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THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITY PRACTICES IN HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN
NORTH CAROLINA AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL OUTCOMES

A Dissertation

by

Cordia Lloyd Wilson

Submitted to the Graduate School

Appalachian State University

In partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

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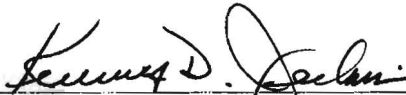
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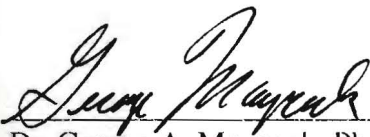
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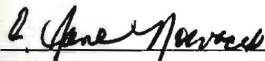
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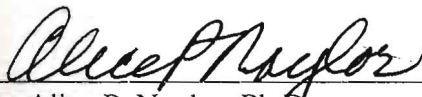
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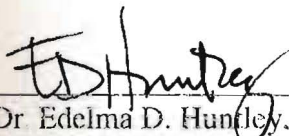
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ABSTRACT

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY PRACTICES IN HIGH POVERTY ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS IN NORTH CAROLINA AND SUCCESSFUL SCHOOL OUTCOMES. (December, 2007)

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The purpose of this study was to empirically examine the relationships of professional learning community (PLC) practices to designated indicators of successful school outcomes. Over the past 20 years the evidence has substantially accumulated in support of PLCs as an organization model that can produce effective education reform. Therefore, this researcher intended to determine whether PLC practices in operation impacted student learning. This study also examined PLC practices in relation to teacher empowerment because of the influence of teacher empowerment on student success.

The independent constructs for this study derived from PLC practices in total and from subcategories of PLCs. The data for the degree of PLC practices operating in a school were obtained through the electronic administration of the Survey of School

Practices developed by the researcher. PLC practices were also divided into subcategories based on the major areas classified by the DuFours' ideology. These subcategories are School Culture, Teacher Collaboration, and Results Orientation. The dependent measures for this study were two major school outcomes selected as indicators of school success, student achievement and teacher empowerment. Academic proficiency scores for each school provided the student achievement measure and the teacher empowerment numbers were obtained from the Teachers' Working Condition Survey (TWC Survey) both available from the NCDPI.

The macro-phase of the study consisted of an examination of the responses from 938 surveys representing 55 schools in 9 school districts. Correlation analyses were used to answer the questions concerning the relationships between PLC practices, in total and by subcategory, to positive school outcomes. Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were used in the statistical computation and produced significant results in five of the six relationships examined.

The micro-phase of the study examined two groups of schools in relation to school outcomes using T-tests. Schools were first ranked from top to bottom using the survey results and then the highest twenty schools and the lowest twenty schools were selected for further analyses. The T-tests for the difference between high PLC schools and low PLC schools resulted in statistically significant findings in relation to both student achievement and teacher empowerment.

The findings of this research provide empirical evidence that PLC practices can have an influence on successful school outcomes. The results provide credibility for the

paradigm shift to empowered organizations and add to the gathering momentum in favor of the PLC as a model for effective educational organizations.