured teams, strictly regarding campus improvement. Typically, organized school improvement strategies such as those used for their in-house professional development, are based on data driven decisions. Yet, overwhelmingly, teacher-participants believe the original cluster membership structure based on teams of teachers who taught the same students served their needs better, as expressed by Clarissa:

> I feel we collaborated much more last year than we did this year, even as an entire department. This year I felt we were really segmented – way much more this year

than last year. It was weird. You would think that we would have more collaboration 'cause we are meeting in our cluster as a department. Our clusters were kind of generic: it could be English Language Arts, it could be social studies, or it could be math. It was not specific.

Mary perceived that the new cluster configuration was not as efficient as the previous one:

So I think it is taking away time from [our team]. We get a chance to meet once or twice a week during this class period, and it is just not enough. So it was actually a good opportunity for us to be in TAP and learning strategies and be able to put them together right then versus, you know, all four of us go to TAP on different periods now.

Subsequently, Clarissa brought up that in the past, vertical collaboration was also possible with her team meetings. Sara had also explained that she did not usually meet with teachers from other grade levels, favoring the old cluster configuration.

Selective Coaching. Coaching is another feature of the TAP/PD. There is group coaching and individual coaching. Group coaching takes place during the TAP/PD meetings. In these meetings, master teachers guided the teachers by providing the school expectations for the use of these rubrics as tools for teaching.

Sara explained how at "the beginning there was a lot of strategies that they were focusing on because of the plethora of first year teachers we have here." It is important to distinguish that teachers in this study refer to rubric strategies they learned during the first months of the TAP system implementation. Sara continued to explained how coaching takes place during cluster:

They have a different lesson like today when we did the metacognition where they go through what we are supposed to do. They are modeling best practices of what we are supposed to do interactively. When they "show a new technique to do or a new strategy, first they explain it and they ask for feedback."

Moreover, Alison expressed having had personal coaching support from her mentor and master teachers:

I think TAP has helped me feel like I have a lot more support to better myself as a teacher. Nobody else was helping me before...[but] now with the TAP master teachers and mentor teachers, like Ms. Cassidy, [who] is amazing - she has taught me so much.

Teachers explained that master teachers observed them and provided examples of the use and application of the TAP rubrics in cluster. However, the meetings are one hour in length. This limits the amount of individual attention facilitators may provide. This is where the individual coaching comes in. The goal of the coaching component is to provide teachers with the additional support after they leave the cluster. The nature of the coaching relationship is more focused. It is expected to relate to a specific goal that is established in advance. Mentor and master teachers are also expected to work with teachers on whatever lesson the teachers are planning to instruct. Both the master or mentor teacher and the career teacher agree and work together to reach the goal.

Clarissa felt that she had collaborated with other teachers much more before the TAP system started at this school. When it came to collaborating with mentor or master teachers, she said:

I don't feel I have had any collaboration what so ever this year other than the

observations. Then that's when we collaborated together to get ideas from each

other about what might work and what might go well as a lesson - that was the

only time.

Sara, who also felt she did not receive a lot of support outside of the cluster

meeting, talks about the master teachers' coaching activities:

I see them go into the classrooms and do sample lessons for the teachers in the

classrooms. I have seen them help write lesson plans with the other teachers.... I

see them working a lot with teachers: giving them lesson plans to show the first

year teachers exactly what it should look like and then showing them how they

are going to teach, and then observe them. That happens all the time.

Overwhelmingly, participants perceived that master teachers spend a lot of time in

the classrooms of first year teachers:

"I know that they field-tested a lot... and I think it might be just because he is

brand new and he came in actually later in the school year instead of the

beginning," said Mary.

Valuable Rubrics. Professional development, observations, and evaluations are

accomplished using instruments called TAP system rubrics that identify multiple

elements to measure teacher effectiveness (Schacter, 2003). The TAP system rubrics are

not content specific or grade level specific. However, they serve as a common language

for educators in this school improvement system to engage in a conversation about

learning and about their students. The four main TAP system rubrics: designing and

planning, learning environment, responsibilities and instruction have three columns each

in which they provide guidelines for exemplary to unsatisfactory descriptors ranked from

five to one (Sawchuk, 2009). The TAP system *instructional* rubric is most important for

career teachers. For example, this rubric provides guidelines for standards and objective,

grouping students, activities and material, thinking, problem solving, and presenting

instructional content, among other quality elements of instruction. Mary explained how

she used one of the rubric strategies for grouping students, in her class:

> We worked quite a bit on that in TAP earlier in the school year and so basically,
> the desks in here have been in groups for a long time, but it was mostly for
> behavior purposes, and this time I put them in groups based on their academic
> abilities. You know you have some highs, some low, and some medium kids in
> every group. Every single class...every single group I got most of the work that I
> was looking for, whereas earlier in the year when they were allowed to group
> themselves or I grouped them for behavior purposes I didn't get that level of work
> out of them.

Moreover, Mary attributed some changes she observed in her students to using the

rubrics:

> The stuff that I am really using from TAP are like the grouping and academic
> feedback. I know a lot of the time at the beginning of the year when I did projects,
> they would not understand at all. Before we even start at all, I do a lot of
> academic feedback and make sure they understand what they are doing, so I get
> much better products from them now. They started this project a couple of weeks
> ago.

Alison acknowledges that she did not pay close attention to the rubrics until she felt she had to learn more about them:

It took a while to sit down and look at the rubrics, she said. I looked at [them] with my master teacher. The TAP rubrics are the common language through which educators in a TAP school communicate. The vocabulary and elements in the rubrics indicate the set of expectations to guide the activities to accomplish the TAP goals.

Natalie reported that she had seen and used similar rubrics to the TAP system rubrics at other professional developments, although they may have been under a different name:

The strategies they suggest, I have already seen. For example, in my class, at the beginning of the school year, I spoke to the students about working in groups. We talked about the criteria for working in a group. This is not something new to me.

Helpful Field-Test Strategies. TAP master teachers address gaps in student learning by collecting and analyzing data about students at the school. Sometimes career teachers identify the need and present it as a problem that needs solution. After they have identified a need for learning from the data collected about students' performance, they proceed to conduct research to identify proven strategies that may provide the skills the students need to improve their learning. Mary gives credence to this, observing that she has seen a master teacher conduct field-testing in classrooms and added, "I know that they research and that they come to cluster with research….it seems that it has been tailored more to our kids and to our school."

The master teachers select a potential strategy that may achieve the goal. During this phase, the master teachers determine what steps to follow in the strategy, outline the steps, and identify the elements that must be present during the field-tests. The next step in the field-testing process is the actual testing of the strategy. At this point of the process, the master teachers test the strategy with a group of students from the school. The testing may take a few days to a couple of weeks depending on the strategy and amount of data to be collected and assessed. As the data is collected, the master teachers and sometimes the TLT analyze the data. Improvements or adjustments driven by students' needs are sometimes made during the testing phase. At the end of the data collection, the strategy is then evaluated to identify its usefulness in students' learning at the school.

Once the field-testing has been concluded the data is presented during cluster meeting. If the strategy produces positive results, then it is launched at a larger scale for all the students in the group identified with the learning need. The teachers are presented with all information pertinent to the research from the time the need was identified until the final data collection and analysis. They are also provided with many elements of the strategy and ways to use it to achieve the expected results. If the strategy does not produce positive results, the data and the findings resulting from the data collection and analysis are also shared with the cluster members. Master teachers modeled the process of PREY strategy implementation during the cluster meetings I attended. Teachers were then encouraged to try the strategies in the classroom with their students. Sara talks about a strategy she learned in cluster and implemented in her classroom:

With this one, it was using visuals. I thought that they could use their inference skills because that [strategy] is differentiated already and that they could guess what they saw on the visual…and they wrote about it. That is why I really like it because you try it out. Sometimes you might see some things in a totally different way and you don't understand it, but you think you do. Then you do it and it goes awry and you go back in there and you [think] "Oh, I should have done this first."

Alison explained how her students observed the use of the strategy in many classes:

I started mentioning it and the next day kids [said], "Ms. Childress said PERUSE, PERUSE, PERUSE a billion times. The next day they'd say, "Mr. Jameson, the choir teacher, said PERUSE, PERUSE, PERUSE;" and, then the next day they'd say Mr. Clark said "PERUSE"….I was telling them, "you are going to be hearing this in all your classes because everybody is going to be doing PREY – that is not going to be something you hear only in your social studies classes 'cause you are going to be hearing it in math; you are going to be hearing it in choir; you are going to be hearing it in theater. So when you are sitting at a task, reading a newspaper article, or whatever it is, you are going to be thinking, what am I doing that is *PREY*?

These strategies are to aid teachers in using a systematic, school-wide protocol to ensure skill-based instruction is consistent across the many contents and levels in which they are taught. Teacher leaders mainly, master teachers, are expected to provide support for classroom implementation, if needed. Figure 7 illustrates the strategy called PREY, which requires students to cover all of the answer choices until after they have perused

the visual, read the text for relevant information, and have explained their thought process for arriving to their response.
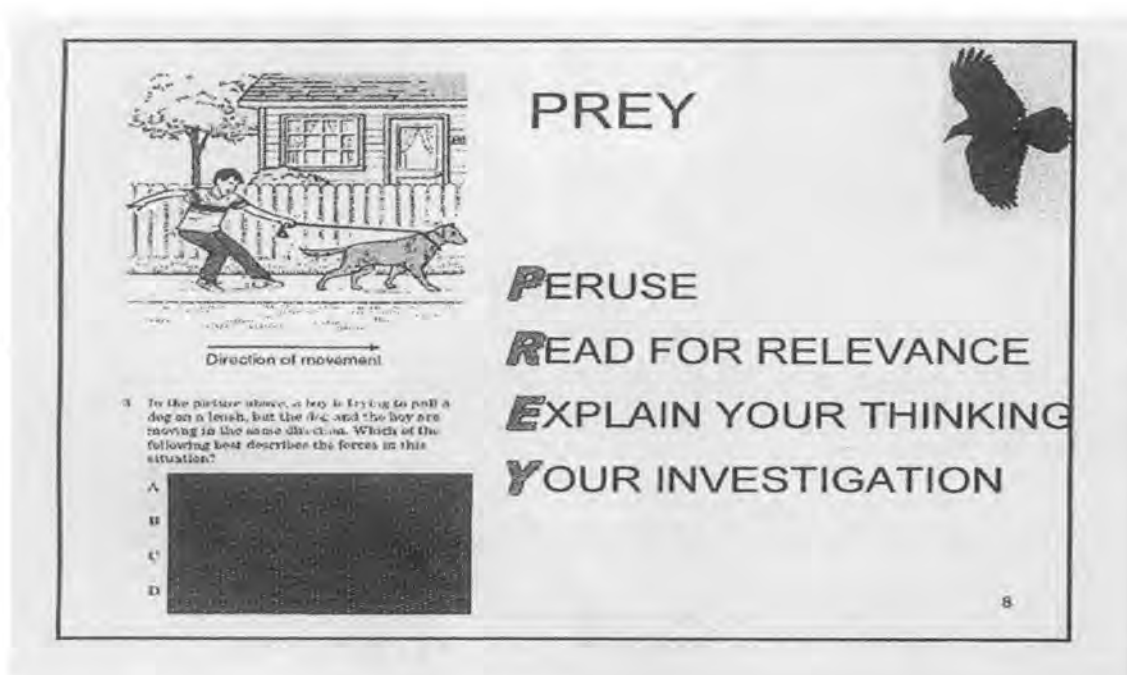
Figure 7 - Field Test Strategy Excerpt

Note. Data obtained from Juan Bosco Middle School TAP/PD meeting. This image is an excerpt from a handout of the reading strategy developed for use in all classrooms during second semester of 2008-2009.

During the strategy implementation in the classroom, teachers are asked to collect student data through assessments and by annotating observations. Usually, teachers return to cluster with information to share about their strategy implementation, but at times, it is not possible to complete the task, much less collect data, as one participant admitted:

> To be honest with you, I don't think I thought it fully because I have five days
>
> until the TAKS test. I am reviewing different objectives and I really don't have
>
> time to spend 20 minutes on something brand new to try to teach them another

strategy. I am going to focus on what they already know, so to be honest with you, I did not use that strategy as it was intended.

After the teachers have been able to use the strategy with the students, they return with the data to share their results in the cluster. Sara shared how once she collected her data for her return back to cluster: "I was able to bring in a whole spectrum of samples of my students and that is what they wanted to see to show where our kids are at and on what skills they needed to have remediation."

Most participants appeared to benefit from the strategies learned in cluster, as expressed by Mary:

All the strategies that I have gotten out of there and activities to try are definitely more useful than some just kind of generic idea that I would get in another professional development because they don't necessarily know the type of kids that we are working with.

Teachers who participated in this study expressed interest in observing an actual strategy, as it was field-tested, to see close-up how the strategy unfolds with students at their school:

I would definitely like the master teachers to come in more and do the field-testing. I know that they field-tested a lot in [Mr. Hollis'] class and I think it might be just because he is brand new and he came in actually later in the school year instead of the beginning. But I have never seen field-testing in any of our classrooms with our specific kids. I would actually love to see somebody do it as it is supposed to be done for us to learn from it 'because it is one thing to hear about it and for them to explain it, but just like the kids, we are hands-on

too. So I think it would be beneficial if we could get more hands-on experience

with it or see it been done or have some more flexibility [if they were to say]:

"Hey, this is working really well in so and so classroom, why don't you take

half a period and go watch them. "

The main concern some teachers expressed with this strategy was that "It was so

late in the year, it was hard to implement," as Natalie expressed. Another participant,

Clarissa, explained, "Well just so happen it is TAKS time. I think it is a little too late. I

think it is good; and I am really glad to have it, but…TAKS is in a couple of weeks."

Although teachers in this study found strategies from the TAP/PD meeting to be

useful, some suggest that field-tests learning strategies explained during the cluster

meetings may be more helpful to students if they are provided sooner. For example,

Clarissa explained:

I felt this is something we could have or should have used kind of when we are

given out the agenda to the kids at the beginning of the year. Here is our

classroom procedure. Here are our school's expectations; and here are our

strategies and this is something you are going to take to every one of your classes,

just like an AVID notebook or AVID binder. I almost felt a little foolish. Kids

are like "Well, what is this stuff now?" I am really glad to have it, but this would

have been great at the beginning of the year.

Perceptions of TAP/PD Roles

The TAP system is a whole-school initiative. One feature of the system is to

involve educators at all levels of the school in the implementation and in the decision-

making process. Figure 8 shows some functions in which educators may participate.

Normally, educators identify with one of four distinct roles at a TAP system school.

Career teachers, administrators, master teachers, and mentors teachers ideally share in the

responsibilities of implementing the TAP system strategies.
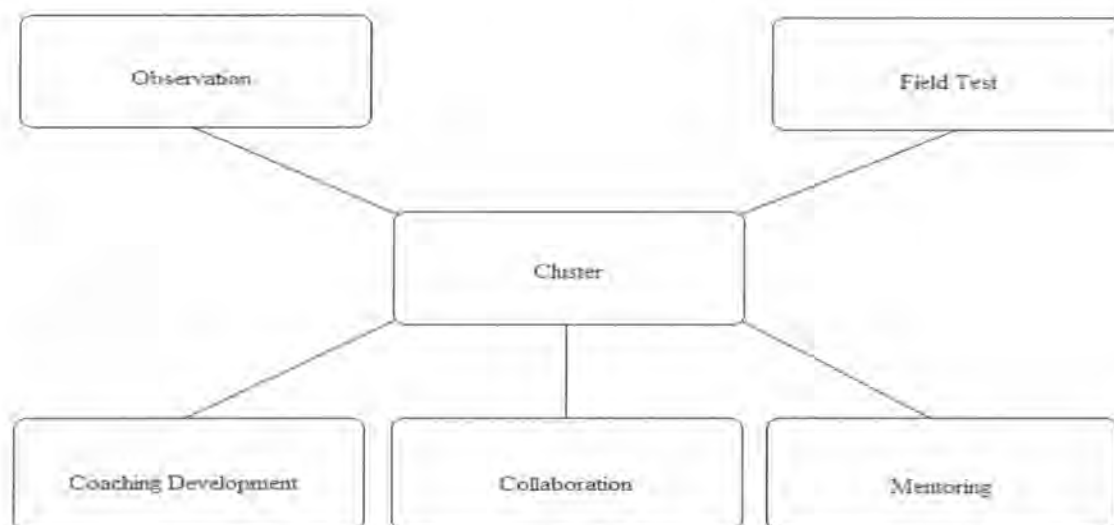
Figure 8 - Functions Related to the TAP System Members' Roles

Busy Master Teachers. Master teachers' responsibilities at this campus were

many during the first year, reported all participants. Master teachers are always busy, as

Alison stated:

> They are pulled to do so many other things and I think a lot of times that's why
>
> people get burned-out. When you see them they look *so* exhausted, but you see
>
> them and they are doing lunch duty, they are doing after-school duty, they are
>
> doing Saturday academy.

Mary and Natalie provide more vivid images of the master teachers. For example,

Mary says one particular master teacher "runs around like a chicken with her head cut-

off." While Natalie makes this point by suggesting that master teachers' time to support

teachers had been limited by their other duties:

Master teachers jobs changed. They are not just the master teachers. It is almost

like you are a cook, but then all of a sudden you are also the waiter, the cashier,

the cleaner and you don't have time to really cook.

His or her area of expertise could further complicate the perception of the master

teachers' role. Some teachers found it difficult to understand how a master teacher can

help them if their content is different from those teachers in the cluster he or she

facilitates. Sara talks about her experience in this situation:

I have gone to the master teacher a lot of times. The only thing is that he is a

science teacher and I don't do any science. It was funny because we had a post-

conference, and all of the things that he suggested that I implement I had already

done... he said the same things. So, I was so happy that I was doing it right. I

have a very mixed group of kids so my challenge has been really the

differentiation.... He would help if I probably asked him.

Another participant, Natalie, indicated that a TAP master teacher: "Helps us with

data. I know Ms. Casswell helped to plan the lessons by speaking to the two 7th grade

teachers about how to get the kids prepared for TAKS at the end of April," she said.

Finally, when it came to the flexibility of communicating with local TAP leaders at her

school, "I go to all master teachers," said Sara. Furthermore, Mary explained how a

master teacher has provided support for her:

I was just kind of lost for resources at the beginning of the year. Ms. Crenshaw

(master teacher) tracked them all down and has helped with planning. The other

[content] teacher is brand new; this is her first year. They have helped us out

quite a bit.

Most participants reported benefiting from the support of one or more master teachers. For example, Natalie thinks:

> The master teachers are very helpful, if I need anything, they are very helpful-that they are. But sometimes, I think they are too busy doing other stuff that has nothing to do with what they are supposed to be doing - it is not their fault - but they are mostly very approachable.

Master teachers at this campus have been seen teaching a class, according to three participants. Modeling lessons is a coaching activity in which master teachers sometimes engage to provide support to career teachers. Alison, the only participant who observed a master teacher model a lesson stated,

> God! Her lesson was so good. I wonder if master teachers plan like we do when they know they are going to get observed. I wonder if this is how good she plans every single time. I wonder if she is just that good.

Where is my Mentor Teacher? Mentor teachers in TAP system schools are members of the TAP Leadership Team (TLT). As members of the leadership team, they are responsible for providing valuable, rich, first-hand information based on their daily experiences in their classroom. Mentors have a full-time career teacher schedule in addition to their responsibilities as mentors. I was told, "Our master teachers do most of the meetings. Sometimes the mentor teachers will run the meetings." The dual function of TAP system mentors makes their roles appear very complex to career teachers. Mary made the connection between the levels of mentor support to another crucial aspect of the mentor teacher responsibility-their own students:

If you go to them to ask questions sure, but since all mentor teachers are also career teachers, they don't have a lot of extra time. I mean, they are more than willing to answer questions, but they can't go around and make sure everything is working like the master teachers can.

Specifically, three participants admitted that they were still not clear about the role of mentor teachers at the time of the interviews. These interviews were conducted in the spring of 2010, more than half the school year into the implementation year. Sara explained,

I didn't even know who my mentor teacher was until last week. I didn't know who mine was, so, I didn't know I was supposed to be meeting with anybody. I didn't know. She asked me last week: Do you need any help; do you need anything in your classroom? We never see each other anyway, 'because I am always in my classroom teaching. If I knew I was supposed to be getting all that support, I would have chased her, 'cause she has so much experience. I would have chased her around saying come help me, come help me, come help me; and, I am sure she would have helped me. I would have liked to have that 'because I always want to learn stuff.... I have nothing against her.

On the other hand, Sara also recalled seeing another mentor teacher involved with her mentees:

I saw a mentor teacher meeting with all of their mentees. I was kind of jealous of everyone else having their mentor teacher after-school coming in. hanging out, and talking to them.

In some ways, participants seem to adopt an understanding outlook about the duties performed by the mentor and master teachers in the first year implementation of TAP as Sara stated, "I know it is her first year as a TAP mentor as well." Clarissa further added, "I will just stick it out this year. It is not that my master or mentor teachers are trying to neglect me. It is just [that] we are just trying to get this off the ground. So I didn't want to be demanding."

When participants talked about the roles of the individual members of the leadership team, they expressed concerns about what the mentor teachers and the master teachers do. For example, Sara did not know what to expect from the mentors,

> That is why I was confused. Probably I needed more clarification as to the role of the mentor teacher 'cause I was thinking until recently that I saw the meetings with the other mentors that it was just supposed to be that the mentors observe us and meet with us before and after [the formal observation] because I never met with her otherwise.

Natalie also admitted, "I really don't know what they do," explaining the confusion she perceived regarding the role responsibilities and expectations of the mentor teachers. Furthermore, Alison perceived other teachers have a similar opinion about expectations for master teachers:

> I think so much at the beginning of TAP this year was so influenced by the attitudes that people had. A lot of people had a lot of negative attitudes in the beginning. Teachers were not feeling they were getting support from their master teachers. Maybe the expectations weren't given to them; they weren't sure of the expectations. They didn't know exactly what the master teachers were [inaudible].

Clarissa also stated she did not know what to expect:

I didn't know what to ask for, I didn't know. It is weird. I would have asked if I

knew what to ask for versus just been given to me because I knew that the role

she was also fulfilling was very new to her too. There was so much she had to

learn as a first year master teacher.

For participants in this study, the classroom is not a new setting. They had all

taught before and had opportunities to attend other professional development

opportunities. They also had experienced working together or at least having had some

semblance of collaboration by meeting by departments in their previous teaching

assignments. Clarissa stated,

I just felt I was alone to try to implement that in my classroom versus if I had had

a TAP mentor teacher or anyone say, "Clarissa, this sounds like you want to do

this, so let me help you do this week." I think that would have really helped me

engage. But it's like, you gain it in cluster, but you are pretty much still on your

own. I still feel pretty isolated.

Participants indicated that one factor that may have limited collaboration on this

campus is the almost non-existent mentor and mentee ongoing contact teachers reported

during our conversations. At the time of the interviews, three out of five participants

explained they had "never seen" or knew who their mentor teacher was. One of the key

supportive roles in the TAP model is that of mentor teachers. The expectation is that

teacher should receive frequent coaching and mentoring support to ensure the gains to

achieve the learning objectives. Sara longed to have a mentor-mentee relationship: "I

would have liked to have had that 'cause I always want to learn stuff. That is the only

thing I can say. I have nothing against her. I know it is her first year as a TAP mentor as well." Still, teachers reported that in many ways, TLT members' participation in the coaching activities was limited. Evidently, the role expectation of master and mentor teachers is one area of concern in which all participants agree to a point. Gordon (2004) explains that role confusion of teacher leaders can be an avoidable occurrence.

Exhausted Career Teachers. In TAP systems schools, classroom teachers are called career teachers (Sawchuk, 2009). Teachers have a natural tendency to be caregivers and helpers (Ingersoll, 2007). When asked, many will cite altruistic reasons for choosing the field. Their helping and giving traits are even more needed in today's schools where multitasking and sharing of expertise is becoming more the norm than the exception. Some teachers at JBMS explained how they shared with other teachers as a result of their experiences in this professional development. Clarissa also spoke about the learning obtained during a cluster meeting from another teacher:

> What I was able to gain was that Ms. Chicon (a career teacher) – the insight that she shared was- I could tell that she was a more experienced teacher; so, what she did share gave me much greater ideas, but I was not able to collaborate. It was like what was gained in cluster pretty much stayed in cluster.

Most participants provided examples of collaboration among peer teachers. Sara explained how she provided some ideas to another teacher with another content area. She then proceeded to explain:

> The strategies we learn we do discuss with each other – what we are trying, what we are not trying and a lot of the best practices too, like you know. Before I try something out, I ask them how it works for them just to see how it will work for

me first before I try it. I am a perfectionist, but I am also stubborn. When I try

something, I know it takes about a month for anything to be successful to become

a habit.

Yet, Natalie perceived a behavior that may have been detrimental to the team effort:

There are some teachers that I am working with for whom [TAP] is not really

their thing. I don't think they really care. So in that sense, it is really hard to

collaborate with someone that doesn't care or doesn't have any idea.

Earlier I reported how at this school approximately half of the teachers were either new to

the campus or even to the teaching profession. As a result of this, the buy-in from the

campus, usually expected before a campus adopts the system, also proved to be a

challenge at the time of implementation.

Alison talks about her role as she captures the essence of the collaboration of

many career teachers by stating, "I am a good teacher and I know that I am helping

people all the time." Helping each other in these meetings is conducive of many

collaborating partnerships and peer mentoring relationships within and outside of their

professional development meetings.

Teachers reported facing many obstacles during this school year. Even though

the TLT have made changes for the second semester, teachers indicated there were still

improvements to be made.

Some teachers expressed consternation for having to attend professional

development meetings. There were many competing priorities for everyone at this

school. To begin with, TAP was not the only program on campus. The district also had

incorporated another weekly support meeting, which the teachers also had to

attend. Alison admitted, "I hated going because it took out of my time; it took out of my

teaming time which are now non-existent, but when I got there, I learned so much when I

got there, the same thing with TAP." As Alison continued to explain how competing

priorities affected the schedules of teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School:

> The hardest thing for me was just that we had TAP on Wednesdays and then
>
> Mondays we had something else at lunchtime. Thursdays we had our district
>
> team coming to train us, and then Tuesday we had our team meetings. Mondays
>
> and Tuesdays were team meetings.

> Preparing for the state standardized test in this AU campus seemed to create

anxiety in teachers as explained by Clarissa: "TAKS season is more pressing than the

TAP cluster, and teachers are exhausted" In addition to the physical strain of the test

preparation, Alison indirectly implied the mood around testing time:

> I think the thing that is so hard that we get so caught-up in [is that] we get told so
>
> much about needing to make sure the kids are getting the kids ready for the
>
> test…how am supposed to get excited about learning when the test is right around
>
> the corner and there is nothing exciting about that.

> The school added a special period to provide support to students in need of

assistance with math and reading. The number of students in need of additional help was

large enough to institute a campus-wide tutoring class. Students who did not need the

help were in classes to promote their art skills or to help them with homework.

> In addition to the above constraints and other priorities, there was a perceived

ambiguity about TAP addressing the needs of *all* students since the same rubrics are used

regardless of the school setting. Clarissa expounded:

There is something that isn't been taken into consideration based on our population. It is all good teaching practices, period. But there needs to be more. I believe there is a missing factor that is being overlooked, not valued, not considered, and has a lot to do with the complications we do have with our campus population. I don't feel we are unique in any way, but I feel - comparing us to a Loughton school - it is going to be the same rubric, the same everything. I think there is something weird doing it at a much greater [scale]. We are doing something you are not going to see being done at a Loughton school. Yet we are not going to be rewarded for it or praised for it, evaluated for it, or recognized for it. However, we sure would be punished for it. Whereas a Loughton campus would never have that situation; it wouldn't have to face what we have to go through.

As expected, teachers also reported the time factor as a constraint in the TAP implementation. Eighty percent of participants indicated that cluster is time consuming. Many teachers in this study expressed feeling overwhelmed by the multiple meetings they had almost every day. Notwithstanding the time element, participants believed that implementing the rubrics and the strategies to be challenging as well: "I don't know if it is just me, but it is hard to find time. It seems there is a lot of stuff that we are doing." Another career teacher added, "I guess if I had more time, then maybe I would be able to implement some of the strategies."

Absent Administrators. Most of the participants were reticent about making direct comments about the participation of assistant principals and principals of this school in cluster activities or TAP system. When asked to what extent the principals

supported TAP at this school, views in response to this question were extreme. For example, one participant openly stated, "I have no comment about that." Yet another teacher stated:

> When we are at our faculty meetings, we discuss TAP and I know our assistant
> principal have come to some of the cluster meetings. I know they went to the
> TAP Institute. I know that one of them is very much experienced, so you can ask
> her any TAP question. I know they spoke about TAP at the different faculty
> meetings and from the conference of course, they have a lot of good feedback.
> When my assistant principal observed me, she had some great feedback and
> advice for me when I had my first observation.

Natalie told me, "To me, assistant principals deal with discipline issues. So, if I have problems with discipline, that is who I am going to talk to," and added she did not receive any type of instruction or curriculum support from the principal or assistant principals. Other responses regarding school leadership role TAP/PD within or outside of the weekly meetings also reflected limited or no noticeable principals' participation. I observed one assistant principal attending a cluster meeting during one of my visits to Juan Bosco Middle School.

How Do Teachers Compare TAP/PD with Other Professional Development Models?

One of the criteria for participants in this study was that they have previous teaching experience. The rationale was for teachers to have already overcome first year teaching anxieties, but more importantly, for participants to be have a clearer understanding of the school process in the hopes to more proficiently articulate their experiences. In addition, as experienced teachers, I assumed they would have some prior

experience with teacher professional development, even if minimal. Alison explained that during her first teaching assignment, she had not had any opportunities for professional development, so when she was told about the opportunity to attend teacher development meetings in her new job, she went to as many as she could.

Two participants were from a larger district, one from a small district and the other two had charter school experience. Their experiences with professional development varied vastly. Natalie was very pleased with the professional development she had received at her previous district. Among the advantages of working and attending professional development in a large district was the large amount of material, curriculum, and other resources available to teachers. There were multiple opportunities for professional development, even during the summer. She recalls that teachers were paid to attend the summer professional development. In her former large district, which she described as having many AU campuses, professional development was a requirement every six weeks.

Mary describes her previous experience with a previous off-site professional development when, according to her, she specifically talked about her need for assistance with inclusion:

> They couldn't give me anything to kind of ease those kids into the situation. I
> brought-up in a TAP meeting and I got all sorts of papers and handouts on like
> how to work better with the inclusion teacher, and how to help group the kids. I
> didn't get anything like that in the all day professional development that I went to.
> They know the kids better, so it is easier for them to take the research and think

that this will work with Jerry, or this won't work with these kids, so it definitely helps.

In her previous professional development experience, Mary asked for tips on how to differentiate support to address the needs of her students whose learning abilities were vastly different. However, she felt disappointed when she did not receive the support she needed.

According to participants, traditional professional development has been generally held away from campus. Some participants identified some advantages and disadvantages of this practice. For example, Sara recalled having attended a two-week professional development training away from campus and explained that at the time she had learned a lot and was eager to come back to campus to put her learning into practice. On her return, she talked about having to come back to the routine and not having time to incorporate her new learning. Admittedly though, she said, "It was awesome. I was excited, but then [I] never get to use it."

When I asked the participants the reasons for not using what they had learned at these professional development sessions, they explained what has been described as one of the isolating aspects of attending traditional professional development – the application experience. Sara stated,

> You are not getting reminded of it, or you don't have anyone else trying it. It is just, everyone went to a different training, and so it is not right there to use and to take. Here you have application, 'cause see it, you do it and then you come back and discuss it. Therefore, so it is more like a cohort of people – of professionals

working together and discussing things and you can find out different ways it

works from how it didn't work.

Alison further proceeded to compare her experience with previous professional

development to her experience in TAP/PD:

> The PDs I had before were just "one day, get-it-all in one sitting" whereas the
>
> TAP is once a week focusing on one strategy or issue. So, they don't try to
>
> [weigh] you down with all this stuff.... In so many trainings you go to whether it
>
> is for the district of for other trainings, you go and you go through all this stuff,
>
> but when you go back to work you don't really have time to apply it... And so,
>
> with this [TAP], because you have one week – after the one day that you go and
>
> you sit through this 40 minutes training or workshop you go back and the next
>
> day or that week sometime you do it or implement it in class. It is different from
>
> being in an all-day training where you are kind of just exhausted.

Teachers explained that there is "a lack of personal support" when they went back

to their campus. For example, Sara compared her previous professional development

experience with TAP/PD,

> They are doing a lot where they give us these strategies to do, they show us how
>
> to do, and we kind of act it out in the practice. Then we come back to our
>
> classrooms throughout the week and we take anecdotal notes to see how things
>
> are working and then bring evidence back to see if it is working. If it is not
>
> working, we tweak it if we need to tweak-it. So, we can see that those things
>
> actually - you can use it right away. It is not something you keep going back for
>
> to get something – instantly you can use it in your classroom.

She then added there is no reminder about using the strategies learned in off-site professional development and furthermore, there is not anyone else using them. During the interview with Alison, she looked towards her wall with a couple of bookcases; while pointing toward it she said, "See the big notebook sitting on the shelf, I got it at a good professional development; but I brought it, put it on the shelf and forgot about it."

Sadly, though, many of their experiences during the professional development, as explained by the participants, were promising. Sara finally stated, "I think that's how it is a lot different because it is a TAP school - when you are a TAP school everyone is doing the same thing."

One non-TAP professional development meeting Alison attended was a content area training where she could share ideas and learn with other teachers who taught a similar subject in other schools and districts as well. She thought the meeting she attended was directly related to her experiences and could contribute a lot to her professional development. However, her experience in this setting was different than she expected:

> I went to trainings that were applicable to my content area, but I still kind of felt I wasn't getting much out of it. It [was] like sitting at a meeting and having a day off work. But with these cluster meetings I feel like they are more – when you are sitting there that you can use it in your lesson the next day. It is encouraged to use.

Moreover, it was the perception of these participants that the district provided limited professional development. For some of the participants, the learning from the professional development in this district was not new. Further, one talked about the

limited learning opportunities available in the district; hence, some teachers felt it was more advantageous to attend professional development away from their school district.

In summary, TAP/PD on this campus appears to be promising when compared to traditional professional development. However, this professional development approach also has drawbacks. Some participants explain that having the meetings during their planning period was stressful, as they felt they had to rush to the meeting and at the end, rush back to their classrooms. Ideally, teachers would have support from mentor and master teachers. Most participants reported limited supplementary support. For these participants, this experience was relatively similar to having an external presenter in the traditional setting who is typically not available for additional support given their detachment from school buildings.

What is the Perceived Impact of TAP Professional Development on Teachers' Professional Growth and Students' Achievement?

This study uncovers findings that arise from the interview responses of these participants through the analysis of a change process aimed at improving teacher quality to impacts students' learning at Juan Bosco Middle School. Unequivocally, the ultimate measure of a teacher quality in this society lies in the capacity of how a teacher improves student learning. For this to occur effectively, teacher classroom practice must be directly aligned to quality teacher preparation and continuous development. Hence, the effectiveness of professional development is manifested in the growth of the teachers and the students. Participants shared their perceptions of the impact of TAP/PD in their professional growth and in their student achievement.

For example, Mary recalls having difficulty getting her students to work well in groups:

> I did not pay too much attention to grouping at the beginning of the year. We went through a whole lot of stuff on grouping and I finally figured out a way that works with the kids where they not only behave, but they get their work done; and, it is a good quality work.

Alison praises the use of the TAP/PD rubrics to her improved classroom management skills:

> It's really help me. I never knew how to control a class and I was just [tell students] 'sit down'. The kids weren't following my rules and my school role models back then were screaming in the hallways. Then I was told not to yell, but I never knew anything else. So, definitely I have learned a bit more about the rubrics, so that's been good.

At the near end of her first year experience attending TAP/PD Mary looks back while reflecting, "I would like to think I am a better teacher because of it. It is a really good program aside from any incentive that comes from it....I think it's made me better."

Clarissa discussed in detail the extent to which TAP/PD might have helped her improve as a professional.

> Compared to my first year and my second year, this by far has been the hardest year of my teaching. But I have seen myself more as a professional and I don't know why. Maybe it's my expectations - I don't know if my expectations are higher because of TAP. I almost want to say as strange as it might seem, I am guessing because there is so many checklists. It seems that our expectations are

magnified much stronger that I put more of a burden on myself, but I have also

felt more insightful, more appreciative of what I is I am doing, whereas before I

just felt more that this is what I do because I am the kind of person I am anyway –

so what's not to be appreciated because it is just me being me versus now like,

Wow, this is what I would be doing anyway, but this is what we all should be

doing – it made me see like Wow, - it made me appreciate myself more instead of

taking myself for granted and I think I carried myself this entire year way more

professionally because I know how many checks and balances and

documentations, reports and so much more that we were having to keep up

with…I don' know, I don't have any idea how anybody else is keeping up with it

but you have seen my desk – I am not doing a very good job, but I think I am

appreciating myself even though I don't feel I have been the best teacher in my

subject matter yet.

When asked about her perception of the influence of TAP/PD on her students'

learning, one teacher categorically states:

To be honest with you, and maybe because it is new, it is not affecting the

kids. The kids don't know about it - the stuff that we are taught in there, like, this

is the first strategy for teaching, it is the first strategy that we have ever learned in

TAP to teach our kids how to do test-taking strategies. We have six more weeks.

In general, when participant teachers in this study appraised the impact of

TAP/PD on their students learning, they were cautious about giving it too much

merit. Yet most, like Alison, were hopeful about the potential of TAP/ PD, "I think TAP

might be a little bit better next year once we kind of get a hang of it...I think if it is done right, and people are using it, it can improve student achievement," she concluded.

Summary

Understanding teachers' perceptions of their experiences with the TAP/PD model is the purpose of this study. It was possible to identify individual and common events as they described their daily experiences in this TAP/PD environment. Several overarching themes relating to potential areas for improvement emerged from the participants' responses:

1. Collaboration within their professional development meetings provided for teacher reflections.

2. Coaching outside of their meetings was focused on first year teachers.

3. Mentor teachers roles were ambiguous, which limited mentors' ability to support other teachers.

4. Master teachers had too many responsibilities distracting from their roles as co-instructional leaders.

5. Administrators did not play a substantial role in the professional development process; thereby the teachers did not see them as instructional leaders.

The next chapter will discussion the findings in light of theoretical and research literature. In addition, I will draw conclusions and make recommendations for practice and research.

CHAPTER VI

SUMMARY, CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND REFLECTION

Chapter 6 is divided into four sections. First, I present the summary section in which I review important elements of this study. I summarize the purpose and context of the study. Then, in the second section I discuss the study findings in light of current theoretical and research literature. In the third section, I present key conclusions derived from the data analysis. In the last section, I make recommendations for practitioners and researchers derived from the findings.

Summary of Purpose of the Study

There is no question the skills teachers need to guide students' learning in the 21st Century are different from years ago. Students' needs are more diverse in many schools, but this is especially true in schools where students need much more support of both academic and non- academic nature. Traditional methods of teaching no longer meet the needs of our students. Unfortunately, it has also become clear that many teachers are not prepared to address these diverse needs. Serving these many needs of students and teachers appears to be daunting for many school communities.

Many modern methods of professional development are now being explored and implemented in schools to help teachers to gain new understanding of effective teaching

strategies. The TAP system is a type of reform plan that links teacher professional development with evaluation and performance pay to attract, develop, and retain teachers who are said to be the most powerful influence on student achievement.

The research revealed a gap in the literature regarding the TAP/PD in secondary schools. There is limited research related to teacher perceptions of modern, integrated professional development systems, and even more limited information regarding the extent to which these systems influence teacher quality and student achievement. The purpose of this study was to investigate how secondary school teachers perceived and explained their professional development experiences in their first year of using the TAP/PD model, one of four components of the TAP system.

I interviewed teachers with at least two years of teaching experience to glean teachers' perceptions of their preparation, successes, and challenges with the TAP/PD. I observed teachers during their professional development meetings and also retrieved additional data to provide a more robust description of the teachers' reports of their experiences for this study. The data analysis included inductive coding of interviews as well as documents and written artifacts, leading to identification of themes.

Conclusions

This study intended to report teachers' experiences from the time the professional development was suggested as an option to improve JBMS until its last days of the implementation year. This section highlights the conclusions derived from this study. Interpretations and discussion of these conclusions will be provided in more details in the discussion section.

Following are some strengths regarding TAP/PD, as reported by participants:

1. *Teachers perceived a positive impact on the frequency with which teachers attended professional development meetings.* Based on my observations and on participants' responses, teachers at this site regularly engaged in professional development activities intended to elicit their learning and transfer of knowledge to class. Some believe that the compulsory nature of the TAP/PD was ensured teacher buy-in to some extent. Most teachers admitted attending their TAP/PD even though they admitted it that at times it felt they had many more pressing concerns.

2. *All participants found potential usefulness of some rubric strategies.* It could be conceived that given that the rubrics used in the professional development meetings are the same rubrics used in the TAP system evaluations, there were more opportunities for teachers to discuss the strategies and their application more frequently. Hence, this could have led some teachers to feel more capable of applying a few of these strategies than they felt with the field-tested strategy.

3. *Teachers appreciated the campus-wide engagement that came from everyone being involved in a common effort.* This became more evident for some when their students reported many of their other teachers were using the same field-testing strategy created to address the students' reading skills.

4. *All but one participant provided anecdotal evidence of their growth as a function of participating in TAP/PD.* They provided examples of how they now carefully plan their lessons and classroom environment, and

ways their classroom practice had improved. Four of the five teachers also admitted to spending more time in reflection when they are planning their lessons, meeting with other teachers, or in other activities as a result of their experiences in TAP/PD.

5.   *Some teachers reported that TAP/PD did not have a significant impact on their student achievement, while others perceived a positive impact but had difficulty pointing to specific evidence.* Three out of five participants also provided an example in which they used either a TAP system rubric "strategy" or a field-test strategy and attribute it to have positively influenced their student learning. However, the growth in their students could not be attributed solely to their participation in TAP/PD based on hard data.

6.   *The field-test strategy provided for a school-wide focus on a single goal.* Participants explained how the students engaged in learning from class-to-class using the same strategies regardless of the subject. Students recurrently talked about the strategies in different settings. This provided students more opportunities to learn and apply the strategy.

Limitations regarding the TAP system professional development on this campus, as perceived by participants are identified below:

1.   *Participants attributed the adoption of the TAP system to the low performing status given by the state.* Juan Bosco Middle School teacher had mixed feelings about their role in the decision making process. Some participants perceived a lack of privacy in the voting process. In addition,

they felt that since some teachers were not on campus when the decision was made, a number of the newcomers did not buy-in to the TAP/PD model.

2. *Participants observed that most of the support mentor and master teachers provided were mainly for first year teachers.* This is somewhat understandable as these teachers have the highest attrition level (Ingersoll, 2007). In addition, at Juan Bosco, there were a large number of teachers in this category; they are typically the ones needing more support (Killion, 2009). Their many needs likely captured the attention of the leadership team.

3. *The findings suggest the importance of creating support for systemic collaboration systems for more experienced teachers to have access to mentor and master teachers.* To enable this, mentor and master teachers need to have workloads adjusted to allow performance of the TAP/PD functions.

4. *Mentor teachers' roles were not clear to teachers.* As a result, teachers were not sure how much to expect from their mentors. In addition, the communication between mentors and career teachers were not established from the beginning in most reported cases. Some teachers admitted not knowing who their assigned mentor was until the second semester of the school year.

5. *While participants acknowledged that master teachers were knowledgeable and receptive to communicating with teachers, they*

pointed out these instructional leaders were too involved in other school business such as lunch duties, administrative duties, and quasi-administrative duties. All of these additional responsibilities seemed to be taking their focus away from curriculum and instruction aspects outside of the cluster meetings.

6. *The recurrent absence of the school administrators from TAP/PD meetings and other related to TAP/PD activities was evident.* I documented this observation many times in my own notes from the first days I began to visit the TAP/PD meetings at JBMS. As explained by the majority of participants, the principals very seldom visited the cluster meetings. This may have signaled to teachers that TAP/PD was not a priority of the school (Killion, 2009).

7. *Collaborative activities were embedded elements within the TAP/PD meetings, but were limited outside of the meetings.* Some teachers found the functional aspects of the TAP/PD elements to contribute to some collaboration, whereas they did not have the same experiences with the supportive aspects. By virtue of engaging in genuine collaboration (Cantrell & Cantrell, 2003) and reflecting on changes to instruction, teachers may improve their practice.

Discussion

In the previous section, I provided a review of the methods and purpose of the study. I also highlighted the conclusions derived from the study. In this section, I will interpret and discuss the conclusions and findings based on the participants' responses. I

will discuss the findings related to each research question in light of pertinent theoretical and research literature.

Adoption of TAP/PD at Juan Bosco Middle School

Juan Bosco Middle School is located in a suburb of Austin, Texas. Its student population includes a high percentage of students who qualify for free or reduced lunch. During the first year the school opened, the number of first year teachers was four times the percentage rate for the state; and the number of teachers with 0-5 years of experience doubled the rate of the state at the time the school was rated low performing. A year later, when this study began, the proportion of first year teachers was lower, but still more than double the state's percentage rate.

Educators in low-performing schools like Juan Bosco struggle persistently to educate their students, in hopes to meet the minimum performance levels established by federal and state mandates. The challenges they face have been especially difficult to overcome because of complexities within and among these schools' internal systems. The complexity of the teaching job itself, the growing and diverse needs of students in America, and the national and global race to remain competitive contribute to teachers' facing myriads of challenges. It is a combination of these things that make teachers' jobs one of the most stressful professions (Cantrell & Cantrell, 2003). Complexities of the environment at this school create "special challenges, many of which are difficult for an experienced teacher to handle" (Yendol-Hoppey, Jacobs, & Dana, 2009, p. 26).

In addition, administrators at Juan Bosco Middle were relatively new. At the time the state determined this school academically unacceptable, the principal was in his first

year as a school leader. Two other assistant principals were also in their first year in that role.

Students were also facing many challenges. Student behavior problems were a concern. In addition, teachers and administrators did not always agree on the ways to redirect behavior problems. As related by participants, a general environment of low expectations may have contributed to low performance within the entire school culture and finally resulted in the campus label as academically unacceptable by the state education agency.

A low-performing label on the school, based on the accountability data about their students' performance, exacerbated the already challenging situation at Juan Bosco Middle School. Hence, district and school leaders sought ways to quickly redirect problem areas to improve Juan Bosco Middle School, just like other school districts across the nation which continue to research ways to enhance teacher performance to ensure student achievement (Duncan, 2010).

Teachers' Perceptions of TAP/PD

I approached this study using the premises of social constructivist theory, the situation cognition, and the cognitive apprenticeship framework. The social constructivist lens is influenced by Vygotsky's theories of learning as a social activity (Chicoine, 2004; Santrock, 2001). Current pedagogical studies regarding learning practices also emphasize the importance of social and practical experiences (Caine et al., 2002). Richardson (2003b), through a study about teacher preparation classes, provides a plausible rationale for using a constructivist framework for understanding this professional development model. She explains the constructivist method,

contradicted the learning paradigm inherent within the various models that the teacher education students were being asked to learn to implement. Thus, it became clear quite quickly that the teacher education classes, themselves, should probably be conducted in a constructivist manner for ethical reasons, to increase the legitimacy of the theory among the teacher education students, and to help students develop deep understandings of the teaching process and habits of mind that would aid in their continuing learning. (p. 1527)

In the TAP/PD format of learning, teachers experience from the learners' perspective and are able to understand and anticipate what may take place before they implement a strategy in their classroom. Polk (2006) suggested, "Teachers must also learn as the students do" (p. 23). At the same time, Santrock (2001) explains the importance of the operative word "active" in social constructivist framework.

These opinions aligns with the findings of this study regarding teaching and learning that lean towards professional development based on *practical experiences* (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2001) of TAP/PD at Juan Bosco. In this sense, it can be assumed that teachers may derive skills from teachers constructing knowledge based on their cluster collaboration.

Teachers' Personal Experiences with TAP/PD. Teacher perceptions drive this study. In tandem, the professional development meetings provided additional data within the teachers' professional learning context to supplement the participants' responses (Willig, 2008). When I observed the TAP/PD meetings, I was able to glean an understanding of how teachers shared ideas, constructed meaning, and solved common problems during the implementation year at JBMS. These observations and participants'

responses also provided information to understand the dynamics of interaction and level of support outside of the meetings.

Coaching and Peer Collaboration in Cluster Meetings. The collaboration process observed during cluster meetings can be seen as consistent with a social constructivist and situated learning framework. First, the master or mentor teachers present the research to teachers in cluster meeting. Teachers may take on the student role by learning the strategy the way the students are supposed to learn it. Then, collaborative development time occurs when teachers have the time to practice the learning or to analyze the material, strategy, or rubric to understand how to use it to advance their students or their subject area. During the development time in TAP/PD meetings, master teacher and mentors provide coaching during these activities to help teachers develop a deeper understanding of the strategies. Teachers construct their knowledge of the strategies by experiencing first-hand how a strategy works. Teachers then discuss how to apply what they learned in cluster meeting in their classrooms. Teachers share ideas about alternative ways in which the learning or data may be adopted to meet the diverse needs of their students. Sharing ideas provide opportunities for teachers to reflect on their practice. Ross-Gordon (2002) reminds us that, "teachers must continuously reflect on both their belief systems about teaching and learning and their teaching practices," (p. 86).

While in professional development meetings, the conversation revolves around students and teaching strategies, specific steps and processes, and data teachers need. This group discussion allows teachers to co-create for better practices to use with their students (Troen & Boles, 2010). When teachers return to their classrooms they apply the

information gleaned while in the student role or in the teacher role earlier in the professional development meetings.

I observed instances in which teachers did not always return to professional development meetings with student data or student work. One time Mary returned to her TAP/PD meeting without her sample of students' work or notes about applying her new knowledge in the classroom. Even though Mary did not bring the expected student work and data, during the follow-up professional development meeting, Mary was one of the most active participants in the meeting. She provided suggestions to other teachers and explained how she would use a specific portion of the strategy with her students. During the next interview to follow-up with the professional development meeting, I asked her about my observation regarding her students' work. She explained there were other curriculum priorities that did not allow for using the strategy in her class at that time.

Teacher participation was not the same in all cluster meetings. I observed instances of teacher's hesitation to fully participate in the activities. I observed that teachers in the science cluster, for example, appeared to not be as engaged in the professional development activities compared to other teachers in other cluster meetings. Some science teachers were not communicating and sharing as much. I noticed this cluster typically engaged in more side conversations. Effective collaboration among different stakeholders may prove to be useful in overcoming some challenges in Juan Bosco Middle School. However, Elmore (2004) cautions that unsuccessful collaborative professional development "can lead quickly to cynical compliance or outright resistance" (p. 109). Musanti and Pence (2010) explained that, "Resistance is an almost unavoidable

presence in professional development programs that foster prolonged collegiality and collaboration" (p. 87).

In line with the situated cognition perspective, teachers collaborate during the TAP/PD in a structured way, with focus on data (Brown et al., 1989). They brought students' work and discussed ways in which a rubric strategy or field test strategy worked or could possibly work in their class. After a while, they began to talk about their common vocabulary using Tap system rubric terminology, they practiced in the cluster meeting, and collaborated with each other. They were coached by master and mentor teachers during the TAP/PD meeting and may have added to their repertoire of classroom practices.

It has been said that professional development enhances teacher quality by the power of collaboration and through reflection of the collaboration. Many authors have elaborated on the importance of collaboration in professional development (Achinstein, 2002; Chan & Pang, 2006). Indeed, Cantrell and Cantrell (2003) affirm, "The most effective teachers do collaborate and seek advice and support from their peers" (p. 110).

Coaching and Peer Collaboration Outside Cluster Meetings. Teacher collaboration was not confined within the walls where the professional development meetings occurred. Sara reported working with another teacher in her cluster that needed some ideas to implement what was introduced in cluster. Ideally, teachers would collaborate with each other outside of the cluster meetings to support one-another. However, most participants' reports indicate collaboration outside of cluster meetings, for TAP/PD activities, was rare.

Coaching outside of cluster meetings is intended to occur immediately after the teacher attends the cluster meeting. However, reports from participants indicate coaching activities did not happen as frequently as expected for all teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School. Many reported they were left on their own to use the teacher strategies and teach the PREY student strategy. Teachers perceived it was mainly the first year teachers who benefited from the coaching opportunities. Sara reported this situation, confirmed by three other teachers:

> I haven't worked with a master or mentor teacher except for when I was observed. But I see them working a lot with teachers giving them lesson plans to show the first year teachers exactly what it should look like and then showing them how they are going to teach, and then observe them - that happens all the time.

It is presumable that given the dynamic nature of the school environment, master and mentor teachers many duties may have played a role in this matter. Killion (2009) explains that teacher leaders such as mentors in new roles must first establish rapport with the other classroom teachers, while trying not to be 'intrusive, p. 16). We know that establishing trust (Killion, 2009) can be a lengthy but necessary process. The fact that more than half the year had gone by without having a relationship or even knowing who their mentor was could explain why most participants in this study could not relate the coaching process of the TAP/PD.

Elmore (2004) explains that professional development leaders must emphasize the relevance, application, and implication of learning strategies. These suggestions are based on adult learning assumptions outlined by Knowles (1990) to explain how adults learn best. Master teachers in particular are to provide coaching support to implement

field test and teacher strategies. Mentors, in theory, may have more interactions and opportunities for communication with career teachers due to their dual role as classroom teachers. Mentors could provide another layer of support for career teachers by encouraging and inviting other teachers to observe how they apply their cluster meeting learning. In addition, principals need to be seen as instructional leaders (USDOE, 2006). Fullan (2010) proposes that part of the power of a principal comes from the emphasis and focus on instruction. He also asserts that as principals become more involved, more teachers positively influence student learning.

Brown et al. also explained, "cognitive apprenticeship attempts to promote learning within the nexus of activity, tool, and culture" (p. 40). Viewed from this apprenticeship model, teachers at JBMS are apprentices who require coaching and collaboration. As a result, they may reflect on their experiences within this professional development model and will able to articulate their practices. However, teachers reported that the cognitive apprenticeship or practical aspect of TAP/PD was not what most participants' experienced during the TAP/PD implementation year.

Drawing from Santrock's (2001) cognitive apprenticeship perspective, master and mentor teachers should anticipate "when the [career teacher] is ready to take the next step with support from the expert (p. 111). In the case of the participants in this study, that was not always the case. Sara was concerned that while other teachers had mentors, she did not have the same experience, "I think that more support [is needed] for people like me," she said.

Teachers found that the TAP system, especially the TAP/PD activities conflicted with the causes for which it was implemented. Some teachers reported not having

implemented the strategies learned in cluster meeting because they felt standardized test should take priority over anything else. Interestingly, the TAP/PD strategies were adopted because the campus was low performing. Could more support and in the classroom have alleviated these concerns? This was another example of how participants repeatedly expressed that the cluster meeting activities complicated their jobs far more often than not.

In summary, this section reveals how in selecting TAP/PD at JBMS, educators embraced idea of improving the systems at the school. Yet, taking that idea into action was more challenging. Data collected at this stage of the implementation indicated that coaching did not occur as consistently as participants expected. Peer collaboration during cluster meetings was beneficial, but outside of the cluster meetings, it was challenging. A stronger focus on instruction and emphasis on adult learning theories may have averted teachers and administrators at JBMS from succumbing into non-instructional activities leading to their absence in coaching or collaborating professional development activities. As a result of this lack of focus, the support system outside of TAP/PD meetings has been described as inadequate to meet the challenges that teachers faced during implementation.

Strengths and Weaknesses of the TAP/PD. Many authors have written regarding important elements observed in effective professional development (Elmore, 2004; Gordon 2004; Richardson 2003a). Appendix F outlines the federal government guidelines for high-quality professional development. Modern methods of professional development are patterned closely to these guidelines. Gordon (2004) identified: strong leadership and support, collegiality and collaboration, data-based development, program integration, a developmental perspective, relevant learning activities, and, professional

development as a way of life. Following is a discussion of JBMS study participants in light of these characteristics.

Strong Leadership and Support. The TLT is charged with providing support for all educators in the TAP system schools. Teachers reported that administrators sometimes talked about the TAP system in general meetings, but that their administrators did not usually participate in the professional development meetings. They also explained how their master teachers, although competent and knowledgeable, were very busy with duties unrelated to instruction or focusing their efforts on first year teachers. They also perceived their mentor teachers did not provide adequate support outside of their cluster meetings.

Collegiality and Collaboration. Another well-known weakness of traditional professional development is the quality of the relationship of the educator with the facilitator. Before a strategy is applied, a teacher may need to further analyze it. Teachers may need someone to clarify or listen to their ideas. Master teachers and mentors on campus could potentially create more coaching opportunities for teachers to apply their learning, as they could provide instructional and technical support. Although this was not the experience of most of these participants, they did claim that first year teachers benefited from this TAP/PD feature. Presenters of one-time professional development and traditional developers are usually not available in this capacity. Traditionally facilitators have been limited in the amount of contact time with teachers who needed support.

Data-Based Development. At the beginning of the year, the TLT creates a school-wide plan to guide TAP/PD meetings. The plan is based on the school-wide

scores and on teacher development needs. "Professional development that attends to student learning of important skills and concepts appears to matter, and matter for all students..." (Gitomer, Foreword, in Wenglinsky, 2000, p. 2). It can be difficult to implement a strategy with no regard for the students with whom it is used. Traditionally speaking, professional development does not consider students as the target audience. Using school data seems to focus the strategy to the specific needs. In Mary's case, she seems to get what she needs, "I keep getting stuff that is relevant to me and that I can use right then and there in my classroom," she said.

Program Integration. Modern school improvement systems join together factors identified as influencing teaching and learning. TAP/PD is a professional development program built among other school improvement elements. It is one of four elements of the TAP system. Hence, by nature of being an element of the TAP system, this PD is related to the accountability, performance-pay, and career paths elements.

Developmental Perspective. Yoon et al. (2007) contend that professional development should not be a one-time event, but rather an ongoing activity. Mary commented about the TAP/PD it is done on a regular basis and that "is something that we need to be doing anyway."

Relevant Learning Activities. Because TAP/PD is also connected to the teachers' evaluations, the TAP rubrics are taught first. Sharing strategies on how to implement each rubric indicator is commonplace during the first few weeks during the implementation stage. In addition, based on the needs assessments of the students, strategies were researched and field-tested on students on the campus. Some participants described the TAP/PD meetings as too structured, but Troen and Boles (2010) caution,

"The team [that] has no clear purpose or goals…rarely engage[s] in instructional talk that would significantly change teaching and learning" (p. 59).

A Way of Life. When I observed this site, the campus-based meetings were integrated within the school schedule. This type of scheduling is consistent with recommended approaches to professional development, which strive for collaboration time within the school day. An advantage of the cluster meetings taking place on campus providing local support is that it reaches more educators school-wide. As a result, most Juan Bosco Middle School respondents reported participating in more hours of professional development than some of them would otherwise attend. In addition, teacher reported having participated in TAP systems professional development either because it was compulsory or because they felt they or their students would benefit from the cluster meeting learning, collaboration, and reflecting.

Presumably, making the best use of time and resources on campus could prove to be beneficial. Meeting weekly for professional development on campus, having an assignment that all teachers try in class, bring samples of student work from students you may have had or will have, analyzing school student data, and using strategies developed or tested on their campus was not the norm. Thus, integrated professional development, which parts from traditional professional development will require more practice for procedures to be established at Juan Bosco Middle School, especially in two of the above elements: strong leadership and support, and collegiality and collaboration outside of TAP/PD meetings.

Influence on Teachers' Professional Growth or Students' Achievement.

Wenglinsly (2000) tells us that classroom practice is the materialization of teacher preparation through professional development and coaching. Mary shared that, "Since we started the TAP clusters, I have pulled out a lot of activities and strategies that I have actually used in here." Alison also praised the use of the strategies guided by the TAP/PD rubrics for her improved classroom management; and Sara believes it is "working" for them. After sharing and developing ideas for classroom activity, using the rubric indicators, applying the field test strategies, did the participants see any growth in them or in their students?

Most participants believe their TAP/PD experience has had a positive impact on their students, although they acknowledge they cannot prove this. For example, Sara said, "they have progressed immensely because they rely on those strategies;" while Mary concluded, "They seem to be learning from it." The beneficiaries of teachers' collaboration and reflection are the teachers and ultimately the students. Towards the end of the implementation year of the TAP system at Juan Bosco Middle School, the campus was no longer an academically unacceptable campus, as it improved to a new rating as an Academically Acceptable campus.

Participants believed it was too early to credit TAP/PD for greatly impacting their classes. However, most participants did believe their experiences in the TAP system professional development: collaboration, reflection, using students' data or talking about their own students made them more "aware" of their own practice.

Recommendations

Based on the data collected, I offer some recommendations for future studies that were not explored given the scope and focus of this study. In light of the teachers' perceptions and my observations, I was able to glean important aspects of the teachers' experiences that could provide valuable insight that may have made for a more positive experience during the implementation stage of TAP/PD.

Recommendations for Professional Development Practice

In all probability, organizing the leadership team as soon as the decision to adopt is made may positively impact the implementation planning. Early selection of the master teachers, mentor teachers, and other leadership staff is crucial. More effective consideration of the plan for the staffing would have allowed the TLT time to explore ways to implement, seek support by talking to local mentor and master teachers, create opportunities to visit other TAP sites, and complete an in-depth analysis of their staff needs before the school year had started.

The TAP system responsibilities rubrics should be communicated repeatedly throughout the year, not only at the beginning of the year. Provide multiple examples and suggestions for how support may be provided for each educator. This way, teachers may have a better understanding of the expectation of the rubrics and their roles.

Communication between mentor teachers and career teachers as well as master teacher and career teachers must be monitored. Considering that mentors evaluate career teachers, one way to ensure early communication among them could be to schedule all evaluations to be completed by mentor teachers at the beginning of the year. The evaluation process entails that teachers are observed and provided feedback with optional

pre-conference and a required post-conference; hence, this could establish mentors and teachers communication early in the school year. In addition, it may also relieve some of the burden from mentor teachers who are also responsible for their classes, and may have been under pressure related to high stakes testing towards the end of the year. This will also leave no doubt for a teacher to speculate who is his or her assigned mentor.

When the teachers clusters for TAP/PD meeting are organized based on content, ensure a differentiating TAP/PD focus. Master and mentor teachers might provide different application and examples based on the characteristics of the teachers. In other words, math cluster meeting presentations should demonstrate math examples and specific suggestions for math application. When appropriate, consider a multi-discipline cluster organization (Joyce & Showers, 1996a). Teachers in this study favored this teaming approach rather than the content-based approach.

Sufficient time should be dedicated at the onset of the implementation stage to explain and support the role expectation of all TAP system members. An example could be clarifying the mentor and the master teachers' roles. Gordon (2004) proposes the creation of a "written description of the teacher-leaders' role and functions.... disseminated to all members of the school community who will be expected to collaborate with the teacher-leader" (p. 106). Gordon (2004) also suggests mentors could benefit from training so that they have a better understanding of their role before the school year begins.

With so many new teachers at this site as reported by participants, master and mentor teachers had to ensure priority providing the new teachers with guidance. However, it is important to ensure that future TAP/PD including a wide range of ways in

which experienced teachers, such as all participants in this study, also do receive more attention from the leadership to ensure their needs are also met. Provide more support for experienced teachers. Ensure there is a system to in the least visit them during class for informal visits to assess their needs. Create a system whereby master teachers and mentor teachers collaborate with experienced career teachers. Help career teachers set goals. Collaborate with them to map out their paths to reach their goals and anticipate the type of support they may need. Killion (2009) confirms and expounds on this idea by stating that more experienced teachers more aptly verbalize their needs.

Inviting teacher perspectives about the TAP/PD could lead to teachers feeling they contribute to the decision-making process. Create a cadre of four to five career teacher representatives from each cluster. An alternative to this could be to create informal surveys periodically. The purpose will be to maintain a thermometer so to speak about the functioning of the PD system. Would participants experiences had been different if leaders at Juan Bosco Middle School had restructured their program taking into account some ongoing, formative surveys, or informal evaluation and feedback from teachers? Reid (2007) implies so in stating that "Teacher [s'] need[s] should be taken into account" (p. 45) especially in the decisions related to curriculum and instruction at a school.

Steps should be taken to ensure that a truly collaborative climate is promoted by creating opportunities for teachers as well as mentor teachers and master teachers to be seen in other roles. For example, teachers whose students were selected to participate in the field-testing of strategies may present student data and other information about the process when the strategy is rolled out. Career teachers could model selected strategies

for other teachers. This could potentially not only alleviate some of the master teachers' responsibilities, but also add other perspectives. Taking these steps for the TAP/PD meetings could strengthen the school community.

School leaders could also explore alternative methods to schedule their PD to allow release time to support their teachers. For example, mentor and master teachers could be relieved of their lunch duties. This time could be used for their preparation time. Mentors and master teachers could then visit teacher classrooms or meet with teachers to provide coaching support during scheduled preparation time.

In addition, as suggested by teacher comments about being overwhelmed, implementing many school improvement strategies at once may be counterproductive. Schools should set priorities, which may entail focus on one or very few school improvement strategies at a time. Ideally, the selection should be an integral, coherent program. This school incorporated many programs at once. This lack of focus may have contributed to some of the challenges explained by participants.

Some teachers felt they needed additional professional development to address more than only academic needs. Participants provided different perspectives regarding their students' many needs. Despite their good intentions, some of the experiences may be attributed to the demographic differences between teachers and students. Teachers in all disciplines share the responsibility for serving diverse groups of students (i.e. English Language Learners, special education, gifted and talented, and students from all racial and ethnic background). Hence, TAP/PD could include support for teachers to improve their competency by providing culturally responsive recommendations for practice through appropriate content scaffolding, lessons, programs, and environments. This may

improve the teachers the ability to influence the student's learning. Guy (1999) proposes that, "educational norms, processes, and goals must be reevaluated to assist learners," (p. 12) in becoming more culturally responsive.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future research about the TAP system implementation in secondary schools would be beneficial for addressing the concerns raised by participants at this site. While all teachers at Juan Bosco Middle School experienced multiple demands and were challenged by numerous obstacles to implementing different strategies and goals of TAP/PD during the first year, experienced teachers perceived they were inadvertently underserved. Some of the participants talked about competing priorities such as first year teachers, alternatively certified teachers, master teachers having too many duties, principals not attending TAP/PD meetings, and mentor teachers not having time because they had their own full load of classes.

Students do not always know when a school becomes a TAP system school or what it means to be a school in the TAP system. However, they do notice teachers' classroom practice. In this school, teachers explained how students reported using the field-test strategy in different classrooms. Students know that teachers use strategies in the classroom that other teachers use because in TAP schools the strategies are generally launched at a larger scale than individual classrooms. These strategies could be department-wide strategies, team strategies, or whole-school strategies, depending on the school data and the students' needs. Students could provide examples as to their perception of the strategies and their perceived usefulness. Hence, future research could include students' perceptions of their experiences in TAP system schools.

Future research could also focus on the data gathered from students' achievement. When participants were asked to provide their perceptions about the impact of the TAP/PD on their students' learning, some of them explained the information based on quantitative achievement of the students. Collecting qualitative data and showing value-added achievement may better help understand student learning to manage aptly professional development strategies.

First year teachers, whose voices were completely absent due to delimitations of this study, can provide important information regarding TAP/PD. These teachers could be followed on a longitudinal basis to observe and document their value added growth to determine the impact of their participation in a TAP system school.

Future research could also observe educators on a longitudinal basis to document real time perceptions as the implementation is taking place. By the time I entered the site as a researcher, the principal at the school at the time of the decision to adopt TAP system was already gone. Adding the first perception from the leader of Juan Bosco Middle School at the time the school was first labeled low performing could have added another perspective. I could have also observed more of the early TAP/PD events participants reported. For example, in casual conversation with some of the participants, I have been able to glean additional information about where they are this year within the TAP system. However, given that this study is intended to capture only the first year perception of the TAP system implementation from the voice of participant teachers, I have not included any data from this informal conversation as it goes beyond the scope of this research.

In addition, researching school and district leaders' perspectives regarding this professional development model could provide a different perspective. Principals, mentors, and master teachers may provide a more complete portrait of the implementation of the TAP system at the school level. District leaders' perspective about the events that lead to the consideration and decision to adopt the TAP system as a key component to move this school in a different direction could also be investigated. Why consider the TAP system over other systems other school improvement methods for this campus?

Reflection

I sought to understand the TAP/PD process at Juan Bosco Middle School from a qualitative point of view. I have clarified my position as a TAP system master teacher. Although I am not an insider at Juan Bosco Middle School, I do have first-hand experience with TAP/PD. I believe it is important to mention again how this fact may have influenced my analysis of the data presented given my own experience on my campus. At the same time, I have also taken measures to ensure my interpretations of the findings were carefully examined. For example, I have reviewed the data several times. I have also provided the participants with the transcripts to ensure I accurately captured their perceptions. In addition, I cross-referenced my observations in cluster meetings with my researcher's notes compiled from my visits to the campus before, during, and after the data collection process. But I found that I had to go back into the data several times to answer the same question, as I went from transcript to transcript looking at the participants' responses. Each time, I traversed unto a different layer of the data to understand how the pieces fit together to either diverge from or support my interpretation

of the data. Finally, I was careful to link the data collected to justify the findings and to support my discussion. As I sifted through these layers, I frequently questioned the lens of the observation – was it truly from the participants' vantage point or was it from mine? I presented "contrary findings," (Yin, 2009, p. 72) that support alternative explanations of the data.

I disclosed the findings only after presenting the delimitations of this study, the context in which I collected the data, my researcher-participant role, and my experiences as a mentor, practitioner, researcher, administrator, and educator. This study, though systematic, was not a sequential process.

One strength of this study is that it presented teacher perceptions about their experiences from a qualitative perspective. I attempted to fully capture and present each participant's experiences without breaching their confidentiality. This was a particular consideration in instances where I omitted details from the participants' responses as I thought necessary to protect the identity of the participant from possible negative perception at the campus.

One limitation of this study is that it presents findings based on data collected only during the first year of implementation. In addition, it is important to remember that this school also adopted an in-district professional development and a student centered program during the same year. The study reveals that there are some positive efforts to improve the school through the TAP system, even though they expressed feeling overwhelmed. At the same time, all of them reported that they expected the TAP/PD to be "better" next year. White (2006) asserted, "TAP is not an easy program for schools to implement for a number of reasons. First, it is comprehensive; it touches almost every

aspect of the school either directly or indirectly. TAP is also counter-cultural in the field of education. The program requires school personnel not only to act differently, but to think differently" (p. 83). In my experience from working in multiple educational settings, teachers, students, and school leaders will engage in collaborative activities only when it becomes clear to them that what they are doing will be of value. So at first that process may seem to create an undue burden. But once the steps in the process have been worked out, they no longer resent doing them, and the process eventually becomes seamless.

The notion of ongoing professional development as a key to improving student learning and teacher practice is not new. Neither is the notion of instructional practices heavily supported by school leaders new to education. It is important to recognize the role of the nascent practice comprehensive systems such as the TAP system may play in the school improvement process. What is going to be challenging is gauging how one isolated part of the system, such as the professional development in this case, may influence teacher growth.

This study although with a small sample size, has provided some evidence that the implementation stage at this TAP school was very challenging, thereby inhibiting the potential value intended for this year. Because of this experience, I believe consideration must be carefully taken to manage the initial adoption phase.

Final Thoughts

I offer this study to Juan Bosco Middle School and its district to provide them with hard data concerning the first year of implementation at this site. The findings and information herein contained may help guide future implementations of the TAP system

or other school improvement comprehensive models. Therefore, this study may be relevant to school administrators, career teachers, master teachers, coaches, mentors, and educators in general. My hope as a change agent, a passionate learner, and an educator in the K-12 system is that this study will serve as a conversation tool and evidence of the perception of some educators about the professional development field.

Planning for school improvement in an ever-changing society requires new ways of thinking. Districts, school administrators, campus leaders, and teachers must find ways to redress old policies and teaching methodologies currently in place to adapt to the needs of students learning at a distance, or the internet. It is futile to think otherwise. Consequently, the wheels of education have already begun to turn towards this direction. One thing that is clear is that we need to quit the blame game – there is enough to go around and it is does not move us forward in the learning realm. What is unclear is how exactly to produce the needed changes given such diverse educational needs. I am optimistic that the educational change process will involve a collaborative effort that includes teachers, administrators, district staff, and state level educators and policy-makers.

APPENDIX A: DISTRICT ASSURANCE

District Letterhead

Texas State University
Institutional Review Board (IRB)
601 University Drive
San Marcos, TX 78666

Dear IRB Representative:

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that Ms. Damaris Womack has the permission of this district to conduct research at our Juan Bosco Middle School for her study entitled: A Case Study of Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Development Experiences within TAP- The System for Teacher and Student Advancement.

Ms. Womack will contact faculty and staff to *recruit* them by approaching them while visiting our campus. Her plan is to obtain documents about the school, conduct observation, and interview teachers to obtain data to contribute to this research. Ms. Womack's on-site research activities will be completed by December 2010.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact me.

Sincerely,

_____

February 12, 2010
Title
District

APPENDIX B: CONSENT FORM

Consent Form
A Case Study of Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Development Experiences within TAP – The System for Teacher and Student Advancement

This is an invitation to participate in a research study entitled "A Case Study of Middle School Teachers' Perceptions of their Professional Development Experiences within TAP – The System for Teacher and Student Advancement." The purpose of the study is to generate data from teachers about their TAP professional development and how this experience affects their classroom practice and professional growth. The principal investigator, Damaris Womack, is a student in the Counseling, Leadership, Adult Education and School Psychology (CLAS) Department at Texas State University. My email address is dw1004@txstate.edu. You are asked to participate to provide information about your experiences with the TAP system Professional Development.

Methodology

I will ask you to answer some questions in three private interviews, which will each take approximately 30-40 minutes. All interviews will be conducted before, after school, or at another convenient time for you. I will also observe you in your professional development meetings. I will do everything I can to make the interview and observation processes very convenient for you.

I will provide you with a pseudonym for confidentiality purpose. Only this consent will identify your real name and it will be kept in a secure location. Any written or oral response derived from this study will not be associated with your real name. Only I will have access to the list of names connected to the pseudonyms. The recordings on a digital recorder will be coded with no visible personally identifying information and will be kept in a locked file accessible only by me. The digital recordings will be deleted a year after the study is completed.

If you consent to participate, you are agreeing to let me use your interview responses and examples of your oral and written participation as data for this research. Your decision to participate will not affect you present or future relationship with this district or with Texas State University. Further, you may refuse to answer any question without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may already be entitled.

Possible Risks

You have the right to withdraw from this research at any point. During the interview about perceptions of their experiences in the TAP system, teachers may inadvertently provide information either about themselves of others they did not intend to divulge. To this end, participants may elect to delete the information from the record. Further, participants will review a copy of their transcript that will contain the data provided for this study. If you have any concern about any other risk you may experience, you may asks questions at anytime or call me at 512-636-8270.

Possible Benefits

Participating in this research will provide participants the opportunity to reflect about their experiences in a TAP school. They will also be able to think about how their professional development experience influences their instruction and their professional growth. Further, as the participants engage in metacognitive processes about this experience they may uncover areas of accomplishment or areas for growth; and also their potential for transitioning into another career level. School leaders and professional development leaders benefit from learning about successful professional development practices that may serve to enhance school improvement.

Compensation

There is no monetary reward for participating in this study.

Institutional Review Board (IRB) Contact

If you have other pertinent questions about the research, your rights, or research-related injuries to you as a participant, please contact the IRB chair, Dr. Jon Lasser (512-245-3413 – lasser@txstate.edu), or to Ms. Becky Northcut, Compliance Specialist (512-245-2102).

Signatures

I, the principal investigator, have explained the purpose, methods, benefits and risks associated with your participation in this research study.

_____   _____
Damaris Womack   Date
Principal Investigator

I, the participant, have received information about the nature, purpose and risk management of this research study. I have received a copy of this form. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time. I may ask questions before signing this form and at any other time during the study. I also understand that by signing this form, I have not waived any of these rights.

_____   _____

Name of Participant   Date

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

A CASE STUDY OF MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHERS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR
PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT EXPERIENCES WIHIN TAP - THE SYSTEM
FOR TEACHER AND STUDENT ADVANCEMENT
0x-xx-2010

The objective is to examine experiences of middle school teachers in their first year using TAP - The System for Teacher and Student Advancement. Your participation is voluntary and your name will not be associated with any data reported in this study.

Section I
Personal Background Data
(To be completed individually)

First name and Last name (Pseudonym): _____

Gender: M (   )   F (   )   Age: _____

Professional Role: _____

Content: _____

Method of certification: Alternative certification (   )   Traditional certification (   )

Highest degree _____

Years of professional experience: _____

Years of educational experience: _____

Section II
Interview Protocol

Interview 1

1. Describe professional development in TAP at this school.

2. Compare your experience with TAP/PD with one or more previous professional development experience(s).

   Follow-up question(s) from cluster meeting observations – different for each teacher in each cluster.

3. What, if any, changes in your teaching have you been working on as a result of your participation in TAP? *IF APPROPRIATE:* How are your efforts to change your teaching going?

4. Tell me about a powerful learning experience you have had with TAP/PD.

Interview 2

   Follow-up question(s) from cluster meeting observations – different for each teacher in each cluster.

1. Since our last INTERVIEW, what, if any, changes in your teaching have you been working on as a result of your participation in TAP? IF APPROPRIATE: How are your efforts to change your teaching going?

2. What type of support do you receive from your mentor teacher to implement the TAP/PD?

3. What type of support do you receive from your master teacher to implement the TAP/PD?

4. What type of support do you receive from your principal to implement the TAP/PD?

Interview 3

   Follow-up question(s) from cluster meeting observations – different for each teacher in each cluster.

1. Since our last interview, what, if any, changes in your teaching have you been working on as a result of your participation in TAP? How are your efforts to change your teaching going?

2. Do you believe your TAP professional development experience has improved your classroom practice? If so, how?

3. Do you believe your TAP/PD experience had an impact on your students' learning? If so, how?

4. To what extent, if any, has the level of collaboration with your peers changed since being involved in a TAP/PD?

5. To what extent, if any, do you see yourself differently as a professional as a result of working in a TAP school?

6. What recommendations do you have for improving professional development within the TAP system?

APPENDIX D: TAP/PD MEETING OUTLINE EXCERPTS

Juan Bosco Middle School
TAP/PD Agenda

DATE	March 10, 2010
GOAL	By May 2010, student achievement will increase on the TAKS tests…Test results Data is provided

FOCUS	CAREER TEACHER

PROCESS	RESOURCES
TAP End-of-Year Procedures Overview	MTs will provide brief overview of rubric as pertains to the Responsibilities Rubric.
Review individual sections of the Career Teacher Responsibilities Rubric	MTs will provide descriptions, facilitate beginning of documentation procedure.
Career Teachers will complete documentation for rubric individually	

1

NOTES:

2

Juan Bosco Middle School
TAP/PD Agenda

DATE	March 23, 2010
GOAL	By May 2010, student achievement will increase on the TAKS tests…Test results Data is provided

FOCUS	ACTIVITIES AND MATERIAL

PROCESS	RESOURCES
1. Warm Up: Largest Trees 2. Review Norms, and School & Cluster Goals. 3. Review Warm-Up and Benchmark questions 4. Discuss possible student thinking/pitfalls	• Warm UP: Largest Trees
5. Data: Visual texts, and Strategic problem solving 6. What is PREY?	• PowerPoint Handout.
7. Examine Student Work 8. Teachers will create rubrics to use when evaluating their own student work.	• Benchmark Questions – Student work samples • Handout – Analyzing Student WORK
9. Next week, present a **warm up with a visual** to your students. Take notes on how they approach solving the problem.	• Warm up with a **visual**
10. For next cluster: • Teachers will share their work and/or student work samples to be evaluated	• Notes on student observations • 4-5 Student work samples. (Spectrum of Low to High work)

1

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2

Juan Bosco Middle School
TAP/PD Agenda

DATE	May 12, 2010
GOAL	By May 2010, student achievement will increase on the TAKS tests…Test results data is provided

FOCUS	LESSON PLANNING

PROCESS	RESOURCES
1. Review Norms, and School & Cluster Goals. 2. Teachers share modified lesson plans	• Modified Lesson Plans • Plus/Delta chart
3. Enter Evaluation Data	• PowerPoint slides
4. Generate cluster recommendations for school-wide lesson plan template.	• Individual teacher proposals
5. Over the next two weeks (next week – NO cluster) you will utilize the cluster-generated lesson plan template in writing lesson plans.	• Lesson plan template
6. For next cluster: Teachers will share insight gained from using the proposed template.	• Teacher reflection and/or observation

1

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2

APPENDIX E: SAMPLE DATA CODING AND ANALYSIS TABLE

Level 1

	Question	Comment				
	TAP HERE	School Adoption			C	N
	TAP HERE	Personal Motivation			C	N
	TAP HERE	For the Kids			C	
	TAP HERE	Pressure to Adopt			c	
	TAP HERE	Presenter Success			C	
	TAP HERE	Growing Professionally			C	
	TAP HERE	Hope to Learn Secrets			C	N

Level 2

	Question	Comment				
	TAP HERE	School Adoption			C25	N102
	TAP HERE	Cluster is Scripted				C356, C280
	TAP HERE	If Hard For Me, Students Don't Understand, I Fix It			M134	C358
	TAP HERE	Students Learning From TAP Activities & Strategies			M139	C258
	TAP HERE	Liked Better When Meeting as Team			M145	C482
	TAP HERE	Cluster with Team Better			M148,M159	C488
	TAP HERE	Cluster Takes Away Time From Team		A80	M157		N118

Level 3

	1st CODE	Comment	2nd CODE	3rd CODE	4th CODE	
1	TAP HERE	School Adoption	TH ADOP PRO			
2	TAP HERE	Personal Motivation	TH ADOP PRO			
3	TAP HERE	For the Kids	TH ADOP			
4	TAP HERE	Pressure to Adopt	TH ADOP CON			
5	TAP HERE	Presenter Success	TH ADOP SHOW			
6	TAP HERE	Growing Professionally	TH ADOP PRO			
7	TAP HERE	Hope to Learn Secrets	TH ADOP PRO			
8	TAP HERE	Voting	TH ADOP PRO			
10	TAP HERE	First By Admin	TH ADOP CON			
11	TAP HERE	Change Meeting Times	TH CHANGE	PROC CHANGE		
12	TAP HERE	Original Cluster structure	PROC ROUTINE	PROC CHANGE		

Level 4

Adoption Process			2nd CODE			
3	TAP HERE	For the Kids	TH ADOPT	C118		
4	TAP HERE	Pressure to Adopt	TH ADOP CON	C321, S325		
10	TAP HERE	First By Admin	TH ADOP CON		C145	

APPENDIX F: HIGH-QUALITY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Title IX, Section 9101 (34) of ESEA

The following guidelines do not limit the notion of high-quality professional development, which may include:

a. Improve and increase teachers' knowledge of academic subjects and enable teachers to become highly qualified;

b. Are an integral part of broad school-wide and district-wide educational improvement plans;

c. Give teachers and principals the knowledge and skills to help students meet challenging State academic standards;

d. Improve classroom management skills;

e. Are sustained, intensive, and classroom-focused and are not one-day or short-term workshops;

f. Advance teacher understanding of effective instruction strategies that are based on scientifically based research; and

g. Are developed with extensive participation of teachers, principals, parents, and administrators.

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