This study examined principals' perspectives on the professional development process and its outcomes. Principals are in the best position to ensure a connection between research-based best practices and what actually happens in the classroom, but there is little research on how principals actually select professional development for their staff in the field. This study was conducted in a Midwestern state using data gathered from public elementary school principals in the form of a survey. The sample included all K-5 and K-8 elementary principals on record with the state department of education, with 242 principals responding. It examined how much control principals have over the professional development provided for their staff, how principals identify the professional development needs of their teachers, what types of professional development opportunities they put in place, and how satisfied they are with the outcomes. The relationships between these factors were also investigated, holding constant the socioeconomic, geographic, and financial characteristics of the districts and buildings in which the principals served.

Results indicated that self-reported influences on satisfaction, funds available for professional development, and principals' perceived control over the process are the strongest predictors of principal satisfaction with professional development outcomes. Additionally, the factors of time and money were reported as having a similar and
sometimes greater influence on principals’ professional development choices than other research-based considerations known to correlate with student achievement gains. Finally, respondents expressed the highest satisfaction with the professional development opportunities over which they had the most control, although one in four opportunities were still provided/controlled by others outside the school building (e.g., regional and district central office). Recommendations for practitioners and future research are offered.