A QUALITATIVE INSTRUMENTAL CASE STUDY INVESTIGATING THE
INTERRELATEDNESS OF ADULT LEARNING THEORY, TARGETED PROFESSIONAL
DEVELOPMENT, AND THE CREATION OF PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES DURING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF AN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
IMPROVEMENT MODEL

Susan F. Langston

Dr. Cynthia MacGregor, Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Federal school reform mandates and open enrollment policies have challenged U.S.
public school leaders to find and implement innovative improvement programs. Research has
shown effective professional development that is targeted to student, teacher, and school needs is
essential to implementing new programs. The purpose of this study was to illustrate the
interconnectedness of adult learning theory, targeted professional development, and the creation
of professional learning communities (PLCs) during the implementation of the International
Baccalaureate Primary Years Program (IB PYP) at Southeast and Midtown Elementary Schools
in the Midwestern U.S. The conceptual underpinnings of the study were adult learning theory
and learner-centered theory for adults. Research questions developed investigated the extent to
which staff members perceived the schools’ professional learning activities supported their adult
learning needs. The study’s data indicated targeted professional development activities at both
school met the adult learning needs of the teachers and professional learning communities were
formed. Data and discussion of findings of this investigation would be useful to school leaders
seeking guidance with implementing school improvement models.