

Mindful Collaboration to Influence School Improvement

A Dissertation
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF
UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA
BY

Eric Matthew Skanson

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Peter Demerath, Adviser

MAY 2016

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the many people who have helped be through the completion of this journey. The first is my advisor, Dr. Peter Demerath. His patience and fortitude were second to none in helping me see the finish line with a quality race in mind. His insight on culture and leadership helped give words to my observations.

I am blessed to work have learned with great colleagues as a practicing principal and as a student. I thank all those that have given me the inspiration to keep asking questions. I thank my committee members for their insights and revisions, Dr. Julie Kalnin, Dr. Nicola Alexander and Dr. Katie Pikel.

I would like to thank ROCORI schools for their continued dedication to me as a professional and for the time and space to learn about collaboration at a deeper level. I would like to thank my MESPA peers and those that participated in my research study. My endless hours of calling, emailing and talking are over, and you have inspired me to add to our professionalism as a practicing scholar and principal.

Finally, I would like to thank my family. I would like to thank my ever patient and giving wife Jill. My hours of dedication were, in turn, her hours of dedication. I could not have made this journey without her support. Also, I thank my family of educators who surround me with great talk of pedagogy and educational policy. Finally, my four kiddos, Bergen, Jack, Avery and James, may you someday have the pleasure of writing your own "Big Book Report."

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to Dr. Richard Nunnely. His passing was too early and he was an inspiration beyond the classroom. May his ideas live on through those he taught, including myself and my cohort colleagues. He was an inspiration to so many, and we all loved him as a teacher and a person.

His words of encouragement early on through this journey gave me hope that I would have my life back post-grad school. Early on I asked him how people stay balanced through graduate school with full-time work, families and friends. His words did not disappoint. He stated, "They don't, don't try to, but know that as your life is now in an imbalance when you finish you will compensate and be in a positive imbalance. You can do it."

Abstract

School leaders use collaboration for a variety of purposes including school improvement. This study researched how school principals used collaboration for school improvement and examined the day-to-day impact on principals and their staff. A mixed method design was employed to answer questions about collaboration including fruitful areas to encourage, removal of barriers and addition of supports for successful collaboration. The Levels of School Collaboration Scale was developed as a quantitative measure of collaboration in schools to examine the perceived levels of collaboration between various nested relationships in schools of teachers and teams. The scale identified Pinewood Elementary as site of promising collaborative practice for further research. Findings from the case study found that school leaders play an executive role in establishing, supporting and maintaining a collaborative culture for school improvement. The implications for school leaders included the identification of a systematic mindful approach through four dimensions of collaboration to influence successful collaboration.

Table of Contents

List of Tables	vi
List of Figures.....	vii
Chapter 1: Statement of the Problem	1
Purpose of the Study	3
Research Questions.....	3
Significance of the Study	4
Role of the Researcher	5
Organization of the Dissertation	6
Chapter 2: Review of Related Research: Applicable Theories.....	10
Organizational Change Theory	10
Process Theory.....	14
Social Capital Theory	15
Mindfulness.....	17
Collaboration.....	19
Chapter 3: Methodology.....	28
Research Questions	28
Research Design.....	28
Design Phase Rationale.....	29
Setting and Sample	29
Data Collection Methods	34
Conclusion	37
Chapter 4: Quantitative Data Analysis.....	39
Levels of School Collaboration Scale.....	39
Individual Site Analysis	40
Internal and External Comparisons.....	45
Site Comparisons	47
Measures of Variability.....	48
Site Leaders by Category	49
Identifying Exemplary Site.....	50
Competing Collaborative Interests	52
Conclusion	55

Chapter 5 Case Study Findings: Understanding Collaboration in Contexts	58
Site Context	58
Collaboration on a Continuum of Interactions.....	60
Purposes of Collaboration	70
Chapter 6 Case Study Findings: Barriers and Organizational Structure.....	84
Types of Collaboration	84
Addressing Barriers to Collaboration	91
Essential Components of Collaboration.....	92
Chapter 7 Case Study Findings: Tensions, Establishing and Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration	107
Tensions of Collaboration	107
Establishing Collaborative Culture	115
Sustaining a Collaborative Culture	122
Chapter 8 Case Study Findings: The Effects of Collaboration	136
Short Term Wins of Collaboration	136
Long Term Benefits of Collaboration.....	141
Chapter 9 Conclusions and Implications Regarding Collaboration for School Improvement	146
Summary	147
Implications for School Leaders	152
Recognizing Collaborative Dimensions	153
Taking Action with Collaborative Influence	162
Areas for Future Research	165
Appendices.....	167
Appendix A: Levels of School Collaboration Scale	167
Appendix B: Collaborative Codes	170
Appendix C: Principal Interview Questions	172
Appendix D: Research Consent Form	174
Bibliography	177

List of Tables

4.1 Site Demographics	41
4.2 Levels of School Collaboration Scale Weighted Average by Site	42
4.3 Site Demographics by Mean Collaborative Score	44
4.4 Nested Aggregate Mean.....	45
4.5 Internal and External Aggregate Mean Comparison	46
4.6 Measures of Central Tendency	48
4.7 Measure of Variability	49
4.8 Site Leaders by Category	49
4.9 Site Z-Score Comparisons	50
8.1 Summary of Dimensions of Collaboration	147

List of Figures

4.1 Model of Competing Collaborative Interests.....	53
5.1 Collaboration Continuum of Interactions	61
8.1 Model of Collaborative Dimensions	154
8.1 Model of Mindful Collaborative Influence.....	163

CHAPTER 1 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Systematic, generalizable school improvement measures continue to be an elusive target in public education. To date, many studies have tried to isolate factors that underlie successful schools such as leadership, teacher quality, quality standards and class size (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Leithwood K. A., 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Nye, Hedges, & Knstantopoulos, 2000; Wraga, 1999). In addition, policy initiatives have focused on access, institutionalism, and inequalities amongst different types of children such as race and economic disparity (Elmore, 2008). While these efforts all have merit, the school leader continues to look for ways to leverage needed change in school staff's day-to-day school life that is systematic and generalizable to the local level.

Various options come and go and take the form of many different commercial products, legislative mandates, and local district initiatives. These efforts are viewed as both cycles of the repetitious process and educational evolution (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). School leaders continuously work to find the next best thing in hopes that it will be the precursor to sustainable positive reform. Schools have seen policy proposals come and go without a substantive change in the everyday life of school and student achievement. Such broad sweeping programs such as, "A Nation at Risk" and "No Child Left Behind" left a large gap between policy and practice and had little to do with institutional change (Elmore, 2008). This gap in policy fueled by pressure for continual improvement leaves local school leaders struggling to find an answer that fits unique needs at the local level.

Collaboration has become a trend in school an improvement effort that has the potential to fill this gap. Collaboration is all around us. It can be found in the most minute and trivial occurrences such as the Dairy Queen Blizzard and Snicker candy bar,

or Dr. Pepper and Lip Smackers to the BLT, yet is also used as a highly complex scenario such as the United Nations and trade agreements such as NAFTA. Collaboration is found in fun entertainment scenarios such as Willie Nelson and Johnny Cash, Tony Bennet and Lady Gaga. It is found in business partnerships such as Ben and Jerry or Hewlett Packard, Microsoft and Apple. It is even found in historical, political alliances such as Gorbachev and Reagan or our founding fathers like Madison and Jefferson in the creation of the constitution. It is amazing that one word can be found in so many different contexts and so many different applications.

Schools have also turned to the creative strategy of collaboration for improvement. School principals are increasingly turning to the strategy of collaboration amongst stakeholders to leverage successful school change efforts through role expansion (Bemak, 2000), improving staff relations (Anderson, 2004; Ebmeier & Nicklaus, 1999; Walker, 1994), curriculum implementation (Briscoe & Peters, 1998) support data-based decision making (Huffman & Kalnin, 2003; Wohlstetter, Datnow, & Park, 2008; Strahan, 2003), teacher development (Tschannedn-Moran, Uline, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Mackley, 2000), and increasing student achievement (Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007) (Louis, Dretzke, & Wahlstrom, 2010; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; Tschannen-Moran & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000). These instances show that collaboration can be used to achieve specific goals, but they also show that collaboration in itself is not the goal, but a means to achieve specific results.

Throughout this recent trend, little attention has been given to the principal's ability to implement successful collaboration to achieve these tangible results. As Fullan (1993, p. 82) suggests, "Collaboration is one of the most misunderstood concepts in the

[educational] change business.” Fullan (1993) further advises that without personal strength in dedication to success and understanding the intricacies, collaboration becomes more form than content. To successfully lead collaboration, educational leaders need to have a particular understanding of the various needed components such as facilitators and norms, frameworks, and barriers (Welch, 1998) as well as insight into the specific contexts in which to apply the strategies of collaboration.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the day-to-day impact of using collaboration in meeting local school leaders’ needs in leveraging successful school improvement efforts. More specifically, this study helped to document the collaborative intensities of different interactions and the context in which principals choose to apply the strategy of collaboration. It examined the different mechanisms that current school leaders used to address barriers and tensions and where they choose to implement supports for successful collaboration amongst various school groups. School groups such as individuals, teams, parents, principals, and outside agencies were found to have been involved in the work of school improvement. These findings may help practicing school administrators in their everyday practice of leading effective schools and in choosing appropriate change strategies for applications of collaborative relationships within these scenarios.

Research Questions

This study will address the following research questions:

Research Question 1: How do school leaders make decisions regarding how and when they support collaboration?

- a. How do they identify fruitful areas and activities that are appropriate for collaboration?
- b. What supports do they report to be necessary for effective collaboration?
- c. What barriers do they frequently identify as impeding effective collaboration?

Research Question 2: What kinds of collaborations do principals think are valuable?

Research Question 3: What kinds of valuable collaborations do principals try to initiate, support, or sustain? How do they do this?

Research Question 4: What does collaboration mean for the everyday work of instructional improvement efforts of elementary school leaders?

Significance of the Study

This study may have implications for school principals looking to build a coalition of stakeholders to embrace collaboration in the efforts of school improvement. School improvement may take different forms including both academic and non-academic functioning. It may help school leaders effectively quantify the varying levels of interaction occurring in schools.

Also, these findings may help school leaders understand the nuances, frameworks, and contexts of implementing collaboration, remove barriers in future efforts and understand the impact on the everyday lives of school personnel. It may help school leaders to identify appropriate collaborative relationships for corresponding specific outcomes of collaboration.

Role of the Researcher

This research study is the convergence of two parallel journeys. This study of collaboration as both a researcher and as an elementary principal brings together the worlds of research and practice through one professional lens. The hope is to affect both research and practice, yet help the reader see that research and practice need not live separately. They can also converge into a highly professional state where research and practice mutually inform each other.

As a personal note of practice, collaboration has been an expectation in the role of principal at multiple levels. The researcher for this study has been a practicing principal for nine years. In that time, there has been an expectation to collaborate for successful educational change through multiple interactions including facilitation of teacher collaboration, teacher to principal collaboration, community outreach, parent relationships and administrative functioning. These expectations continued to occur with minimal training in the dimensions of leading successful collaboration for school improvement through formal preparation programs. These nuances were left unexplained. As a school leader, these understandings are important in leading and developing schools that focus on successful change efforts and having practical support in gauging where trust may be threatened.

That being said, the primary role of the researcher was to uncover the pathways to successful collaboration through a systematic and thoughtful approach on collaborative leadership. Coursework in culture, organizational change, and historical educational perspectives prepared me to recognize some of the key components and dimensions of collaboration in practice. Additionally, as a student and principal researcher, I have a

drive to understand further how collaboration differs in school contexts depending on variables such as size, experience, and principal leadership.

The study followed a mixed methods design that provided the researcher multiple perspectives into collaborative leadership in elementary schools in Minnesota. Phase one used a quantitative tool to measure the levels of collaboration between internal and external school partners. This initial phase of the study provided insight into how multiple schools viewed their own collaborative relationships as viewed by staff on a continuum of collaborative interactions. Phase two dove deeper into the day-to-day culture of a highly collaborative school as identified by phase one. The researcher used qualitative methods to gain insight and validate findings from phase one using observation, interviews, field notes and artifact analysis.

Findings of the study identified multiple dimensions of collaboration that school leaders need to remain mindful of when engaging in collaborative relationships. These dimensions included major themes of organizational structures and collaborative cultures. These findings also uncovered the difficulty in maintaining collaborative relationships due to barriers and tensions found in the day-to-day operations at a school level. In this study, the school leader played an executive role in the establishment and maintenance of collaborative schools for improvement. The following chapters further explain the findings of collaborative schools.

Organization of Dissertation

Chapter 1 introduces collaboration and the significance of the study and its link to research and practice for future school leaders. In addition, chapter 1 outlines the relevant problem and the principle researcher's guiding research questions.

Chapter 2 introduces the reader to applicable theories and grounds the research in collaboration as a school improvement effort. The applicable large scale theories included organizational change theory, process theory, and social capital theory. Chapter 2 also introduces the reader to a working definition of collaboration and broadens this by examining collaboration in a school context through interaction scenarios. These scenarios included teacher to teacher, teacher to team, teachers to principal, teachers to parents and teachers with outside community. These interaction scenarios were used later in the quantitative stage of research and data collection.

Chapter 3 explains the relevant choices in methods design include typology, setting and collection methods. For the purpose of the study, mixed method design was chosen to best capture and explain the nuances of collaboration. The quantitative design used a tool that was developed to quantify the level of collaboration in a school. The qualitative phase followed and utilized case study and a site visit to help understand the nuances and dimensions of a highly collaborative school.

Chapter 4 examines the results from phase 1 of the research study. Phase 1 utilized a collection tool adapted from the work of Frey, Lohmeier, Lee and Tollefson (2006) called the Levels of School Collaboration Scale that focused on quantifying the levels of collaboration in schools. Phase 1 examined the varied patterns that were observed moving from internal and external collaborative partners and also the impact of setting and demographics on collaborative settings. Chapter four focuses on the examination of demographics and internal and external differences. Chapter 4 findings also identified a potentially highly collaborative site for further examination in a case study site visit.

Chapters 5-8 relayed the findings of the case study and site visit in the qualitative phase of research. The qualitative phase utilized interviews, observations, field notes and document analysis to further explain the dimensions and nuances of a highly successful and collaborative school including the organizational structures, collaborative cultures and barriers and tensions of collaboration.

Chapter 5 examined the contexts of collaboration and their corresponding purposes. Chapter 5 began by expanding in the context of the identified site. Chapter 5 also introduces some key structural frameworks including collaborative intensity and continuum of collaboration and the varied purposes of collaboration

Chapter 6 focuses on the organizational structures and common barriers to collaboration. This chapter again uses information from the site visit to better understand how collaboration is organized and to identify common barriers that impede the organizational stages of collaboration.

Chapter 7 explains what was identified as tensions of collaboration, but also the dimensions of establishing and sustaining a collaborative culture. Staff feelings and comments about teamwork and school culture gave insight into the leader's role in maintaining a safe and supportive collaborative environment.

Chapter 8 identifies both short and long term benefits of having a collaborative culture. These benefits were again identified through staff comments and perspectives that point to a self-sustaining model of collaboration that is fed by both internal and external perceptions of the school.

Chapter 9 introduces the reader to two models that synthesize the future implications for school leaders in using collaboration for school improvement. The

Collaborative Dimensions model introduces the reader to four dimensions to be aware of when using collaboration for improvement efforts including qualifying, environmental, developmental and leadership. These dimensions were then applied to an action orientated model of mindfulness and collaborative influence. The chapter concludes with implications for future research on collaboration.

Through research, study, observation and design, this dissertation helps to explain the nuances and implications for school leaders through a systematic and mindful approach to influence successful collaboration.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED RESEARCH: APPLICABLE THEORIES

Related research and applicable theories played an important role in understanding the underpinnings of collaboration and its connection to larger and better-understood theories. Included in this chapter is the connection to organizational change theory, process theory, and social capital theory. In addition, this chapter examines the definition of collaboration and some of the applicable research showing collaboration with varied groups for school improvement.

Organizational Change Theory

Schools wanting to undergo fundamental organizational change must give attention to theory and understand both the macro and micro level changes involved. Schools as organizations can follow typical patterns of behavior that illustrate change theory as a series of organizational stages moving from less collaborative to more collaborative. Equal in difficulty is moving the organization from a stage of autonomy and isolationism to collective responsibility and collaborative practices. To understand these shifts, school leaders need to examine the type of change needed, episodic or continuous and the purpose of the change, transformational or transactional.

At the macro level, change is complex and contains multiple variables. The elements of organizational change theory such as the content, contextual, and process issues are applicable in considering a change (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999).

Content models

Content models in organizational change focus on factors including strategic orientation, organizational structure, and organizational environment that impact the

character, mission and direction ultimately affecting long-term success (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999; Burke & Litwin, 1992). In the context of public schools, this means attention to the hierarchal structure of relationships among collaborative groups, the current work of the organization and history of how work is accomplished. School leaders need to be mindful of the organizational content before considering an organizational change.

Context models

Context models of organizational change consider the internal and external factors on an organization's capability for responding to environmental changes. These contextual models include factors such as organizational age, size and inertia and momentum of change efforts (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999), but not limited by external policy requirements at both the local and national level (Sastry, 1997). School leaders need to consider the contextual application of these factors in considering workload and demands on collaborative groups such as the continued local initiatives and mandates that need to be addressed, collective identity and historical characteristics of collaborative groups.

Process models

Process models bring particular attention to the phases of implementing change and the understanding of how members experience change (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). The process includes such factors as planning, communicating and institutionalizing change. School leaders can use this understanding in maintaining credibility and managing resistance when planning for a change from non-collaborative

to collaborative practices. Beyond these elements, school leaders should examine the purpose and type of the anticipated change.

Transformational and transactional dynamics

Burke and Litwin (1992) speak of transformational and transactional dynamics involved in organizational change. They link transformational changes to a change in identity. Transformational aspects of these changes include the need for new employee behaviors and definition of purpose on an organizational level through mission and vision and organizational culture precipitated by leadership. For schools, a new purpose of collaborative identity change may be embedded in the new found urgency for successful academic practices, but also in collegial interactions that sanction positive employee behaviors such as trust, efficacy, and innovation. While transformational changes are linked to behavior and purpose, transactional changes also need to be addressed.

Transactional changes occur within the structure and offerings (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999) management practices, motivation, performance, systems and individual needs (Burke & Litwin, 1992). The structure and offerings may mean changes to the schedule, programming, and priorities that support collaborative behaviors in schools. This may also mean school leaders need to be mindful of providing motivation for collaborative parties to engage including meeting individual needs and providing relevant tasks and skills training. Each of these dynamics gives insight into the appropriate change strategy that may be needed in moving from a non-collaborative to a highly collaborative environment for school leaders. Equally important is considering the tempo of change needed.

Episodic and continuous change

Weick and Quinn (1999) examined the contrast between episodic and continuous change efforts through the basic analytic frameworks and the role of the change agent. Episodic change is defined as ones that tend to be infrequent, discontinuous, and intentional. Continuous change in contrast is ongoing and incremental (Weick & Quinn, 1999). The school leader needs to examine the current state of collaboration in considering the type of change needed.

For schools that are currently in a higher collaborative state, continuous change tends to be less dramatic more supportive of moving along a collaboration continuum. For some schools, this change from autonomous to collaborative is both transformational and transactional at varying levels (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999) and rooted in episodic change.

To create a collaborative culture, change must be dramatic enough to shift the ethos of the school focused on a central leverage point. Episodic change tends to be dramatic bringing about emotions and the shedding of complacency and self-righteousness (Weick & Quinn, 1999). Lewin (1951) speaks of this dramatic shift as moving through phases. He refers to the states of change as unfreeze, change, and refreeze. In this model, these terms mean to change an organization through a process of dismantling the unwanted, making the change and solidifying the new practice. In this sense, urgency must be established in facilitation to unfreeze current underlying values to change and refreeze to the organization's new identity or risk organizational decline. In contrast to continuous change, Weick and Quinn (1999) state that a fundamental episodic shift in direction is needed and required to promote divergence from its equilibrium.

Process theory

To further understand the transfer to collaborative practices from isolation, it is useful to examine the specific change from the perspective of process theory (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995). Process theory serves as the building blocks to understand more deeply the steps through which the described typologies proceed. According to Van de Ven and Poole (1995), four distinct types of processes occur in change including Dialectical, Teleological, Evolutionary, and Life Cycle. It would be simplistic to describe any one change as having an exclusive process, however, as they are a combination. However, it is useful to understand the basic theoretical framework that the prescribed change may be traveling through using these descriptions.

Examining collaboration as an episodic change leads to a dialectical process in the sequence of events. Van de Ven and Poole (1995) describe dialectical change progressing through a series of colliding events or contradictory values that compete for dominance. As the process evolves, it proceeds through a sequence of thesis/antithesis, conflict, synthesis, and return to the thesis. The thesis/antithesis defines the competing values. The conflict describes the stage of competition. Synthesis refers to the new stage (usually a compromise) of competing values. This is followed by a return to the thesis, or the new state of normal in the organization. A simplistic evolution of the framework would see that the thesis (status quo of isolationism) is being challenged by the change to collaborative practices (antithesis) resulting in new ethos (synthesis). External factors are the triggering events that have created the contention between the old (thesis) and the new (antithesis) ways.

In contrast, a school that is already collaborative and looking to improve its collaborative relationships through a continuous change may understand further through examining an evolutionary process of change. In this instance, a collaborative school would move through three phases including variation, selection and retention (Van de Ven & Poole, 1995).

In this model, a school would evolve in collaborative practices through the application of trying various collaborative structures and relationships (variation). They would, in turn, select the successful models and only retain the models that survive through resource allocation and completion for resources (selection). Thus, only the successful forms of collaboration would survive and continue to add to the collaborative nature of the school (retention).

In conclusion, a school leader should examine the appropriate change theory including the elements (context, process, and content), dynamics (transformational and transactional) and the processes (dialectical, evolutionary, life cycle and teleology) of change. Although change theory can serve as a fundamental building block of successful collaboration, another theoretical aspect in considering the use of collaboration to facilitate change is through the social context in which collaboration may exist.

Social Capital Theory

In a school organization, there are always separate entities within the school that act and operate on independent levels and seek independent goal completion. However, within schools, there also operates a widely naturalistic web of the organization of social relationships that can leverage either positive or negative outcomes. Collaborative

practices are a means by which these independent groups may come together to form increased social capital within the organization.

There is an academic argument about a clear meaning for social capital. There seems to be a lack of clarity for both substantive and ideological reasons (Dolfsma & Dannreuther, 2003; Foley & Edwards, 1999). Not surprisingly, there are also multiple frameworks for examining social capital which in turn creates a propensity for even more contradiction on definitions (Adler & Kwon, 2002). However for this study, the term social capital will be defined as a sociological concept that refers to the connections within and between social networks.

Social capital has value in an organization just like machines have physical capital, and the degrees of the employees have human capital value. Social capital theory highlights the collectivism of people that gain both tangible and intangible resources at varying levels. This includes individual, group and organizational levels through social interactions and collaboration (Miles, 2012). In general terms, social capital is about social relations and consists of derived benefits of fostering positive relationships between individuals and groups (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Adler & Kwon, 2002).

Collaborative practices use the theory of social capital by advancing the collective knowledge through social relationships of school organizations. By intentionally fostering relationships of previously unlinked individuals or groups, the collective result promotes higher productivity and innovation due to the increase in social capital (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Florin, Lubatkin, & Schulze, 2003).

For school leaders, this particular theory has value in examining the relationships in and between various collaborative groups. The principal's role in building a positive school culture and fostering learning in schools is well documented in research and educational literature (Barth, 2002; Anderson, 2004; Bushe, 2009; Hoy, Tarter, & Kottkamp, 1991; Kruse & Louis, 2009; Stolp, 1994; Peterson & Deal, 2009; Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999; Moolenaar, 2012). School leaders interested in supporting these assertions can use the theory of social capital to advance both the opportunity of engagement and fostering of successful collaborative relationships.

Mindfulness

Individuals, schools and organizations have the capability to practice mindfulness in the daily routines. There are varied definitions of the use and definition of mindfulness. For the purpose of this study, mindfulness is defined as, purposely paying attention, being present and non-judgmental and knowing what you are doing and why you are doing it (Paulson, 2013).

Mindfulness has been considered at multi-levels of study including individual (Langer, 1989) to organizational (Weick and Sutcliffe, 2001) to school mindfulness (How, 2003, Hoy Gage, and Tarter 2004). Each of these views of mindfulness practices some critical elements of awareness of surroundings and suspending judgment.

One particular interesting view of mindfulness comes from Weick and Sutcliff's (2001) characteristics of mindful organizations which include: preoccupation with failure, reluctance to simplify, sensitivity to operations, commitment to resilience, and deference to expertise. When using these characteristics as an intersection with collaborative practices, we better understand the importance of being a mindful collaborator.

Mindful Characteristics

Weick and Sutcliffe's (2001) characteristics explain further the deeper understandings of organizational mindfulness, but can easily be applied to individual and school mindfulness. Each of these characteristics shows the importance of staying mindful in collaborative relationships for better results.

For example, a preoccupation of failure does not refer to a pessimistic outlook of collaboration, but rather points to the disposition of identifying early mistakes before they become detrimental to collaborative relationships. In addition, reluctance to simplify identifies subtleties of collaborative relationships and giving credit to the complexity of collaborative relationships. Sensitivity to operations refers to the core functions of collaborative identities and purpose. Mindful collaborative relationships anticipate day-to-day interruptions. They do not experience surprises. Commitment to resilience characterizes an organization's ability to recognize early mistakes and still come back from that mistake. This is especially important amongst collaborative partners. Finally, deference to expertise explains the difference between following rank and order and being flexible with resources. Collaborative decision making needs to remain fluid and linked to enabling structures.

Mindful Leadership

School leaders looking to engage in mindful practices not only need to stay mindful about collaboration, but also their own leadership. Mindful leaders can influence their employees. In a study by Reb, Narayanan and Chaturvedi (2012), mindfulness traits were positively associated with different facets of employee well-being, such as job satisfaction and need satisfaction, and different dimensions of

employee performance, such as in-role performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

Trust is also fostered through mindful leadership. In a study of 75 schools and 2600 teachers by Hoy, Gage and Tarter (2006), it was found that mindfulness was a concept that every school administrator should understand and practice. In this study, school leaders practiced mindfulness in their interactions with staff while encouraging risk taking, experimentation and resiliency. This, in turn, promoted trust and more mindfulness of staff members.

Mindfulness continues to show promise in ranges from individuals to organizations. It continues to grow in popularity and disciplines and fields (Sethi, 2009). Disciplines continue to find ways that make it applicable to performance and relationships. Sethi (2009) promotes three revolutionary skills regarding mindfulness: Focus, Awareness and Living in the Moment. These could play a critical role in the success of collaborative relationships and its ability to impact school improvement. (E. & Sutcliffe, 2006)

Collaboration

Collaboration is defined as the direct interaction between at least two equal parties who voluntarily engage in shared decision-making as they work toward a common goal (Cook & Friend, 1991). Also, collaboration has been defined as a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve a common goal (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001). Collaborative school practices are ones that support the act of working together on a joint project or purpose between typically non-associated groups to increase student achievement. This can be both

rewarding and challenging especially for schools that face environmental and contextual deficits such as poverty and financial limitations (Ainscow, 2006). These challenges are most notably indicated in these definitions and in the relationship between multiple non-associated groups for the betterment of joint cause. Inter-organizational collaboration has been argued to present challenges as well as rewards (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010). The work of collaboration is complicated and can in different situations give different results. It is important to look to tradition, structures and processes when defining collaborative relationships (Hibbert & Huxham, 2010). In addition, collaborative goals become complex when addressing the congruence and diversity of collaborative groups (Vangen & Huxham, 2011). This complexity has the opportunity to bring synergetic gains to the collaborative organizations and parties, but is also contingent on understanding collaboration on a continuum and not as a static event.

Collaboration on a Continuum

Not every interaction is fully collaborative, but every interaction falls on a continuum of collaboration. Collaboration is a dynamic and nuanced interaction that occurs on different intensities and planes that are dependent on the participants need. This continuum of collaborative interactions plays an important role in defining the purpose, product and process of collaboration and approaches with various stakeholders. Collaboration is a synthesis of trust, social interactions, change theory and process.

Much work has defined collaboration as occurring in varying states of interactions including (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006; Gajda, 2004; Peterson N. , 1991; Tuckman, 1965). These stages define the collaborative interaction as a series of growing and intensifying interactions that define how collaborative an interaction is operating.

Peterson (1991) proposed three types of interactions including cooperation, coordination, and collaboration. These stages were developmental and built upon each other by adding increasing levels of communication and shared decision making.

Gajda (2004) reviewed this work and was able to present a three point continuum that focused on Networking, Partnering, Merging, and Unifying. In this model, it is explained how groups begin to form a unified collaborative identity. This is especially helpful in remembering that higher level collaborative work involves the merging into a single identity while maintaining past identities.

Frey et al. (2006) used these continuums to define interactions among grant partners in an interagency model using networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration. These stages were defined through various relationship characteristics and attributes. Although they were not labeled in this model, the attributes described the organization, communication, decision making and role definition. In this study, they developed the Levels of Collaboration Scale to measure the collaboration among the various organizations and individuals involved in the multifaceted approaches to collaboration. Results were used to show a visible link at varying levels between grant partners.

This scale was useful in providing quantitative measuring of collaborative relationships. By quantifying collaborative levels, Frey et all (2006) were able to compare and analyze the nuances and intricacies of collaborative relationships at varying partners in the grant.

This work examined the state of collaboration as fluid and contextual based on the various interaction relationships not as a static state. This provides a working definition

of collaboration that refers to states of collaboration and not collaboration itself.

Collaboration in schools takes many forms. For the purpose of this study, the relationship amongst different organizational groups was considered. The following interaction scenarios give examples in which collaboration was used as a strategy for specific outcomes. Principals can use these examples of specific outcomes when considering when to apply collaboration as a strategy to achieve particular results. The following interaction scenarios help to define some of the useful collaboration scenarios through literature have shown promise in linking school improvement to collaborative work in schools.

Teacher to teacher collaboration

It has been documented extensively that teacher collaboration is a necessary element for improved student achievement and ongoing school success (DelliCarpini, 2008; Guiney, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, 2001; Tschannen-Moran, Uline, Woolfolk-Hoy, & Mackley, 2000; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). Naturally, forms of collaboration takes place throughout the day in the hallways, staff lounge, and informal settings, but recent trends have prescribed more formal means of collaborative structures be placed within the school day to promote teaming, innovation and productivity.

A collaborative school is one in which all the adults in the building routinely work together in problem-solving, examine student work and combining resources to promote a successful teaching and learning. Judith Warren Little (1982) characterized successful schools to include some “critical practices of adaptability.” These critical practices characterize collaborative schools by including practices of focused educational talk,

frequent observations and evaluations, cooperative planning, designing, researching, preparing and evaluating materials, and teachers teaching the practice of teaching.

According to Roberts and Pruitt (2009), to meet the ever-changing needs of learners in our schools, we must give all students access to the curriculum. Furthermore, all the adults in the building must be willing to collaborate to provide the proper learning opportunities. Collaborative practices which are focused on students, allow the power of collaboration to harness multiple professional adults to focus and provide opportunity and/or intervention strategies for a particular student. In moving towards collaborative practices, isolation may end by removing the barriers to true collaborative work.

In a study by Goddard, Goddard, and Tschennan-Moran (2007) preliminary results indicated that school improvement through collaboration had positive effects on student achievement. The research team used hierarchical linear modeling in which survey data were collected two months before students took mandatory state assessments. These assessments served as the dependent variable. Also, this was a naturalistic study that used secondary data analysis with no treatment or randomization. The teacher's natural variation in collaboration was measured then compared with student performance controlling for children's social and academic backgrounds. Through this research, it was suggested that when teachers are given an opportunity to collaborate on issues related to curriculum, instruction, and professional development there are translated results on student achievement.

Also, research by Huffman and Kalnin (2003) studied eight district teams engaged in a year-long data-based inquiry process. Through self-reported survey results and focus groups growth was found in both understandings of district's curricular consistency, and

educators' professional knowledge. This study would suggest that collaboration can be used to affect positive student achievement through intentional work shared by collaborative teams.

Teacher to team collaboration

Collaborative practices have also been found to affect team level perceptions of collegiality, trust, and efficacy through internal accountability. Shared responsibility and collegial support are traits of well-performing schools (Abelmann, Elmore, Even, Kenyon, & Marshall, 1999; Elmore, 2000). In North Carolina (Strahan, 2003) a three-year study examined the dynamics of three elementary schools that had beaten the odds in improving low-income and minority achievement. In this study, it was noted that the culture of collaboration had the biggest impact on professionalism and beating the odds. Although collaborative practices can affect team perceptions, it must be noted that structure and strategies alone cannot guarantee success.

Teacher to Principal collaboration

Teacher to Principal collaboration has been found to have an impact on relationships, student achievement, and building culture. Scott and Smith (1987) cite that formal structures and strategies help collaboration, but success ultimately depends on the development of norms of cooperation among school personnel. In this role, the principal is the key facilitator and leads by example. They note that when teachers seek principal help to improve they are more likely to work with one another to improve their teaching. Walker(1994, p. 39) states that "The role of the principal appears to be changing from one of principal manager to principal as facilitator." This dynamic proves complex and confusing as principals balance the role of an equal team member with the authoritative

role arising from the need for accountability (Walker, 1994). Even with these complexities, the principal role has been found to have an impact on organizational conditions and student engagement within the school (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Results from survey data from a large district that sampled 1,762 teachers and 9,941 students demonstrated strong significant effects of principal transformational leadership on organizational conditions and moderate but still significant total effects on student engagement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). In a qualitative study by Leithwood, Leonard and Sharratt (1998) in 14 schools, with a sample of 111 teachers the most important condition that fostered organizational learning was the transformational form of principal leadership. Principals have the opportunity to shape school culture through collaborative interactions with teachers.

School and parent collaboration

School and parent collaboration follow a continuum progressing through four increasing degrees of interaction including informing, involving, engaging and leading (Hedeen, Moses, & Peter). In this model, school and parent collaboration can be seen in formats ranging from newsletters to parent lead organizations such as parent/teacher organizations to parent advisory roles. In the scope of this research proposal, the collaborative levels considered are ones in which parents and school personnel actively engage with each other to support student achievement and school improvement.

For example, in a study of 41 families with eighth graders, Baker and Stevenson (1986) explored the relationship between family socioeconomic status and academic achievement through parent's collaboration with school officials. It was found that parents who are actively involved in their children's education are more likely to enroll in

postsecondary education. Izzo, Wissberg, Kaspro and Fendrich (1999) suggest in a study of 1,205 students via teacher perceptions of parent involvement that is enhancing parental involvement in children's schooling relates to school functioning. In a review of 64 studies on parent involvement and student achievement, (Henderson & Berla, 1994) suggest that when parents are involved at school, both the children's academic achievement and the schools they attend become better. In addition to school and parent collaboration affecting educational outcomes in school and postsecondary Walberg (1984) summarized findings from over 2,500 studies on academic learning. He concluded through 29 additional studies that the home environment has an effect on achievement that is three times larger than socio-economic status. In his assessment, he found that parents directly or indirectly influenced the eight determinants of cognitive, affective, and behavioral learning. The ways schools care about children is also reflected in the schools approach to working with families (Epstein, 1995). These studies and reviews show the importance of parent and school collaboration in increasing student achievement and influencing learning and connecting home/school connections while working with families.

School and community collaboration

The literature on school and community points to the importance of collaborative models for successful schools (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Epstein, 1995; Bauch, 2001; Sheldon & Epstein, 2002; Sheldon, 2003). Communities can serve as valuable resources in collaborating with schools. In a study of 82 schools in a large urban area, community involvement, and student achievement were compared. The findings suggest that schools' efforts to involve the community in school partnerships could be useful in promoting

higher student achievement (Sheldon, 2003). In another study by Sheldon and Epstein (2002), it was reported that disciplinary actions were reduced as schools improved the quality of their partnerships and collaboration through program development.

Collaboration between school and community can also enhance learning in schools through curriculum development (Bouillion & Gomez, 2001). In a case study involving fifth-grade teachers using connected science, an analysis showed how diverse knowledge from community partnerships was able to support student learning in science education. The importance of these findings points to the impact that school to community collaboration can have an impact on multiple levels of school functioning.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

Chapter 3 discusses the overall research design plan, collection and analysis used to address the main research question of this study. How do school leaders use collaboration for school improvement? The pre-design phase included identifying the role of the researcher and designing a research approach to best answer the primary research question. The subsequent design phase included identifying setting, sample and research participants. Finally, the last phase included tool development, deployment, and site visit coordination.

Research Questions

Again, these research questions are presented to link to the research design. These research questions were previously presented in chapter 1.

Research Question 1: How do school leaders make decisions regarding how and when they support collaboration?

- a. How do they identify fruitful areas and activities that are appropriate for collaboration?
- b. What supports do they report to be necessary for effective collaboration?
- c. What barriers do they frequently identify as impeding effective collaboration?

Research Question 2: What kinds of collaborations do principals think are valuable?

Research Question 3: What kinds of valuable collaborations do principals try to initiate, support, or sustain? How do they do this?

Research Question 4: What does collaboration mean for the everyday work of instructional improvement efforts of elementary school leaders?

Research Design

For the purpose of this study, a mixed method design was employed. According to Teddlie and Tashakkori (2009), mixed method designs can be quite complex based on the typology, priority, function and perspective of each study due to the limitless possibilities and combinations therein. However, this limitless possibility also leads to extensive flexibility in designing a mixed method study that can meet the researcher's specific needs.

In this case, a mixed method design was developed to accurately identify collaborative sites through quantitative comparisons then quantitatively explore various dimensions of collaboration at those sites including the intricacies of thoughts, relationships and context in examining collaboration for successful school improvement. Both methods provided appropriate measures to gain insight into answering the primary research questions.

Design Phases Rationale

For the purpose of this study, two design phases were appropriate to 1) identify schools and participants with a high collaborative disposition and 2) study a collaborative environment for further insight into how collaboration affects school improvement. These two phases allowed for a systematic approach to answering research questions. By separating identification from the case study, the principle researcher was able to use separate results to validate findings from each phase.

Participant Identification

This study's primary interest was to identify a school leader's role in fostering collaboration in schools. In addition, the researcher is an elementary principal interested in improving personal practice. The researcher wanted to identify similar participants for the study including elementary school principals with varying school demographics. The researcher was also interested in elementary principals with a propensity for leadership.

Collection Phase Design

For the purpose of this study, two collection stages were needed to understand fully how school leaders use collaboration for school improvement. Phase one collection focused on identifying a highly collaborative school. Phase two collection focused on identifying the folkways, tendencies, and day-to-day operations that lead to a collaborative school and their link to school improvement.

Site identification proved to be a difficult challenge. Perception data was needed to identify sites that viewed themselves as highly collaborative. Perception scales can be used to capture central tendencies associated with collaborative schools. For this measurement, collaboration is an elusive feature in practice. To fully be able to identify a collaborative site, the principal researcher developed a tool to measure quantitatively a school's level of collaboration.

Upon review of previous literature, the work of Frey, Lohmeir, Lee and Tollefson (2006) was found to have the greatest potential for adaptation. The work of Frey et al. measured the collaborative relationships amongst grant partners in collaborative relationships. The authors used the discipline of evaluation to present collaboration to the grant stakeholders that was meaningful.

The original tool measured relationships on a scale of 1-5 of passing through stages of collaboration ranging from networking to collaboration (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006). For the purpose of this study, the researcher adapted the work of Frey et al. to measure collaborative relationships amongst school collaborative stakeholders through two nested relationships on the original scale. The adaptation is significant enough that the scale will no longer be reference by the original work. The adaptations included changing the relationships identified as collaborative interactions. In addition, the scale added a “0” state of no interaction. The first collaborative groupings included as viewed as a teacher to the following groups: to teacher, to team, to principal, to parents and outside community. The second nested organizational view was as a team member. Each individual also exists as a part of a larger team. This may be as a grade level, department, or specialized team such as a student assistance team or professional learning community. The second nested view of compared relationships of team to the following groups: to teacher, to team, to principal, to parents and outside community (Appendix A: Levels of School Collaboration Scale).

Following phase-one, phase-two design employed qualitative methods to gain access to principal insights using a phone interview (Qual 1) and Case Study Field Visit (Qual 2). A principal phone interview was designed based on the seven stages of interview investigation as outlined by Kvale (1996) including thematizing, designing, interviewing, transcribing, analyzing, verifying and reporting. This instrument was developed based on research questions and delivered via phone contact. The main design of this interview was to gain insights from a practicing principal who uses collaboration to promote successful school improvement. More specifically, this instrument was

designed to obtain insights into the mechanisms used to combat barriers to collaboration as defined by Welch (1998) as conceptual, pragmatic, attitudinal and professional. The interview was also used to elicit the current structures and relationships among collaborative groups used by a practicing principal that show innovation in collaboration. A list of interview questions is provided in Appendix C.

The interview targeted principal perceptions regarding barriers and supports using behavioral, affective and cognitive mechanisms, as well as defining the different relationships and structures that the principal engaged within their buildings. Particular attention was given to gaining insight into principals' representations of how and why they choose to engage in collaborative relationships. This interview attempted to elicit the principals' assessments of the value of collaboration. The principal chosen for this interview was identified through phase-1 results by expressing a higher propensity to foster collaborative relationships in their buildings.

Qual 2 design rationale focused on delving into the everyday life and collaborative dispositions at the identified site. The site phase (Qual 2) design included a two-day site visit to the identified school. This site visit design was to make field participant observations, conduct on-site focus groups and identify artifacts that exemplified either collaborative school improvement efforts or collaborative cultures. Observations of collaborative meetings, such as staff or department meetings were included. Also, documents were planned to be collected including meeting schedules and agendas. Unlike interviews, observations can provide more objective information related to the research topic (Hancock & Algozzine, 2011).

Site visit and field notes can be useful in triangulating data from (Quan 1) and (Qual 1 & 2). Participant observation can connect the researcher to human experiences and immerse the researcher within the context they are trying to explain (Guest, Namey, & Mitchell, 2013).

Setting and Sample

The initial recruitment opportunity for this study was presented to the Minnesota Elementary School Principal's Association (MESPA) board of directors. MESPA is a state organization of elementary school principals. This board consisted of 24 division officers, eight committee chairs, and four executive board members. The researcher presented rationale, estimated time commitment, benefits to the participant's school and copies of the survey scale instrument. Potential participants were given contact information for the researcher for further questions and the opportunity to sign up for participation

As a group, the board of directors has increased interactions and connectivity through multiple meetings throughout the school year that focus on strategic direction and advocacy. Participation of schools was voluntary.

The initial selection of participants was by invite to the MESPA board of directors. From the initial invitation, 13 principals elected to participate as indicated by an initial inquiry. From the 13 principals that elected to participate, nine sites followed through and completed phase 1, Levels of School Collaboration Scale.

The elementary schools that voluntary participated in the initial collection stage of phase 1 ranged from school staff sizes of 20-80 certified staff members. These schools were all elementary schools led by full-time principals. The school setting varied from

metro, suburban and rural school districts and were self-elected to participate in phase one. Selection for participation in phase two was taken from participating schools that completed the Levels of School Collaboration Scale and showed a propensity for highly collaborative interactions. More specifically, aggregated school collaborative scores were compared as raw scores, and through comparative measures using standard deviations. The school with the highest overall collaborative mean score and largest positive deviation from the mean in the comparative group was selected for further study in qualitative measures.

Data Collection Methods

Data was collected using two data collection periods. Phase one employed the Levels of School Collaboration Scale to sites that self-elected to participate. Phase 2 used qualitative measures such as a principal phone interview followed by a site visit to gain field notes and focus groups to gain insight into collaborative practices.

Phase 1 Quantitative

For the first phase of research, the researcher used the Levels of School Collaboration Scale to capture the overall collaborative score of each of the sites accurately. One of the barriers to conducting phase 1 was delivering and completing the Levels of School Collaboration Scale because of distance. For this reason, the scale was developed as an online instrument; the cooperating principal proved a link to the instrument to the teachers.

The collection was conducted online using a popular survey site. Each site was given its unique URL. This URL led participants to an online version of the levels of

school collaboration scale. The participating principals gave instructions during a meeting and allowed time to complete the survey using an online survey application.

The survey remained open for two weeks for participants to complete. A total of 166 respondents in 9 schools participated. Participating teachers were instructed to review relationship characteristics for each of the five stages of collaboration including networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration. Survey participants ranked their view of their level of collaboration within the nested relationships of teacher to and team to. Results were used for quantitative analysis for patterns of interest and also identification of phase 2 for qualitative study and site visit.

Phase 2 Qualitative

Phase-two gained insights through qualitative measures to further examine collaborative tendencies of the identified site. Several collection methods were used including interviews, field observations, focus groups and artifact analysis.

The principal phone interview was designed using a research matrix based on research questions to guide the design. A thirteen question survey was used to guide the interview with the site principal. The principle researcher conducted the interview. The interview targeted principal perceptions regarding barriers and supports using behavioral, affective and cognitive mechanisms, as well as defining the different relationships and structures that principals currently engage within their buildings. Particular attention was given to descriptive insight into how and why principals choose to engage in collaborative relationships. This interview attempted to elicit the value of collaboration from the principal.

The site visit utilized collection methods including field observation notes, focus group interviews and artifact collection to triangulate data found in phase 1 and 2. The site visit was conducted over two days by the primary researcher. The principal researcher interacted with building staff including teachers, counselors and school secretaries in focus group settings. Field observations were made by observing team meetings, building PLCs and grade level openings.

The site visit was used to triangulate data between the principal interview and results of the Levels of School Collaboration Scale. The researcher was embedded in the identified school for the course of 2 days.. During this time, the researcher referred to the research questions to frame observations and interviews.

Day 1 was chosen due to the schedule of meetings and interactions. This observation included field observations of various collaborative groups including grade level and site council teams. Also, focus group interviews were conducted with PLC leaders, school secretaries, new staff and problem-solving teams. In the time in-between formal group observations and focus groups, the researcher gathered observations from school artifacts and informal group observations.

Day 2 was used to follow up with key individuals to speak about the principal's leadership attributes, self-observations on collaborative culture and also observe building level PLCs. The second day was an early release for students while staff stayed to work on building and grade level goals. The principal researcher observed these groups as an outside participant. In between observations, several individual interviews were conducted with the school counselor and speech pathologist.

Coding

Qualitative data analysis was used to examine field notes, interview transcripts, and artifact examination. Inductive coding was used by examining the detailed transcripts and notes of the raw data. A copy of the codes is listed in Appendix B: Collaborative Codes. Through the coding process, derived concepts, themes, and models were developed through interpretations made by the principle researcher. The code in qualitative inquiry can be a word, phrase that symbolically represents an idea. The code can be a summative, salient, or essence-capturing, and/or evocative attribute for a portion of the language (Saldana, 2013).

The data was coded into themes that helped to answer the primary research of “How do school leaders use collaboration for school improvement?” Themes were categorized into several sub-categories of collaboration. These sub-categories included purpose, practice, types, components, roles, culture, tensions and long-term benefits.

Conclusion

Researching, designing and implementing a research plan are important in providing findings that are viewed as valid and acceptable. For this reason, a mix-method approach was designed and implemented to answer the primary research questions around collaboration and school improvement. Phase 1 used Quantitative methods to quantify the level of collaboration between nested relationships based on two perspectives, teacher to and team to. Sites were compared on their overall collaborative scores as well as measures of the standard. This comparison led to the identification of the site self-identified as highly collaborative to be targeted for case study review.

The applied site was visited and examined in phase two of the mixed research design where qualitative methods were employed such as field observations, site interviews, focus groups and artifact examination. This two-day site visit gave explanation and context to the researcher into collaborative environments and the day-to-day happenings that make collaboration a way of life.

CHAPTER 4 QUANTITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS

Chapter 4 presents data from the quantitative stage (Quan 1) of this research study using the Levels of School Collaboration Scale. The idea of this tool came from necessity. Collaboration is an elusive concept that is hard to capture in terms that can compare sites. The adaption of this tool (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006) became a necessary step in being able to compare school sites using a common definition and understanding of collaboration from varied school staff using self-reported perceptions. Results from the Scale compared nine participating sites and examined the results for patterns of interest. Variables such as site and staff demographics were analyzed for patterns of significance using comparative measures.

Levels of School Collaboration Scale

Identifying the overall levels of collaboration at the site level can prove to be difficult. Collaboration is an elusive concept that changes based on the participants, context and relationship of the partnership. The Levels of School Collaboration Scale adapted from the work of Frey, et al (2006) experienced significant modifications and will no longer be attributed. This Scale quantified the perceptions of site participants on a continuum that captured the overall intensity of day-to-day collaboration along with the self-perceived measure of interaction between collaborative relational participants. The scale is referenced in Appendix A. This scale provided insight into the role that both teachers and teams play in the development and sustainability of collaborative partnerships that benefit the school. The scale was beneficial to quantify the overall collaborative levels of each site, but also compare levels between sites and establish patterns of interest regarding collaborative relationships.

The Scale examined several different views of collaboration at the site level. Participants were asked to rate their perceived level of interaction based on several interaction scenarios that ranged from internal to external relationships through two nested relationships. Participants first familiarized themselves with the collaborative continuum of interactions and their descriptors including Networking, Cooperation, Coordination, Coalition, and Collaboration. Each stage on the collaborative continuum showed differences in levels of decision making, role definition, structural supports and the amount of communication between collaborative partners.

Participants were then directed to view themselves within two nested relationships both as a teacher, then secondly as a team member. Through these views, they were asked to rate themselves on their level of interactions to teacher, to teams, to principal, to parents and to community for a total of ten total interaction scenarios. The first three interactions were internal including teachers, teams, and principal. The final two interaction scenarios were external including parents and community organizations. The overall collaborative aggregate was analyzed for each site level for patterns of interest.

Individual Site Analysis

The Levels of School Collaboration Scale is beneficial to individual sites looking to understand the extent of which they use collaboration with various stakeholder groups. In all, nine total sites participated fully by utilizing the Levels of School Collaboration Scale to identify strengths and areas for improvement. Each site that participated was an elementary school serving grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. The sites ranged in different demographics including school type, the range of teacher training, principal and teacher years of experience. These demographic results are summarized in Table 4.1.

Site	School Type	Principal Years of Experience	Percent Years of Experience Staff			Teacher Training	
			< Than 3	3-10	>10	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree
S1	Rural	4	11%	34%	55%	42%	57%
S2	Rural	10	11%	37%	52%	41%	59%
S4	Rural	9	7%	31%	62%	24%	76%
S5	Rural	6	13%	39%	48%	13%	87%
S6	Rural	9	9%	35%	56%	11%	89%
S7	Suburban	6	6%	30%	64%	21%	79%
S8	Suburban	17	9%	15%	76%	19%	81%
S9	Urban	12	10%	0%	90%	75%	25%
S10	Rural	10	12%	44%	44%	44%	56%
S11	Rural	10	11%	31%	58%	49%	51%

Individual site results for the Levels of School Collaboration Scale were summarized by the weighted average score for each interaction scenario as well as a mean collaboration score in Table 4.2. Site results showed variability at each site in areas of strength in both internal and external interaction scenarios. At each site, weighted averages varied. Sites showed a higher collaborative weighted average depending on the interaction scenario. For instance both S4 and S10 showed high teacher to teacher collaborative results; however their team to teacher results varied by nearly .5 weighted points.

One possible explanation for this observation may be that each site has a unique context that impacts where the collaborative relationships are emphasized. For example, site contexts in an organization such as site teaming or a strong parent organization partnership may account for differences at each site. Also, individual sites may differ in

collaborative goals such as internal school improvement efforts, curriculum development or community outreach. With these areas of emphasis, each site may have finite resources such as time and staffing that may dictate where time and energy are spent in collaborative relationships.

Table 4.2
Levels of School Collaboration Scale Weighted Average by Site

Site	Number of Respondents	Q1. Teacher To	Q1. Teacher	Q1. Teams	Q1. Principal	Q1. Parents	Q1. Community	Q2 Team To	Q2. Teacher	Q2. Team	Q2. Principal	Q2. Parents	Q2. Community	Total Collaboration Score	Mean Collaboration Score
S1	14		3.50	3.43	2.64	2.29	1.57		3.79	3.29	2.43	1.71	1.29	25.93	2.59
S2	38		4.29	3.76	3.21	3.00	1.79		3.97	3.13	3.16	2.58	1.79	30.68	3.07
S4	14		4.36	3.79	3.57	3.29	2.07		4.07	3.14	3.64	2.29	2.07	32.29	3.23
s6	10		3.36	3.14	3.14	2.14	1.43		3.00	3.00	3.07	1.93	1.57	25.79	2.58
S7	23		3.78	4.04	3.17	3.00	1.70		3.96	3.61	3.43	2.83	1.87	31.39	3.14
S8	16		3.75	3.75	3.63	2.75	2.06		3.31	3.19	3.50	2.81	1.63	30.38	3.04
S9	14		3.43	3.79	3.50	2.57	1.64		3.00	2.79	3.36	2.50	1.71	28.29	2.83
s10	17		4.41	3.47	3.24	3.12	2.18		3.29	3.12	3.00	2.53	1.94	30.29	3.03
S11	20		4.10	3.65	3.20	2.75	1.70		3.70	4.10	3.05	2.60	1.90	30.75	3.08

One area of exploration for this phase was to examine individual site results in comparison with site demographics as reported in Table 4.3. Table three ranked sites in order by the mean collaborative score in comparison with site demographics including school type, principal years of experience, staff years of experience, and teacher training. Caution should be made in making greater assumptions in this limited data set. However, these areas were looked at in the scope of this study.

One possible explanation for higher site collaborative mean scores by site was to look at school type. Schools participating in the Levels of School Collaboration Scale

included schools of all types including rural, suburban and urban. School site context shows potential differences in staff social connectivity. One assumption would be that schools in smaller rural communities would have increased access to community connections through staff potentially living within or near the community. This increased access by staff to each other and community influences might lead to higher collaborative mean scores. However, examination through this variable showed no significance findings to explain higher collaborative means.

Principal years of experience were also examined for potential explanations. Principal experience ranged from 4 to 17 years' experience. One possible assertion would assume principals with more years of experience would have a better understanding of leveraging collaboration for school improvement and/or have a higher degree of developed relationships with different groups of influence. Again, no significant findings applied to this study.

Teacher years of experience were also examined as a variable to higher collaborative success. Teachers with more years of experience would potentially have longer standing collegial and community connections to draw upon for collaborative relationships. Upon examination, no significant correlations between teacher experience and collaboration were found. The top collaborative sites showed some evidence that staff experience mattered in acquiring a higher collaborative score, contrary evidence showed that lower collaborative means sites had more experienced staff.

Another possible area of exploration was to examine site results by level of teacher training. Teachers with master degrees would have experienced higher levels of training in pedagogy and theory that may give credibility to higher degrees of

collaborative interactions. Each site ranged from a low of 11% master's degree to a high of 81%. The top two sites (S4 & S7) with collaborative mean scores showed a lower completion rate of masters degrees. Although this proves to be interesting, this examination showed no results of significant findings.

Perhaps one of the most interesting findings of this examination of results is the lack of patterns between potential explanatory variables and collaboratin scores. It appears that in this study, these background variables played no significant impact on the level of collaborative interactions at each site level. This lack of pattern points to other factors that may influence the level of collaborative interactions at each site, but sample size was too small for statistical analyses in this study. Additional factors are taken up in the next section.

Site	School Type	Principal Years of Experience	Percent Years of Experience Staff			Teacher Training		Mean Collaborative Score by Site
			< Than 3	3-10	>10	Master's Degree	Bachelor's Degree	
S4	Rural	9	7%	31%	62%	24%	76%	3.23
S6	Rural	9	9%	35%	56%	11%	89%	3.14
S10	Rural	10	12%	44%	44%	44%	56%	3.08
S2	Rural	10	11%	37%	52%	41%	59%	3.07
S7	Suburban	6	6%	30%	64%	21%	79%	3.04
S9	Urban	12	10%	0%	90%	75%	25%	3.03
S8	Suburban	17	9%	15%	76%	81	19	2.83
S1	Rural	4	11%	34%	55%	42%	57%	2.59
S11	Rural	10	11%	31%	58%	49%	51%	2.59
S5	Rural	6	13%	39%	48%	13%	87%	2.58

Internal and External Comparisons

Each site showed a decrease in the collaborative level of interaction as it moved from internal to external groupings or from teacher to teacher from teacher to community as shown in Table 4.4. This pattern is evident by the decreasing aggregate mean for each of the nested relationships moving from Teacher to Teacher (3.89), Teacher to Team (3.65), Teacher to Principal (3.26), Teacher to Parents (2.77) and Teacher to Community (1.79).

		Internal			External			Internal			External	
	Teacher To	Q1. Teacher	Q1. Teams	Q1. Principal	Q1. Parents	Q1. Community	Team To	Q2. Teacher	Q2. Team	Q2. Principal	Q2. Parents	Q2. Community
Nested Aggregate Mean		3.89	3.65	3.26	2.77	1.79		3.57	3.26	3.18	2.42	1.75

This pattern continues when looking at the second nested relationship concerning teams. The aggregate means included Team to Teacher (3.57), Team to Team (3.26), Team to Principal (3.18), Team to Parents (2.42) and Team to Community (1.75).

This pattern is also evident when looking at the direct comparison between internal and external collaborative relationships as presented in Table 4.5. In each nested view, the internal collaborative mean was higher than the external collaborative mean. Also, when participants were asked to switch the view from a singular teacher to multiple parts of a team member, the internal and external means were lower.

This decrease in mean may be a result of the ever increasing difficulty in eliminating pragmatic barriers such as time and space with external stakeholders, but may also include political and organizational value and purpose differences that take longer to negotiate when establishing collaborative connections and relationships over time.

Question	Internal Mean	External Mean	Question Aggregate Mean
Q1	<i>3.60</i>	<i>2.28</i>	<i>1.96</i>
Q2	<i>3.34</i>	<i>2.09</i>	<i>1.81</i>
Internal/External Mean	<i>3.47</i>	<i>2.18</i>	

One possible explanation for this difference is internal collaborations would likely be centered on school success in various forms such as academic achievement, program expansion, fiscal conservation and student wellness. External collaborations, although still centered on school success in the same ideas presented as internal, have the potential to be compromised by conflicting collaborative interests. These conflicting collaborative interests may include differing familial moral values, views on high-stakes testing, the amount of choice, school safety and social exposure in defining school success from parental view.

Community collaborative relationships may also have a tendency to view school success through the economic impact on workforce development, civic engagement, and community safety. Although all the items above would be indicators of successful students by both internal and external collaborations, the rank order in which these appear

to be most important may differ creating conflict. This may be an area for future research in collaborative partnership success.

Site Comparisons

The Levels of School Collaboration Scale can be a useful tool in the identification of highly collaborative sites. The Levels of School Collaboration Scale can be a valid tool in comparing different school sites and identifying schools of promising practices in collaboration. For the purpose of this study, it was used to compare initial participant sites and to identify a site high in collaboration to identify more in depth as a case study.

To establish sites as showing promise for collaborative practices the principle researcher analyzed the sites based on standard deviations and subsequent-Z-Scores. Standard deviations show that data is either widely spread or less reliable or shows data that are tightly coupled around the mean or more reliable. Another view of standard deviations is to use it to identify whether the difference in means is significant and supports your hypothesis. By examining sites standard deviations, it allowed the principle researcher to identify those within the comparison group that showed a positive Z-score or, at least, one standard deviation higher than the group.

Z-Scores were established for each of the nested interaction scenarios using measures of central tendency. For each site composite and each subcategory, measures of central tendencies were examined (Table 4.6). Single values were identified including mean and median as summary statistics. These values were used to establish a central position for each subcategory

Measure	Q.1 Teacher To	Q1. Teacher	Q1.Teams	Q1. Principal	Q1.Parents	Q1. Community	Q2. Team To	Q2. Teacher	Q2. Team	Q2. Principal	Q2. Parents	Q2. Community	Total Collaboration Score
Mean		3.89	3.65	3.26	2.77	1.79		3.57	3.26	3.18	2.42	1.75	29.53
Median		3.78	3.75	3.21	2.75	1.70		3.70	3.14	3.16	2.53	1.79	30.38

Measures of Variability

After each site was compared using central tendencies, the next area of comparison was that of variability Table 4.7. These summary measures were used to describe the amount of variability or spread in the set of data of each of the sites and subcategories including the range, the variance, and standard deviation. For this step, comparisons were made in range and standard deviations from the mean.

Question	Q.1 Teacher To	Teacher	Teams	Principal	Parents	Community	Q.2 Team To	Q2. Teacher	Q2. Team	Q2. Principal	Q2. Parents	Q2. Community	Total Collaboration Score	Mean Collaboration Score
Mean		3.89	3.65	3.26	2.77	1.79		3.57	3.26	3.18	2.42	1.75	29.53	3.0
Max Value		4.41	4.04	3.63	3.29	2.18		4.07	4.10	3.64	2.83	2.07	32.3	3.2
Min Value		3.36	3.14	2.64	2.14	1.43		3.00	2.79	2.43	1.71	1.29	25.8	2.6
Range		1.05	0.90	0.99	1.15	0.75		1.07	1.31	1.21	1.12	0.78	6.5	0.7
Standard Deviation		0.41	0.26	0.30	0.38	0.25		0.42	0.38	0.36	0.38	0.23	2.33	0.23
Variance		0.15	0.06	0.08	0.13	0.06		0.16	0.13	0.11	0.13	0.05	4.85	0.05

Site Leaders by Category

Table 4.8 shows the site leader by interaction scenario.

Q.1 Teacher To	Teacher	Teams	Principal	Parents	Community	Q.2 Team To	Q2. Teacher	Q2. Team	Q2. Principal	Q2. Parents	Q2. Community	Composite Collaboration Score	Mean Collaboration Score
	S10	S7	S8	S4	S10		S4	S11	S4	S7	S4	S4	S4

Table 4.8 shows the complexity in identifying a site of collaborative promise. Of the nine original sites involved in the Levels of School Collaboration Scale, five sites had higher scores in different interaction scenarios. This variability in site highs again shows that school context matters in setting collaborative aims and priorities. Each site showed

collaborative promise in different areas as a site leader by category. As each site continues to focus on its collaborative agendas, the sites showed these strengths represented through higher collaborative interaction means.

Each site has its unique demographics, site complexities, and initiatives that drive its collaborative practices. Depending on where the school leader is dedicating time and effort, the fluidity of a composite collaborative score may differ. This variability is of particular interest for school leaders looking to differentiate when and where to spend valuable time and effort in creating and sustaining collaborative relationships with both internal and external collaborative groups.

Identifying Exemplary Site

Site comparisons of Z-scores led to the identification of S4 as a site of promising collaborative practice Table 4.9.

Site	Q.1 Teacher To	Teacher Z-Score	Teams Z-Score	Principal Z-Score	Parents Z-Score	Community Z-Score	Q.2 Team To	Q2 Teacher Z-Score	Q2. Team Z-Score	Q2 Principal Z-Score	Q2. Parent Z-Score	Q2. Community Z-Score	Composite Z-Score
S1		-0.93	-0.83	-2.07	-1.26	-0.87		0.52	0.06	-2.10	-1.86	-1.99	-1.54
S2		0.97	0.43	-0.15	0.61	-0.01		0.96	-0.35	-0.06	0.42	0.16	0.49
S4		1.14	0.54	1.06	1.37	1.09		1.20	-0.32	1.27	-0.34	1.35	1.18
s6		-1.28	-1.92	-0.38	-1.64	-1.43		-1.34	-0.69	-0.31	-1.30	-0.77	-1.60
S7		-0.25	1.50	-0.29	0.61	-0.37		0.94	0.91	0.69	1.08	0.50	0.80
S8		-0.33	0.39	1.27	-0.05	1.05		-0.61	-0.19	0.88	1.03	-0.52	0.36
S9		-1.10	0.54	0.83	-0.52	-0.60		-1.34	-1.23	0.49	0.21	-0.18	-0.53
s10		1.27	-0.67	-0.07	0.92	1.51		-0.64	-0.38	-0.51	0.29	0.81	0.33
S11		0.51	0.01	-0.19	-0.05	-0.37		0.32	2.19	-0.37	0.47	0.63	0.52

To protect anonymity, all personal identifiers have been changed to pseudonyms, including staff names and school names. For the purpose of this study, S4 is referred to as Pinewood Elementary. Pinewood is a rural school in outstate Minnesota. Pinewood Elementary is a 900 student school housing Kindergarten through 4th grade. Pinewood's principal has been practicing for less than ten years, and its staff has a 62% of teachers that have taught for more than ten years. Pinewood Elementary is the only elementary school in a rural mid-sized town that is a bedroom community to an outstate population center. The major economic influence in the area is agriculture. Pinewood Elementary has sections ranging from 6-8 teachers per grade, plus multiple specialists in the area of art, physical education, music, STEM, Spanish, and media center. Also, Pinewood Elementary school is a Title 1 school. Auxiliary staff includes title teachers, reading specialists, high-potential teachers, counselors, and special education teachers.

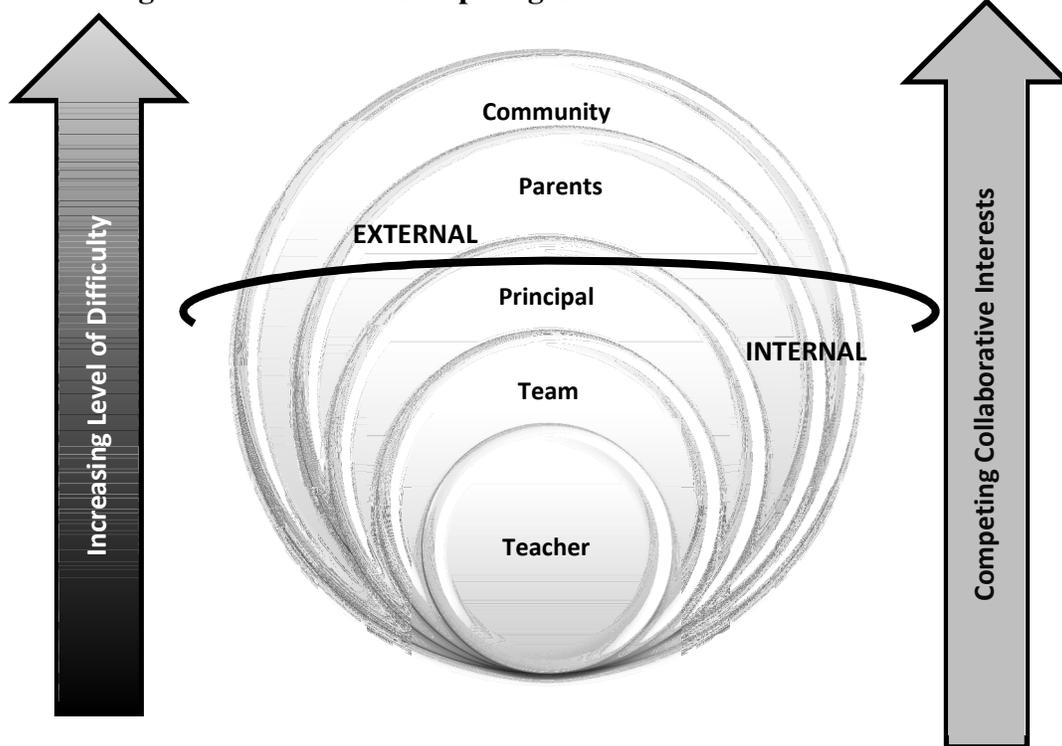
Table 4.9 shows the Z-scores of participating sites. Pinewood Elementary showed promising practice in multiple areas of collaborative relationships. These totals included collaborative mean and the highest positive Z-Scores in both Teachers to Parents (+1.37), Team to Teacher (+1.20), Team to Principal (+1.27) and Team to Community (+1.35). S4 also showed positive Z-Scores in Teacher to Teacher (+1.14), Teacher to Principal (+1.06), and Teacher to Community (+1.09). Site 4 had the highest collaborative composite score (32.29), Collaborative Mean (3.23) and Standard Z-Score (+1.18). The results point to a good working relationship among staff members for collaborative growth. Especially interesting was the area of high team collaborative scores and especially within the context of teams collaborating with the building principal.

Competing Collaborative Interests

Individual site results showed a propensity to be more collaborative with internal stakeholders than external at both levels of nested relationships. The results from both Q1 and Q2 show a regressive pattern of scores in aggregate mean as interaction scenarios move from internal to external. As such, one hypothesis of collaboration is that competing for collaborative interests play a role in the successful attainment of highly collaborative relationships. The pattern in data shows an increasing difficulty in holding meaningful collaborative relationships that are moving from internal to external and also from teacher to teacher to team.

One possible interpretation for this pattern is that the farther teachers move from one on one to more socially complex collaborative relationship, they have to navigate and compromise increasingly complex levels of values, priorities, and interests that differ from their own. For example, as teachers collaborate with other teachers, they are more likely to hold the common interests of the school and students at the center of purpose making it easier to collaborate and maintain focus. As teachers move farther from the center and collaborate with varying internal groups such as other teams or principals, different priorities or perspectives may emerge that differ from the original collaborative goal. When considering external groups such as parents and community, competing interests make it even more difficult to find common experiences or purposes to collaborate. This possible interpretation is represented by the model of competing collaborative interests (Figure 4.1).

Figure 4.1. Model of Competing Collaborative Interests



Model of Competing Collaborative Interests

The Model of Competing Collaborative Interests is explained through both layers of interaction and level of difficulty in attaining true collaboration. As one moves away from self, competing collaborative interests also increase. Competing interests may include differences in opinion, purpose, goals, value and definition of success.

Identity and purpose play an important role in collaborative relationships. The continuum of collaboration shows an increasing connectivity in purpose and decision-making as it moves from networking (lowest) to collaboration (highest) form of collaboration. As one moves from internal to external, these collaborative values become increasingly difficult to initiate and sustain. As you move farther from the center, these values and purposes have a natural tendency to dissipate. As these are farther apart, it is

harder to find common ground that varying groups find valuable without considerable time and effort by each collaborative group.

This aspect is important for future leaders of school to recognize. Considerable time must be spent in nurturing collaborative relationships or identifying common goals and interests when moving to external collaborative relationships. Due to constraints such as time and opportunity, the school leader must be cognizant of these constraints in providing more time to network and further background work in vision and purpose alignment.

The second dynamic of collaboration in which the model seeks to represent is the increase of individuals within collaborative groups. Question 1 asked teachers to rate their collaborative interactions with other teachers and groups. Question 2 asked teachers to rate themselves as part of a nested team in rating interaction scenarios. As teachers move to collaborative relationships with more stakeholders, some varying self-interests, experiences and values continue to increase by the sheer amount of people involved. This increase in self-interests takes a considerable amount of time and energy to sustain collaborative relationships through establishing relationships that find common interests and goals that are meaningful to all parties. Again, the school leader should take the time to recognize the amount of people involved in creating and sustaining collaborative relationships. It may be more fruitful and productive to bring representation from various groups rather than entire groups when creating and sustaining collaborative relationships for school improvement.

Conclusion

The Levels of School Collaboration Scale used quantitative measures to identify promising collaborative practices at the site level by identifying areas of collaborative strengths and rating sites on total collaborative scores. Without such an instrument, it is difficult to identify particular sites of promising collaborative practice for further study. The Levels of School Collaboration Scale compared participating sites using comparative measures and standard deviations to find sites that were, at least, one standard deviation from the mean.

Through this quantitative phase, it was also clear that results varied in looking at individual site interaction scenarios. The varied results showed that each site can accomplish higher collaborative levels of interaction based on an emphasis on particular collaborative relationships. School leaders may need to pay attention to building opportunities in all areas to raise overall collaborative scores to produce fruitful collaboration for school improvement. School leaders should be cognizant of striving for particular improvement with collaborative interactions, instead of developing vague goals to be more collaborative. Sites with lower scores in particular collaborative interaction scenarios can use results to foster new collaborative growth.

The Levels of School Collaboration Scale also identified a particular pattern in the area of competing collaborative interests. Competing collaborative interests increase as collaborative partnerships move from the internal center (self) to the external community. This finding points to school leader's necessity in providing more effort and attention to common purpose and shared meanings in identifying and sustaining external collaborative relationships. Building collaborative relationships is about expanding the

school organizations reach and inclusiveness of school culture. This inclusiveness only happens through bringing more stakeholders into the culture and shared the meaning of school success through a clear, coherent, collaborative vision.

A coherent, collaborative vision specifies that values and beliefs between collaborative partners will guide policy and practice within the relationship. The school leader plays an important role in developing this vision with collaborative partners. This can prove difficult as a vision in a collaborative relationship can continually change as competing interests influence the outcomes.

As Peter Senge (1990 p 12) notes, "At any one point, there will be a particular image of the future that is predominant, but that image will evolve." The principal who is able to adapt a collaborative vision to new challenges will be more successful in building strong school cultures in partnerships with collaborative groups.

The vision of creating a healthy school culture should be a collaborative activity among teachers, teams, principals, parents, and community organizations. Michael Fullan (1992, p19) writes, "Whose vision is it?" "Principals," he says, "are blinded by their own vision when they must manipulate the teachers and the school culture to conform to it." A more useful approach is to create a shared vision that allows for collaborative school cultures by all collaborative groups."

The school leader's attention to collaborative values, vision and areas of the partnership may allow a higher successful rate of school improvement. The improvement through collaborative work shows great ability to innovate, problem solve and then by simply blind and hopeful interactions. By using a tool to help quantify areas of strength a

school leader can leverage support and collaborative relationship that can positively affect school improvement efforts.

CHAPTER 5 CASE STUDY FINDINGS: UNDERSTANDING COLLABORATION IN CONTEXT

Chapters 5-8 discuss the findings of the case study of the site identified by the quantitative phase of research using the Levels of School Collaboration Scale. The general thematic outline follows a description of findings developed through an inductive coding process. The principle researcher found the following themes related to investigating the primary research questions regarding how school leaders use collaboration for school improvement. This process was done by conducting interviews, focus groups, field observations and artifact examination. The site visit was conducted over two days following identification of Site 4 (S4) as a school of promising collaborative practices. The major findings showed three organization themes including collaboration on continuum, the organizational structures and initiating and sustaining a culture of collaboration. In order to better understand the findings, first note the unique qualities of Site 4. For the purpose of this study, pseudonyms are used for the school and individuals referenced within the school.

Site Context

Pinewood Elementary is located in a rural community that serves approximately 800 students annually. The school is a k-4 school and situated within a district of about 2000 students. Pinewood Elementary serves two communities and is the only elementary school within the district.

The communities that Pinewood serves have a combined approximate population of 7000 residents. The communities are located approximately 15 miles from a large population center that is a major healthcare hub. The primary economic employment of

the area is in healthcare, transportation and sales. According to the 2010 U.S. Census, The racial makeup of the two cities was 96.0% white, 0.4% African-American, 0.3% Native American, 0.5% Asian, 1.2% from other races, and 1.6% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race was 4.2% of the population.

Pinewood Elementary is comprised of approximately 60 licensed staff members. The staff is a relatively experienced staff with 62% having taught for more than ten years, 31% of the staff teaching between 3-7 years, and 7% teaching less than three years. The staff educational level includes 24% having completed a master's degree and 76% percent having a bachelor's degree. The school is organized into grade level teams. These teams are located within wings of the school that holds 6-8 sections of each grade. The classrooms are located near each other and also within proximity to auxiliary services such as speech, counseling and special education.

Academic results at Pinewood Elementary show promise for collaboration in student achievement. Over the past 3 years, scores have been above the state average. In addition, math proficiency results have increased from 61% to 69% and reading proficiency results have increased from 61% to 69%. It should be noted that this study intent was not to empirically link achievement to collaborative propensities but rather examine the environmental and cultural nuances that lead to highly collaborative schools.

Pinewood Elementary School's Principal has been practicing for nine years and is actively involved in the state organization of elementary school principals. She has served on the state board of directors as both a division officer and a statewide committee officer. Recently the principal was awarded the National Distinguished Principal Award

for the state of Minnesota for her exemplary dedication to the profession. The practicing principal is a white Caucasian.

Collaboration continues to be a very elusive concept when talked about in the context of schools. School leaders use collaboration for a variety of purposes in schools, yet there is little insight into what this means in practice and what makes it successful. The site visit proved to be valuable in gaining insight into the nuances experienced around collaboration. Pinewood Elementary was an engaging site in which collaboration was evident in many different facets and through many different organizational levels. Staff, students, auxiliary services and the principal exhibited a propensity in collaborative practices that can give future school leaders insight into practicing collaborative practices in their schools for successful school improvement.

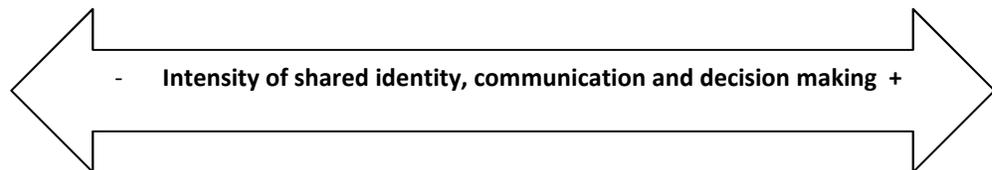
Collaboration on a Continuum of Interactions

Collaboration is often viewed as the end and not the means. Many researchers have examined collaboration as series of stages. For the purpose of this site visit, collaboration was viewed through the work of Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson (2006) and their five stages of development in their original study of collaborative grant partners. These five stages included networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition, and collaboration.

It should be noted that throughout this case study, the term collaboration is used at large, but in reality, many of the observations were found to fall within the continuum of collaboration at different levels of intensity. Figure 5.1 outlines the descriptors and stages of collaboration and uses Frey, Lohmeier, Lee and Tollefson's continuum (2006).

Figure 5.1**Collaboration Continuum of Interactions** (Frey, Lohmeier, Lee, & Tollefson, 2006)

	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration
Organization	Aware of organizational units	Provide information to each other	Share information and resources	Share ideas and Share resources	Members belong to one collaborative organizational unit sharing ideas and resources for advantage
Role Definition	Loosely defined roles	Somewhat defined roles	Defined roles	Defined roles	Defined roles with Authority
Communication Level	Little communication	Formal communication	Frequent communication	Frequent and prioritized communication	Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust
Decision Making	All decisions are made independently	All decisions are made independently	Some shared decision-making	All members have a vote in decision-making	Consensus is reached on all decisions



Survey findings related to the interaction scenarios showed that Pinewood Elementary exhibited all intensities of collaboration. Interactions that were observed showed the utility of operating at any particular level of collaborative intensity related to the design and purpose of the collaborative partnership.

Each level of interaction at Pinewood seemed to be by design in that it was only meant to achieve a particular intensity of collaboration. In other words, the intensity of collaboration matched the particular purpose or end goal that was trying to be achieved. At Pinewood Elementary, it was observed that not all partnerships were designed to operate at a fully operationalized level of pure collaboration, but were used as a development stage to help collaborative groups develop further.

Also, particular collaborative partnerships only required a particular level of organization, role definition, communication and decision making necessary to achieve particular results to be successful. This understanding is an important finding for school leaders in deciding how much time and energy or collaborative intensity is needed to leverage partnerships to achieve school improvement efforts. Here I shift to using the Continuum of Collaboration to understand the various collaborative intensities that were observed at Pinewood Elementary. Later, the link to purpose will be discussed.

Networking

The first stage of the collaborative continuum is networking. Networking's collaborative attributes include being aware of other units, loosely defined roles, little communication and independent decision making. Networking can be useful in establishing preliminary experiences and connections that can later develop into more intense collaborative partnerships.

One example, at Pinewood Elementary, was provided by the collaborative group called the icing group. When asked to explain this title, the building principal explained that this group was compared to the icing on a cake. This group included the extra staff that provides support and specialized services such as content specialists, media, and language, counseling and reading support. This group described a networking collaborative model that included meeting with other area specialists. Their jobs were very specific and often included tasks that were unique and unduplicated within the school. They found it difficult to discuss their job and tasks with other Pinewood Elementary staff.

One networking opportunity that they were afforded was to meet with other area schools through the education collaborative. These meetings were conducted two to three times a year and required travel. The Icing staff members spoke positively about this experience. One staff member stated, “It is so beneficial to meet others that know what my job is like. I don’t get to share these experiences with anyone on staff.” Another staff member mentioned, “We don’t get to necessarily work on projects together, but it is an opportunity to learn about new ideas or experiences that I can impact my job at school.”

In this instance, the building principal recognized the advantage in releasing staff to participate in networking opportunities. These collaborative partnerships needed fertile ground to take seed. The school leaders were cognizant of the opportunities for potential school improvement and supported staff members in this connection through professional release.

Cooperation

The next stage on the continuum is the development from networking to cooperation. Cooperation was defined as initial information sharing, defined roles, and formal communication structures with independent decision making.

The staff at Pinewood Elementary engaged in cooperation through internal interactions. Cooperation opportunities were evident through multiple groups but were primarily pronounced through the work of informal collaborative interactions. An ad hoc group formed around particular building needs such as building culture activities. Although no formal structure was evident among groups, they complied with each other and shared information.

One observation that fit into this category was the organization in holiday building celebrations. During the site visit, the staff lounge was filled with holiday food and decorations. I was curious about how this was organized and implemented. It was obvious that some level of informal collaboration was used to provide this building initiative. When random staff members were asked about the organization of this event, staff members shared that several staff members felt it was important to organize this for building connections and moral. There was not a formal committee, but many staff members participated in an informal sign-up process.

This particular observation displayed that staff members shared a common understanding of need and participation in collaborating around this event. Somewhat defined roles took the lead in organizing and communicating, but participants made independent decisions on participation and shared food items. Although at the surface level this may seem trivial, it showed a propensity of internal staff members to participate passively in a collaborative effort for building improvement. In this instance, the need was recognized to celebrate and congregate in the staff lounge and share experiences.

Coordination

Coordination's collaborative attributes include sharing information and resources, defined roles, frequent communication and some shared decision making. Coordination is a stage in which it is easy to exist. Coordination stages typically include the coordination of student services, committees and teams and can be authoritatively convened by school leaders. This coordination is an important stage of development in the continuum of collaborative relationships as defined roles begin to emerge.

At Pinewood Elementary, there were multiple examples of coordination.

Document analysis of Pinewood committee lists included 16 different formal committees and groups ranging from more fully developed teams such as Student Assistance Teams and Professional Learning Communities to less intense groups such as I Love to Read Committee and Sunshine Committee. Each of these groups coordinated a particular service or task at Pinewood Elementary. These teams consistently had formal structures, memberships, meeting times and were defined by a particular purpose.

These coordinated groups provide formal access and input to building wide collaborative tasks. One particular observation of coordination was through the interactions of the Site Leadership Team. In an observation of the building site leadership team, coordination was evident in the way various represented groups coordinated building initiatives from several departments, grades, and employee groups. Numerous initiatives were discussed and coordinated including Project Lead the Way, Family Literacy Night, Book Bags, and the Veteran's Day Program follow-up. Each of these coordinated efforts showed various groups participating in a coordinated effort to initiate or wrap up events.

In the case of Project Lead the Way, there was a coordinated effort to support the STEM teacher in delivering lessons. The Family Literacy Night was also discussed. Various groups conversed about the impact of concurrent testing sessions that were planned. In this instance, the grade level representatives were looking for support from the building principal in coordinating testing sessions. The grade level teams also showed coordination efforts in preparing Kindergarten book bags. Book bags were in need of being moved and organized. Grade levels were coordinating their efforts in

preparing and getting access for kindergarten students. Finally, the Veteran's Day program had concluded, and the team discussed a coordinated effort to prepare follow-up to thank you cards for the participating Veterans.

Each of these examples showed a coordinated effort of various groups. Partial decision making was shared by groups in how to approach and execute efforts in the building. The shared efforts required somewhat frequent communication and follow-up with various groups in conjunction with some shared decision making. The building principal used this forum to connect and coordinate efforts amongst various collaborative groups.

Coalition

Following coordination, Pinewood Elementary also used the stage of Coalition to interact and conduct school improvement efforts. Coalition's collaborative attributes include sharing ideas and resources, frequent and prioritized communications and all members having a vote in decision-making. Coalition moves along the continuum by providing an amplified voice in decision making and also intensified the level of development through ideation efforts requiring more frequent communications. Organization of Pinewoods various curricular committees such as math, reading, science and social studies represented a valid example of building wide coalitions through their efforts to change curricular outcomes for the entire building.

Pinewood's organizational structure provided an opportunity for grade levels to provide a coalition in discussing, examining and providing direction in Technology, Social Studies, Reading/Language Arts, Science, and Math. These committees frequently looked at building data to bring ideas of improvement to all of the grade level teams. The

representatives from these departments intensified efforts by meeting regularly and sharing ideas of how to improve. At times, these groups would give recommendations to the building PLC team on areas of focus. In speaking of this coalition, the principal stated, “For instance, last year was vocabulary so then each of our PLC’s was working on vocabulary to implement in their classrooms.” All staff participated on a committee ensuring each teacher has a voice and responsibility for shared leadership. Teacher creativity, communication, critical thinking, and collaboration were enhanced as they strove to continuously improve.

Coalitions increased collaborative intensity by providing a higher level of input and decision making by groups such as what strand to focus on, what curriculum to enhance and what assessments to implement. In this instance, the building level curricular teams used their coalition to provide building-wide recommendations for focus and improvement. These recommendations were reported to grade level teams and at times to the building Professional Learning Committee team for further development. Autonomy was still granted to grade level teams to make some degree of decisions on how improvements were implemented in the classrooms. At the same time, the building principal was included on curricular recommendations but trusted the curricular teams to make final decisions on recommendations.

Collaboration

The final stage on the continuum is collaboration. This is a stage that takes considerable collaborative intensity focused on time, effort and attention to reach and requires a mindful and influential school leader. Pure collaboration results in the creation of a new shared identity into a new organizational unit. Communication must be based on

frequent and high levels of trust with an emphasis on consensus building. Although Pinewood Elementary showed a high propensity for all its collaborative groups to visit this stage on the continuum, very few tended to live at this stage. One group that exemplified this stage was the PLC facilitators group.

The building principal spoke highly of the relationship and continued efforts of this group to provide exemplary leadership at Pinewood Elementary. When speaking with the building principal about this group, she stated,

My PLC leadership group is the most powerful group that I have in my school because they are able to do amazing things, I think, because it is hands-on work that they do within their grade level and it is meaningful to what they need (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

When speaking of the development and commitment of this group, the building principal referenced a commitment to behavioral norms that were developed by the PLC facilitator team and the above and beyond commitment of time and effort.

This collaborative team took extra time to develop as an identifiable organizational unit. The PLC team committed their own time in summer months to develop these shared values and norms through a summer retreat day. PLC members gathered at one member's home, shared food, and developed a yearlong commitment to improvement. The building principal referenced this time as being valuable to the relationships and shared commitment to the group. They used the time to create a yearlong fun organizational theme of the building such as “Under Construction” and “Read like a Rock Star”. The PLC group promoted these themes by taking group pictures that were representative of the theme and posting in their office or desk areas.

Also, this group brought ideas to a consensus before relaying this message back to the general school staff. The building principal referenced the PLC group in leading the building through their summer retreat. “They are helping guide that discussion. I think that some of the best ideas for our school have come out of that. It almost feels like a “think tank” sometimes.” In speaking of the unity of consensus decision making, one PLC member stated,

I think that because we have been doing that work, we are brave enough or comfortable enough to say whatever is on our mind. You know, we are very professional, but we can let somebody know, you know, we have trust (Interview, Dec 9th, 2014).

Although other teams exhibited characteristics of true collaboration, the Pinewood Elementary PLC Facilitators group spoke and carried out a collaborative idealism on a highly consistent basis.

True collaboration is embodied by a longitudinal culture of shared identity, trust, and consensus making. In this school, the building principal at Pinewood Elementary complemented this development by allowing a high level of decision-making, trust, and autonomy while simultaneously supporting with time, resources and collaborative structures. For true collaborative partnerships to exist, a high level of support and development is needed by the school leader to reach and sustain collaborative practices for school improvement. The building principal recognized and understood the need for various collaborative intensities to accomplish specific purposes for collaboration. The next section highlights some of the various purposes that were observed and the use and the matching of appropriate collaborative intensities.

Purposes of Collaboration

Organizations can use outcomes to maintain a clear focus on positive change. At-large school change can encompass multiple change strategies. Collaboration can be used to maintain focus by guiding teams to accomplish various school improvement efforts such as curriculum development or increase student achievement. At Pinewood Elementary; the data collected suggested a plethora of purposes or collaboration focus for school improvement efforts. These purposes required different collaborative intensities as identified on the continua of collaboration.

Curriculum Development

As observed through multiple comments, staff at Pinewood Elementary used collaboration to develop, improve and maintain curricular coherence. Many teachers pointed to the use of collaborative team processes to assist with curricular development.

Teachers used teacher to teacher collaboration to coordinate and maintain curricular coherence. When asked in what ways is collaboration used to improve the day-to-day outcomes at school, the principal stated, “A lot of grade levels will talk about their lesson pacing or where they are at in units.” In a focus group session with the building Professional Learning Community leader’s group, one teacher stated, “Mr. Bennet will say “I’m just really having trouble on text evidence and going back into the text” and I will say, “Hey, we can start working on that in first grade!”

Specialists and general education teachers also found connections in collaborating around curriculum. One specialist teacher stated, “I can take ideas back, and we know what is going on in the classroom and appreciate that and just the vocabulary that we use, we can use the same terms and things like that.

In other words, teachers used both formal and informal connections to coordinate their roles in maintaining curricular coherence. This curricular collaboration laid the groundwork for establishing an understanding of curricular gaps and needed supports by coordinating teachers.

This particular school leader recognized the importance of providing an opportunity for teachers to explore these connections by providing collaborative structures and adequate opportunities. The school leader provided both horizontal grade level and department time. She provided this through morning release time and more formal structures such as PLC focused on specific goal attainment of common assessments and collaborative lesson outcomes.

Program Development

Another purpose of collaboration was to provide ample opportunity for program development. Schools need to develop programs that respond to student need including academic and social-emotional program development. Program development through collaboration was evident at Pinewood Elementary through several noted examples.

One example of collaborative program development was classroom behavioral supports. Pinewood Elementary is a PBIS, Positive Behavioral Intervention System, School. Collaboration was used through several internal and external groups in providing students a positive school environment. Collaboration was conducted between classroom teachers, principal and support staff. The Pinewood Elementary staff used collaboration to develop a PBIS program. School-wide installation of rules, recognitions and artifacts were done through collaborative meetings in which all diverse perspectives were honored. The supports were visible through school artifacts.

School pride was visible in classrooms, hallways and common areas that referenced the PBIS model. Through shared development, collaborative partners were able to jointly define successful implementation criteria.

Another example of program development was the peaceful bus program. The building principal mentioned the use of collaboration to develop and maintain a peaceful bus program as coordinated through the efforts of the transportation provider, drivers, and school. School staff and transportation providers met regularly to develop and install a program to provide students a positive and welcoming bus experience. At the beginning of each year, drivers and students spend extra time interacting with each other to develop a shared understanding of desired student expectations while riding the school bus to and from Pinewood Elementary. Through collaborative participation and development, partners were able to define success from both internal and external expectations.

Program development is an important purpose of collaborative relationships. The school's leaders recognized the importance of allowing collaborative groups to co-develop programming so it meets the needs of all involved parties. According to the continua of collaboration, one aspect of collaboration is described as being embodied in shared decision making and meaning of collaborative partners. The building principal provided successful new programming by allowing collaborative processes between partners to develop a shared meaning and understanding of positive bus culture.

Student Achievement

Another key collaborative purpose found at Pinewood Elementary was the use of collaboration to focus on student achievement. Although this is a rather large area, specific evidence was found in the way teachers interacted with each other in looking at

specific goals for achievement in both teacher to teacher and team to team interactions and in establishing a culture that emphasizes data as important in the day-to-day decision-making process. Specific empirical evidence between the link of collaborative practices and the increase of student achievement was not addressed in the scope of the research.

Teachers expressed their work of collaboration as having time to set and identify common goals for student achievement. One PLC group participant stated, “We are trying to increase reading skills, now what it looks like for fourth grade and second grade might look different, but we hear where everyone is coming from.” Another stated, “We get an idea of what we can work on in lower grades to help support, to prepare for MCA’s or to do other things like that and look at data...”

The building problem-solving team stated, “We use MAP Data. We look at the lowest 2% and how to find the biggest improvement with this group.” Another problem-solving team member stated,

We work on the academic piece, you know what are our deficits, what are our strengths, how do we build on it? How do we improve? We do all that within our facilitator's meeting so we can guide our teams to have the greatest impact on student achievement (Interview, Dec. 9th, 2014).

The building principal also recognized that goal setting was important. The principal stated, “For instance, last year was vocabulary, so then each of our PLC’s was working on vocabulary strategies to implement in the classroom... this year we are working on the pillars of reading instruction.” Also, the principal commented on the use of specialized teams to impact student achievement. The principal recognized the use of the PLC facilitators, Site Team, and RtI team in focusing the work on student

achievement. In this instance, the collaborative teams help set the focus for classroom teachers through work on collaborative data trend analysis. In her opinion, the teams are, “One of the biggest keys for continuous improvement.”

The shift in thinking about school goals for student achievement is evident in the presence of a collaborative culture. New staff is brought into this collaborative culture through the use of data collaboration to increase student achievement. One new staff members mentioned,

So, I am new this year. Some of this is new to me as we were going through the process, but one of the first meetings we had been looking at data, what is it showing, what areas we need to improve on (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

The principal also believes that collaboration led to an informed shift in the way of thinking and decision making by her staff. She stated, “We focus on making the data really drive our instruction, and it makes us really think about what we are doing and how we are doing it for our students.”

Collaboration impacts the process of focusing and maintaining clarity on student achievement through goal setting. At Pinewood Elementary, staff recognized the importance of collaborating and coordinating particular curricular focal areas that had potential impact on student achievement. The building principal seemed to recognize the importance of allowing time for specialized teams to analyze data and provide direction to individual grades and teachers in goal setting. It was also evident that the building principal recognized the importance of establishing a culture focused on student achievement through the indoctrination of new staff and the leadership of existing specialized teams.

Idea Expansion

School collaboration also plays an important role in idea expansion through social networking. At Pinewood Elementary, collaboration allowed diverse perspectives to foster idea expansion. Various observations noted the use of collaboration to meet this particular purpose. Important observations of the staff were found recognizing the importance of allowing groups to use collaborative partnerships to fruitfully expand ideas for school improvement. Observations also noted staff had a positive outlook on the challenging of status quo and tended to look at questioning as a means of developing better ideas instead of personal attacks.

In a field observation of staff interactions and collaborative group of specialists, they used their collaborative meeting as a means to develop ideas in a thoughtful and challenging way. One group member stated, "I like what you're saying, but I wonder if you thought about giving more time with vocabulary." Another staff member followed by adding, "I think we have a responsibility to look at it with vocabulary and not just our specialist vocabulary. How can we embed more from the classroom?" This exchange showed an acceptance and culture of idea challenge that was not met with resistance. The group showed acceptance through positive body language, smiling and eye contact throughout collaboration for idea expansion.

In another collaborative grade level PLC, team members also showed their acceptance of idea expansion. The grade was coordinating efforts on using and developing common assessments. Different ideas of assessments presented themselves with various processes and products. Grade level members were open to challenges. Group members would use phrases such as, "I didn't think of that" or "I agree, and how

about we also.” Again the positive body language was accompanied by laughing and moment of collegial teasing that supported idea expansion and created an environment of safe exchange of ideas.

It was also evident that an acceptance of collaborative culture had lifted some staff members to a realization that collaboration can lead to better ideas. During a site interview with PLC leaders, one member stated,

As far as collaboration, I know that I have some good ideas, but I have learned through the years that when I share my idea and willingness to share, somebody can piggyback off of that, and my idea can become a much better idea (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

In a RtI focus group, staff members also spoke to the theme of idea expansion through their role as interventionists. One member stated, “We collectively come up with interventions. It is like we are spreading new ideas. It is always reciprocal.” It appeared that staff members accepted that ideas become better with support and dialogue. In other words, ideas became enriched and accepted through a collaborative process of collegial vetting.

The principal also recognized this positive attitude and opportunity through idea expansion. When speaking of her grade level teams, the principal stated,

Issues arise like a grade level wants to look at maybe a new report card system or something like that. It’s kind of a think tank as well, kind of where some ideas are generated (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

She also spoke about her building in attitudinal terms. She spoke about why she brought teams together.

I think anytime you have many minds working together they are always going to come up with many ideas, and they will be tweaking it and changing it to make it best. I think there is a lot of thinking and creativity that goes on when you bring teams together collaboratively with people and the communication (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Idea expansion as an application of collaboration was an important purpose of expanding ideas at the site level. The principal appeared to recognize the opportunities embedded in collaborative groups and the organizational capacity to create new opportunities for school improvement. The principal made it known through her own words and actions that everyone benefited from a safe and productive environment. This environment allowed for ample expansion of ideas and the acceptance of diverse perspectives.

Professional Support

Another purpose for collaboration that was evident at Pinewood Elementary was in the practice of professional support. Pinewood Elementary staff spoke of collaboration as providing opportunities to interact, give and receive professional support in various settings.

The Pinewood Elementary Problem Solving team spoke of this in a focus group interview. When speaking of data and accountability, one staff member mentioned, "It is important to have extra sets of eyes for extra perspective." In this instance, it seemed that staff members appreciated having others to look at the data to minimize personal bias. Other staff members would look at school and classroom data to offer perspectives and

views that offer supportive measures, both positive and negative in how to respond.

Another staff member stated, “We are all learning from each other.”

The purpose of professional support was also apparent when grade levels responded and met with each other. Field observations of grade level meetings showed grade level teams offering levels of professional support in the day-to-day operations during the school day in the form of advice and understanding. Observations showed that grade level teams often supported each other with words of encouragement, gestures of reassurance and humanizing efforts. In one grade level collaboration, team members were sharing professional resources and ideas to support reading strategies for at-risk learners while sharing their professional supports. This support took the form of personal affirmations in words such as, “I have been there before” and “You can do this”. In a PLC focus group, one staff member stated, “You can only get better with help.”

Professional support was primarily evident through internal supports from other teachers and staff members. However, the principal also stated that support is also offered from external collaborative community groups such as the local chamber of commerce. She stated, “I am active in the chamber of commerce, anytime we need help, I just put a shout out at our chamber meetings, and people are more than willing to come in and help.”

The principal recognized that professional support is needed and welcomed at Pinewood Elementary. In commenting on the staff, she stated.

I think that they learn from each other. I think they grow. I think whenever you do things like that; it is a bunch of people thinking about what the end result is going to be like and how you make that happen (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Professional support is needed in creating a culture of collaboration that is supportive of change and focused on professional growth. Real-time collegial support was important in building successful collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary. Staff members wanted to learn and grow from each other. Diverse perspectives added support when staff felt unable to meet the ever changing and increased demands in their classrooms.

The building principal seemed to recognize the opportunity of staff members to serve as confidants and counselors in meeting day-to-day challenges. At Pinewood Elementary, staff members supported each other with words and actions in their collaborative groups that provided a safe and encouraging environment. The building principal also seemed to recognize this and provide ample opportunity to share personal stories and provide encouragement during collaborative interactions and meetings.

Team Development

At Pinewood Elementary, collaborative practices and interactions appeared to lead to a faster rate of team development. Team development is defined as the rate at which teams develop shared norms, experiences and understandings of tasks and goals. Although team development happens naturally, collaboration appeared to be a catalyst in the rate of team development. Professional support seemed to be a prerequisite to team development.

The increased rate of development was due to the increased collaborative intensities of shared meanings. In the case of Pinewood Elementary, team development through shared meaning of collaborative practices was noted as being present in grade

and building level teams. This development was evident through trust building with teams and also through principal expectations.

Pinewood Elementary uses multiple levels of internal collaborative groups to accomplish needed school improvement efforts, building culture and goal attainment. As a secondary benefit, these teams developed trust in their interactions. One grade level member stated, “We have weekly meetings. I was new to the team. It helped me understand what we were about.”

The building PLC team also experienced a rapid rate of team development in its interactions with each other. In a focus group interview, team members reported learning together and increased trust in their group actions. One member stated, “We look at academic pieces, we do that with all of our PLC meetings, but none of that happens without the relationships we build first, we trust each other. We know each other. That is why it works.”

The principal also noted an increased speed of team development. She spoke of the interactions in committees having a positive impact on relationships.

The other thing which doesn't really fit into that is the relationship building that happens. I have a big school. Someone that is in fourth grade might not interact with a first-grade teacher very often, but they interact when they are in different situations like this. They say, Wow! I had no idea that Kelly was such an awesome person and teacher until I worked with her on this committee (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

In other words, cross grade level and committee work tended to lead to a faster rate of acceptance, trust and community building.

The building principal recognized the importance of team development in both regular teaming such as grade level and departments, but also in cross-department collaborations. At Pinewood Elementary, collaboration provided adequate opportunities for relationships to grow and teams to develop. The shared meanings and trust building facilitated by collaboration had a positive impact on the feasibility of positive school improvement efforts.

Problem Solving

One more purpose that collaboration served was through day-to-day problem solving. Collaboration added value to problem-solving through diverse perspectives and experience. The Problem-solving team used collaborative interactions to accomplish a variety of tasks. At Pinewood Elementary, collaborative problem solving was observed in various groups and interactions.

The building site leadership team used collaboration to discuss, and problem solve for immediate and simplistic building needs. In a field observation of the site leadership team, it was evident that collaboration was the means to accomplish positions and policies to impact positive day-to-day operations and management. The agenda of the meeting was focused on various building level issues. Group members focused on giving direction and oversight in these predetermined agenda items but also were able to adjust the items on the agenda collaboratively. In other words, the team was jointly responsible for the co-creation of the agenda.

One area of exploration led to a shared understanding of recess temperature guidelines. Although the principal was present at this meeting, it was evident that each member offered a unique perspective and was valued. Each member had the opportunity

to give voice and input. Grade level representatives shared concerns regarding supervision during indoor recess. Others offered perspective on student needs such as physical activity and wellness. The principal listened to perspectives but ultimately allowed the site team to come to a consensus through a democratic process. This same process was used to establish guidelines for the use of space at the school, playground activities and attendance issues of students.

Collaborative problem solving was also evident in the approach used to discuss and find success for individual students through interventions. The building problem-solving team routinely used collaborative meetings to discuss and support general education teachers in intervention planning for struggling academic and behavioral students. The collaborative approach was used to provide interventions to students by both specialists such as interventionist and English Language teachers, but also by grade level team members.

One member indicated, “We offer support, like if a kindergarten teacher brings a student to share concerns about, then there is a kindergarten representative on our problem-solving team that will come along that day.” In this instance, staff members used collaborative decision making to come to a consensus on the most feasible and applicable intervention for student success.

Problem-solving presented itself as a general attitude and expectation at Pinewood Elementary through internal and external interactions. The principal detailed one such instance with an external relationship.

We also collaborate with a local church to provide backpacks of food for our student that are in need on the weekends. There is a snack cart, and I take

donations, I think we funded about four thousand dollars in donations to provide our kids that don't have enough money to be a part of our snack cart program.

We work together to provide a positive experience for our kids (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

She affirmed that Pinewood Elementary staff was predispositioned to problem solve major or minor issues that arose. She stated, "We work with each other. Even if it is not in a formal PLC or team, all the nitty gritty things get done. We get those things done."

Pinewood Elementary showed a propensity to problem solve at multiple formal and informal levels. Formal teams used predetermined structures to bout day-to-day occurrences that needed solving. Problem-solving was also evident in more non-formal aspects such as grade level work, support, and procedural developments. In both instances, Pinewood staff used collaboration as a positive support to problem solve and allow diverse perspectives to develop positive outcomes for school policy and operations.

Chapter 6 Case Study Findings: Barriers and Organizational Structures

Chapter 6 provides insight into the various barriers and organizational structures of collaboration at Pinewood Elementary including pragmatic barriers, essential structural components, and membership roles. These organizational structures provided a deeper understanding of the continuum of collaboration described in the previous chapter.

Types of Collaboration

Collaborative relationships and interactions fall into two organizational typologies. Collaborative interactions can be either internal or external. For the purpose of this case study, internal is defined as with other school individuals, teams, or personnel and included teachers, teams, and principal. External is defined as any individuals, groups or agencies organized outside of school personnel including parents, community organizations or other school systems.

As previously stated in chapter 4, internal and external collaborative relationships are not equally accessible and/or sustainable as relationships due to competing interests. Internal collaborative relationships tend to be easier to maintain due to a tighter coupling of shared meanings, values, and purpose. External collaborative relationships prove to be more difficult to maintain due to accessibility, differing organizational purpose and require higher collaborative intensity to sustain.

Examples of both internal and external collaborative relationships were found at Pinewood Elementary. Through a closer examination of these relationships, contexts were observed that further explained the pragmatic application of these collaborative interactions and how they impacted school improvement. In addition, barriers were

identified that impeded collaborative advantage when they were left unaddressed. The following sections explain these impacts further.

Internal

Internal collaborative relationships were characterized by two further subsets including formal and informal settings. Collaborative relationships characterized as formal used established processes, roles, and meetings to accomplish particular goals or outcomes. Informal collaborations were characterized by lower expectations of formal elements, but focused on more “Ad Hoc” applications and showed initiation through organic or self-interest measures of development.

Formal Collaborative Efforts

Formal applications of collaboration were observed as, but not limited to committee work, special event planning, program development and team teaching at Pinewood Elementary. Committee work represented a bulk of the formal internal collaborative relationships. Pinewood Elementary used formal committee work for the purpose of site leadership, PLC formation, Technology, Building Culture, Curricular Coordination, Grounds, Bully Prevention, Emergency Response and Student Problem Solving. The principal spoke of the commitment and organization of these committees. The principal mentioned, “So there are some committees that that we set at the beginning of the year, and there are some committees that come up as the year goes on and then I call for volunteers on those.”

Other formal collaborative partnerships occurred through special event planning. Groups formed around special events that were held at Pinewood Elementary such as “I Love to Read” month or the Veteran’s Day Program. Committee chairs were used to

facilitate and organize the group towards reaching goals. The principal spoke of these special events and the people involved, “So I had two teachers that co-chaired, and we had the best Veteran’s Day program ever, I also rely on committees that are made up of people that have a vested interest in like Veterans Day or homecoming committee.” She spoke of the necessity of encouraging these groups and the efficacy. “We collaboratively did that together. I don’t know how you would do that any other way. I try to focus on people that have a special interest in something.”

Formal collaboration was also evident in team teaching opportunities. Auxiliary services such as counseling frequently engaged in formal collaborative relationships for teaching student behavior and modeling. In a site interview with the school counselor, she stated, “This school supports collaboration between classrooms and student services.” When asked how, the counselor responded with enthusiasm about the opportunities. The counselor mentioned her joint programming with the classroom coordination with services. In these instances, she was welcomed to come in and teach in the classroom by focusing on coping strategies in the classroom, healthy friendships, where she co-taught two-thirds of the lesson with the teachers. She also co-developed two units per grade level.

Other applications included flex grouping by classroom teachers where they shared student outcomes and programming. One PLC facilitator spoke to the efficacy of team teaching, “I think a big improvement has been our flex grouping in attaining positive student outcomes.” Grade levels engaged in shared student groups during flex grouping time to be efficient and develop shared commitment to students. Also, the

building principal expressed positive views about how grade levels flex group students using collaborative efforts.

I think flexibly grouping takes a collaborative effort to determine where all 180 kids in a grade level go every day for a ½ hour for reading and ½ hour for math. That collaboration is what I am going to teach, what I am teaching in my regular classroom and what am I teaching in a flexible group all needs to be a collaborative effort. They look at strand data from NWEA MAP tests and they look at classroom data and grade level data to help determine those things. We are constantly... everything in our building is based on growth. So our goal is, so every kid can have one year's worth of growth (Interview, November 25th, 2015).

Informal Collaborative Efforts

Informal collaboration also was apparent at Pinewood Elementary. Although this was not as easy to identify due to its spontaneous nature, staff shared examples and structures that supported ad hoc or organic collaboration to grow. Organic collaboration is defined as informal collaborative relationships that grow in the absence of formal structures and roles.

At Pinewood, organic collaborations seemed to be most apparent in teacher to teacher interactions. Several teachers declared that Pinewood Elementary is an easy place to collaborate with other teachers. One teacher said, "It is not uncommon to find teachers talking, collaborating all around our school. We talk in the lounge, the parking lot at community events. We are constantly sharing and developing ideas for school, no matter where we are at." Other informal collaborative partnerships started through networking opportunities and developed through self-interests. PLC facilitators noted

that informal PLC starts without their leadership. The informal self-interest collaborations meet in open times to study and discuss strategies and approaches to student engagement and academic success. One PLC facilitator noted,

A lot of the time we do the organization work of PLC, but there are plenty of times where they [the staff] do not need us. They get together to learn, grow and help kids no matter where they are (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

When asked about supporting this type of organic collaboration, the principal communicated, “I don’t know how you would do that any other way. I try to focus on people that have a special interest in something.”

External

Pinewood Elementary also showed a propensity to reach beyond internal collaborative relationships and engage with external partners for school improvement. External collaboration is defined as engaging in relationships and partnerships with stakeholders that are connected to school but not bound by the organizational hierarchy of the internal partners. These groups typically include groups such as parents, outside agencies or community organizations. These groups may also include schools either in the district or out of district other than the internal stakeholder school.

Staff members at Pinewood Elementary voiced interest in their relationships with other local schools in inter-district collaborative relationships. One teacher spoke of this out of district collaboration.

We get together every other year with the PED schools, so it is all the districts and every other Wednesday before fall break. I kind of look forward to that because I have gotten to know some of those teachers, and we bounce ideas off of that kind of

thing but you are right, when you get in a group, there are five new teachers, and one is right out of college, and the other ones have experience, so it's fun, they brought all kinds of experience and different ideas (Interview December 9th, 2014).

This experience was not unique to just one staff member. Many Pinewood staff expressed an interest in meeting and collaborating with external partners.

Parents were also the subject of external collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary. When asked who the external collaborative partners are, staff members stated that "We have a lot of parent volunteers." Parents provided an external level of support to the school that brings perspective, resources, and trust to the school. Parents collaborated through several opportunities at Pinewood. External collaboration was evident through parental participation and feedback through organized curricular nights. The principal said, "We also have parents in for literacy and math night. We collaborate with them too, just to figure out, you know, what it is that you want. What kind of education can we provide for you?"

Parents served as a natural bridge from internal to external collaborative partners. At Pinewood, they identified with the school, yet brought considerable external experience and perspective to the collaborative partnership with the school.

Community organizations and agencies also served as a key external collaborative partner for Pinewood Elementary. Several examples were shared in which the school collaborated on special programming, support and curricular development. One example of external collaboration occurred in working with local area church organizations.

Pinewood offered students a weekend food backpack programs. In speaking about the program, site leadership team members were visibly excited and proud of the

growth of the backpack program. One team member stated, “We started with just five families, now with the help of the churches, we get to help many more.”

In addition to local churches, Pinewood Elementary worked with local engineering firms to offer an engineering day of discovery for the students. The school worked collaboratively with local engineering firms to co-develop a hands-on day of learning for students in which the firms sent employees to work with students in developing a better understanding of engineering and science concepts. Not only were the firms present on the student day, but also were key partners in developing the lessons and student experiences. The building principal spoke directly about this relationship.

So we collaborate with an engineering firm, and we collaborate with them on a multitude of things. Primarily we put together a full day, engineering day for all of our students. And so we have thirteen different stations and it is completely organized by our engineers and it is amazing the STEM education that we are able to promote (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

External collaborations brought extra resources, ideas, and perspectives to Pinewood Elementary and affected the experiences of students and staff with positive outcomes.

Pinewood Elementary used both internal and external collaborative relationships to positively impact student outcomes. The principal and staff recognized that these opportunities were abundant and worked diligently to continually foster and develop a shared identity and identifiable outcomes when engaging in these collaborative relationships. Pinewood seemed to engage in high levels of fruitful collaboration for school improvement by recognizing, balancing, and fostering the growth of both internal and external collaborative relationships to maximize school improvement efforts.

As found earlier in the Levels of School Collaboration Scale, internal partnerships were easier to identify and nurture than external collaborative relationships. External collaborative relationships needed more attention including supports and intensity to initiate and sustain.

Addressing Barriers to Collaboration

Successful collaboration does not happen without being mindful and addressing potential barriers. Pinewood staff recognized that collaboration at their school had to overcome both pragmatic and conceptual barriers to be successful in school improvement efforts. These barriers, unaddressed, had the potential to derail efforts and cause collaborative relationships to decline into lower forms on the collaboration continuum.

Pragmatic Barriers

Some of the most common barriers to collaboration are simply pragmatic. Time, proximity and financial limitations proved to be regular items to overcome at Pinewood Elementary. Both the building principal and staff worked collaboratively to overcome these realistic barriers.

Time for collaboration proved to be a real barrier to overcome at Pinewood Elementary. The school included multiple sections of each grade, multiple specialists and auxiliary programmings such as high potential, title, counseling, and ESL. Although regularly scheduled time was given, barriers with other staff commitments commonly interfered such as personal meetings or coaching duties.

Proximity proved to be another barrier to collaboration. All the grade level teams at Pinewood Elementary were able to be in proximity to each other within the level. For example, all first-grade teachers occupied a specific wing of the school. This support

also proved to be a barrier to vertical collaboration. Because of their consolidation into wings, grade levels did not experience as much organic vertical collaboration.

In addition, Kindergarten was spread amongst all the wings. At the time of site visit, the school was under construction and building a new Kindergarten Wing. This lack of proximity proved to be a challenge for Kindergarten staff to collaborate regularly on an informal plane.

Finally, financial limitations proved to be a barrier to regular collaboration. Time was often overcome with financial support and purchasing time for grade level or specialized teams to come together to collaborate. Pinewood Elementary proved to be similar, in that it had financial limitations to continually pull teachers out of the classroom to buy collaboration time.

Pragmatic barriers were acknowledged and addressed by both building principal and staff through problem-solving. Although these were at times relatively easy to solve, they still had to overcome the pragmatic barriers to allow collaboration to continue regularly and thrive. The principal and staff at Pinewood Elementary mitigated these barriers by the inclusion of essential components of collaboration.

Essential Components of Collaboration

Case study data indicated that Pinewood overcame these barriers in several ways. This section details essential components of collaboration that were evident at Pinewood. Collaborative interactions at Pinewood Elementary showed some common themes that demonstrated the existence of some essential components of collaboration. These essential components included processes, structures, support mechanisms and leadership.

Essential processes included governance, administration, and organizational autonomy. Essential structures identified were membership, communication and clearly defined roles. Support mechanisms identified adequate opportunity and transactional supports. Finally, the leadership of both teachers and principal proved to be essential to the success of collaboration. The inclusion of these essential components allowed the day-to-day collaborative relationships to be successful and ultimately lead to positive school improvement.

Essential Processes

Processes essential for organizing collaboration included measures of action that add to the value of the collaborative relationship. The initial action adds value by establishing early growth and development of collaborative groups. According to Thomson and Perry (2006), collaborative processes are an integral part of the understanding of collaboration and its success with collaborative partners. They outline five processes to be cognizant of including governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality and norms of trust & reciprocity (Thomson & Perry, 2006). The first three were found as essential components of organizational processes at Pinewood Elementary. Mutuality and norms of trust and reciprocity were essential cultural process and are discussed in chapter seven.

Governance

Governance refers to the oversight or rules and ability to jointly make shared decisions (Thomson & Perry, 2006). At Pinewood Elementary, this was evident through the daily negotiations and commitment processes by collaborative groups. Many of the groups met without the building principal or authoritative oversight. In the absence of

authority, the groups had to adhere to a willingness to monitor themselves and each other to meet the collaborative outcomes. Several examples presented themselves in governance.

Pinewood Elementary committees routinely met without the principal. Each grade level routinely held collaborative PLC meetings on scheduled days. Through field observation, it was evident that each group routinely met to carry out the end goals of curricular collaboration. Grade levels were charged with refining grade-level common assessments.

One observation of a grade level PLC noted several adherences to group commitment. Group members started with a review of the daily goals in which one member stated, "I feel like we can get these done today." Another member restated the 90-day goal after other group members started to veer from the daily target. She stated, "Remember, we are here to review our goal of starting flex by Oct. 31st and set a new 90-day goal." After further discussion, a final group member looked for verbal and non-verbal compliance by stating, "Are we good with that?" The response to this was evident through verbal and body language. Group members were good listeners. They repeated back ideas.

Administration

Administration refers to the ability to delegate and get things done. In traditional organizations, coordination mechanisms are administered through an authoritative figure. Routines such as standardization, routines, and assignment are used by the authority to get things done. In a collaborative relationship, this becomes much more horizontal in that group members need to find ways to delegate and get things done.

Thomson and Perry suggest that in a collaborative relationship, it takes the right combination of administrative capacity and social capacity to build relationships (2006). Collaborative relationships require individuals within the collaborative to broker relationships and search to expand the boundary or reach within the relationships to be successful.

At Pinewood Elementary, the process of establishing administration was evident through several interactions. The most prominent were through the Site Leadership Team. In this instance, the building principal was in attendance, and most likely added a hierarchal presence to get things done. However, it was not the principal who imposed such expectations. The site leadership team brokered the ability to bring multiple stakeholder groups together to get the collaborative work done. A particular example of this process was in regards to the decision of carrying out the yearly Care and Share Drive.

Site team members all carried a particular role in the success of the Care and Share Drive. Member's roles outside of the site team showed no impact on the administration of this event. Teachers, Specialists, and Paraprofessionals all engaged in the administration of the event including the coordination, advocacy, communication and collection of toys. Different partners played different roles in the success of the drive. The Site Team collectively decided on the administration roles from within the group and carried it out to success.

Organizational Autonomy

Developing Organizational Autonomy is a key process in establishing collaborative success. This process refers to the upholding of individual group identity in

relation to a new shared identity. Staff members at Pinewood Elementary showed considerable identity as an entire school, but also as collaborative groups. Collaborative groups developed working norms together, ate lunch together and portrayed collective personalities of fun and comraderies. An overall observation of Pinewood Elementary showed visible signs of unification.

On the particular day that was observed, staff members were wearing school colors; shirts displayed the school mascot. Also, parents and visitors that signed into the school were also wearing school colors. The school secretaries were asked about this observation. They stated, “Everyone really is proud of this school. Everyone knows that Wednesdays are our school pride day. We sell a lot of shirts each year, parents and staff members want to be identified with this school.”

Also, there were multiple visible artifacts of school pride throughout the building. These artifacts also included posters, awards for the school, and even toilet paper and paper towel dispensers that displayed the logo and emblem of the school. These emblems and artifacts show the visible identity of staff members and the school.

The staff members retained this identity while engaging in collaborative relationships with external groups like community members and organizations. In essence, they were able to maintain individual autonomy with shared identities in meeting school and community collaborative goals.

The organizational autonomy also refers to the ethos of each of the grade level entering into collaborative relationships. Each grade level is represented in the various collaborative committees at Pinewood Elementary and maintained the autonomy of mission and goals for each grade level. One example of this autonomy is in the goals

brought to higher organizational structures of the PLC leaders. At this level, the PLC Leaders showed new shared control, partnership, and identity. At the same time, each team member also represented their respective representative groups such as specialists, grade levels or departments.

The process of reconciling individual autonomy and collective interests is an important process to consider in sustaining and leveraging collaboration for successful school improvement. In this instance, the building principal recognized the importance of autonomy when establishing collaborative relationships. The building principal encouraged individual sharing in collaborative meetings that represented individual perspective and goals while simultaneously focusing on shared identities and goals.

Communication

High-quality communication is another essential component of collaboration. Pinewood Elementary excelled in this area by extending communication expectations to committee chairs and also allowing open access to the building principal. Rubin (2009) alludes that communication adds unexpected and unrelated new accomplishments in collaborative relationships. "Communication sits at the center of all human relationships (Rubin, 2009, p. 70) As a component of collaboration, communication expectations, and channels add value and efficiencies in collaborative relationships. They open dialog and exchange between more members and within decision makers. Without clear communication channels, collaborative endeavors can quickly deteriorate into less formal relationships and status.

In speaking of communication, the building principal stated, "They are really in charge of disseminating all the information once we have met then they meet their grade levels

and disseminate the information. They are also the people that call weekly grade level meetings.”

The principal took much leverage in democratizing communication and placing power and control within the collaborative structures and the chairs to communicate directly with the building staff. One grade level team members stated, “We have discussions at least once per week, we are expected to talk and share.” Another member spoke about communication of progress. “Our principal expects that we keep her in the loop about our progress on our goals. We have to turn in our notes, and if there is a problem, she expects that we talk to her directly.”

At the same time, the building principal remained open to direct communication and made it a priority to be accessible to any staff member for clarifications. This duality of communication style made it a collaborative communicative school in that all members routinely accessed and prioritized collaborative communicative messages throughout the building.

Collaborative communication was also observed in staff behavior at several of the meeting observations. Team members were consistent in clarifying expectations with each other but also in active listening to dialogue. During meetings, collaborative members were on task and showed non-verbal listening skills such as eye contact. There was minimal off-task behavior such as side conversations or cell-phone usage. This focus on collaborative communication led to a shared message and shared understanding of meeting content, tasks and outgoing messages to other collaborative groups.

The building principal also noted the importance of high staff engagement in facilitating high-quality collaborative communication. She stated, “You know I think that

the conversations, like for instance when we are in our PLC leadership, we have every grade level and department, or areas represented in our leadership group.” This structural alignment coupled with active collaborative communication allowed different collaborative groups at Pinewood elementary to communicate at a high level and continue to build shared identities, formal and prioritized communication bonded by trust.

Pinewood Elementary continually reinforced communication through formal reporting expectations. This proved to be an essential component in the success of maintaining high collaborative fidelity throughout multiple interactions. Staff members were clear about the process of reporting collaborative outcomes to both the staff at large and the building principal. Outcomes and messages frequently were confirmed with the building principal prior to being released to the staff at large, but were not required.

Again, collaborative communication appeared to be a clear expectation of the building principal. Communication was reinforced through her daily interactions and the design of committee chairs and communication structures such as verbal conversations and sharing of documents.

Representative Structures

Another essential component of collaboration was the intentional design and structure of collaborative groups. These structures seemed to provide meaningful representation and clear expectations of meeting frequency. Membership in the committees was representative of all the grade levels and departments. Multiple layers of participation are recognized as including every level of representation including operations and management (Mattessich, Murray-Close, & Monsey, 2001). For school

purposes, this means representative of both labor and management, or teachers and administration.

Pinewood Elementary utilized 16 different formal collaborative groups to leverage school improvement. Memberships in these groups were always inclusive and included clear expectations for participation. The principal stated, “I expect there are two leaders within every grade level or every group in my building.” Major committees were defined by clear expectations that everyone was represented. However, each member still utilized choice in self-electing to be a member of the collaborative groups.

Pinewood recognized the importance of collaborative success by assigning members that had both a passion and interest in serving on particular committees. The principal stated, “The more people you have involved, the more people you have engaged and they have a vested interest in the success of the group.”

In addition to membership, clearly defined roles were evident at Pinewood Elementary. There were assigned chairs or co-chairs for each collaborative group. The chairs were responsible for co-setting agendas and facilitating the meetings. They were responsible for establishing collaborative norms and carrying out the purpose of the collaborative groups. Mattessich, Et al describes this as the development of clear roles and policy guidelines (2001). The implications of these clear guidelines were clear communication lines, ownership, and effective decision-making.

Pinewood Elementary staff and the principal clearly understood the importance of providing clear structures to their collaborative groups including intentional membership, roles and frequency guidelines. These structures allowed Pinewood staff to understand and utilize the various collaborative groups with confidence and efficiency. Staff

members understood whom to communicate concerns to, when decisions were going to be made and who was responsible for carrying out the action.

This delineation was also important for the building principal. When confronted with various problems of practice, she was able to identify quickly which collaborative group to engage. This quick identification also was apparent in her success in engaging particular stewards of each of the committees. By having chairs to collaborate with on Committee direction and tasks, trust and reciprocity were developed with individual staff members charged with leading the committee.

Support Mechanisms

Collaborative partnerships need to be supported through various mechanisms to remain viable and productive. Pinewood Elementary provided various levels of support for its collaborative groups including transactional and transformational supports, adequate opportunity and leadership.

Transactional Support

Transactional supports occur within the structure and offerings (Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). At Pinewood Elementary, staff members and the building principal mentioned these transactional supports in the form of transactional elements such as time, technology and financial allocations. The building principal found these items to be essential in supporting collaborative partnerships.

If there is something that you need to do, like as grade levels they are collaborating all the time on curriculum and instruction and if there are things that you need, let me know I am going to try and find the money or resources to do that (Interview, Nov. 25th, 2014).

She stated that time can be bought to support collaborative endeavors, “Sometimes I will substitute grade levels out to do a collaboration. I will be subbing out my first-grade team because I want them to get their formative assessments developed.”

The Board of Education also makes time available to staff members at Pinewood Elementary. Teachers recognized this time as essential to the success of their work during official and unofficial times. One staff member said, “We have time built into our schedule to make collaboration possible. The board has given us release time, but it is also encouraged that we spend time together as a grade level team in team meetings.”

Technology was also afforded to staff members to help them do their collaborative work. To support their time, specific technology was deployed to use with collaborative meetings. One staff member mentioned,

We have technology that makes it easier to collaborate. We are a Google Docs school. Everyone has access to our documents. We also use infinite campus and Ties data warehousing to look at data to make the best decisions possible for interventions (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Staff members used these technologies regularly in meetings to connect, share and communicate.

Transactional supports played an important role in creating opportunities for collaborative relationships to grow and flourish at Pinewood Elementary. Resource supports were offered and set by decision makers in authority positions. Most important was the resource of time. Time was a set aside for collaborative meetings to take place. Without time, technology and financial support for materials, the collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary would have been difficult to sustain.

Adequate Opportunity

Another important yet implicit support to collaboration is providing adequate opportunities to collaborate. This support presented itself differently than having adequate time. Adequate collaborative opportunity is being exposed to multiple collaborative interactions. By working in an organization that continually provides adequate collaborative opportunity, successful mindsets begin to emerge; diverse perspectives develop, and team members understand the nuances of collaboration. In these organizations, collaboration becomes the cultural norm. There is an expectation that staff members are not closed off from each other's classrooms, cubicles or departments.

The offering of ample opportunity was apparent at Pinewood Elementary. Staff repeatedly talked about the ample opportunity to collaborate with other staff members. One staff member explained, "We are expected to participate in multiple committees and contribute." The principal reinforced this idea by remarking about why they have so many committees and opportunities, "It is a lot about buy-in. I am a firm believer in building the capacity of my staff and creating and empowering leaders. I think that they help create that collaborative environment."

Transformational Leadership Supports

Transformational supports were also evident at Pinewood Elementary in the form of leadership. Leadership is defined in many different terms depending on the context. School leadership is typically attached to either the principal or teacher leader. In this context, both manifested themselves as supports for collaborative relationships.

Supports for Teacher Leadership

Teacher leadership was abundant at Pinewood Elementary. Teachers were found in both formal and informal leadership roles within collaboration as previously discussed. However, in both of these scenarios, teachers led collaborative meetings and also provided much of the background supports in organization and task delegation. In addition, teachers were an integral part of establishing shared values about students at Pinewood Elementary. As one staff member on the problem-solving team mention, “It starts with the teachers.” Teachers modeled for each other how to work as a team.

Another stated,

I think that leadership and collaboration are so tightly intertwined that you cannot have one without the other. So, whether it be the teacher leadership, administration, or if you are talking about the PLC leadership team, I think that when there is a leader in place that models what collaboration looks like in the fact that these are our kids and that we work together and always...always we come back to what is best for kids (Interview December, 9th 2014).

Teacher leadership provided transactional leadership as well. Teachers that led committee chairs or other formal collaborations were expected to provide agendas, room assignments and provide on-site facilitation. Teachers in other informal scenarios provided leadership through idea expansion, facilitation of events and communication to the building principal. Teachers not only showed leadership but continually modeled a predisposition to collaboration.

One member of the PLC leadership team stated, “Well collaboration simply comes down to whether or not you are willing to collaborate or not.” The building

counselor also stated, “There is no part of the day that is absent of collaboration.” Both of these statements show that modeling and leadership provide an expectation of collaborative endeavors at Pinewood Elementary.

Principal Leadership

The teachers also recognized that collaborative leadership also came from the building principal. One staff member mentioned, “Her leadership style is democratic.. it is about working together, we get to have ownership over ideas and innovations.”

Another spoke of the building principal’s work ethic and involvement, “She lets us take the ownership, she models that too. She works just as hard if not harder.”

The principal spoke of what collaborative expectations were at Pinewood Elementary.

I see cohesive teams at Pinewood Elementary as one that work well together, they might disagree on things, but they still come up with the best solution. And a cohesive team is one that you know, also spreads the wealth. We all work together; it is kind of the glue that holds the whole thing together (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Also, the principal modeled expectations by leading her own collaborative group. She worked closely with the building PLC facilitator team to model expectations. She stated, “So like I facilitate my PLC leaders during a PLC planning, a half day before each PLC meeting.” She also sat in on other grade level meetings and would follow up with teachers and provide subtle modeling through questioning. In one interaction she specified,

I just had a critical conversation with a teacher I was going to go observe, and she said, “I think most of my kids know it.” I was like, “Stop, why are we teaching

it?” It’s about getting them to start to understand that we need to start to make decisions that benefit all the kids (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

The building principal routinely had these types of conversations with staff members. In another instance, the principal spoke of working with grade level teams and departments at Pinewood Elementary. When asked why do you collaborate with teams? she stated,

You know it is about really making decisions that are going to best meet the needs of kids. And really trying to get them to understand to that we have had such a strong focus on reading, literacy and math, and we need to continue that strong focus on literacy and math, but those two things alone, are not sufficient for lifelong learning (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Leadership by teachers and the principal established collaborative norms of operation for Pinewood Elementary. Leadership routinely emphasized collaborative decision making over isolationism and autonomy. Executing collaborative leadership is closely related to the process of establishing leadership. The execution of authentic leadership at Pinewood Elementary led to trust formation and professional respect as well as reciprocity amongst collaborative partners. The execution of authentic leadership provided insight into establishing and sustaining a culture of collaboration which is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 7 Case Study Findings: Tensions, Establishing and Sustaining a Culture of Collaboration

Pinewood Elementary presented itself as a school based on a collaborative culture. Pinewood staff spent time establishing a collaborative culture through processes that established mutuality, built trust and reciprocity and developed shared meanings. In addition, Pinewood took steps to sustain their collaborative culture over time. Sustaining was through the commitment to collaborative practices and the strengthening of collaborative bonds. The collaborative rituals and folkways at Pinewood Elementary helped establish and sustain the collaborative culture despite the presence of various tensions. Embedded throughout this chapter is the presence of collaborative influence through leadership. The following sections highlight these observations.

Tensions of Collaboration

Tensions of collaboration develop when barriers remain unaddressed and start to influence collaborative culture. This can be caused by a multitude of conditions, but several factors surfaced at Pinewood Elementary that were noteworthy. Conceptual barriers surfaced at Pinewood Elementary in the form of lack of perception, confidence, unhealthy competition, pride and comfort in surroundings. These conceptual barriers were often rooted in attitudes. Tensions also developed in collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary stemmed from an overall loss of control including engagement in unmeaningful work, loss of autonomy and a slower rate of development, or collaborative inertia. These tensions did not hinder collaborative work but were undercurrents that had the potential to dismantle collaborative culture.

Conceptual Barriers

Like pragmatic barriers referenced in chapter 6, conceptual barriers are more easily addressed than collaborative tensions. Conceptual barriers tended to be individual based and not organizational. These conceptual barriers were addressed through modeling and principal collaborative influence.

Lack of Perception

Lack of perception surfaced as one conceptual barrier. Lack of perception referred to the lack of understanding of diverse perspectives. Without an understanding of the other collaborative partner's perception, the new group had a hard time reaching shared understanding. When asked about barriers and why collaborative groups had previously failed, one member of the PLC facilitator group stated, "They don't really always think through perceptions of all of the stakeholders." The principal noted this barrier as well. When asked about diverse perspectives, she stated, "It might be something where I will have to say, let's back up the bus a little bit and be able to identify, are there going to be problems with the particular way we are going to do this?"

Collaborative Confidence

Another conceptual barrier was that of confidence. Confidence referred to the ability to be confident in one's own ideas and skills when entering a collaborative relationship. In a social exchange model, all of the entering parties need to have value to add in collaboration. One staff member noted that this was a barrier to successful collaboration, "When you lack confidence in what you are doing, it is difficult to be vulnerable in a collaborative relationship. You don't want to look naïve."

The principal was able to help staff members overcome this through exerting collaborative influence. In one instance, the principal recalled having an explicit conversation with one staff member. She stated,

I am like, you need to open your mouth, you need to start being a leader. She will say that is hard because it is not in her nature to do that. So I really had some conversations with her about how I really need her to start collaborating with your team and helping them make good instructional decisions (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

The building principal used collaborative influence to encourage collaborative expectations, which in turn affected grade level collaborative relationships.

Pride

Closely related to confidence is a barrier of pride. Pride proved to be a conceptual barrier to collaboration at Pinewood Elementary when specifically discussing data and scores. One staff member noted, “It is easy to become defensive about your data if you lack the ability to be vulnerable.” Another member of the PLC facilitator group stated, “It was a little intimidating when we first started looking at scores together, and you opened yourself up to what others were going to be able to see how you were, or how the students in your classroom did.” These two statements point to the need of trust to overcome pride in collaboration.

Comfort

Lastly, a final conceptual barrier that was identified was that of comfort. As staff members continue to exhibit increased levels of comfort in their positions, there may no

longer feel the need to reach for collaborative help. In other words, experience brings overconfidence. This high comfort level was captured in one staff member's experience.

I think there are different dynamics. I think also, the number, I don't know, I think the number of years you teach, you get into a routine and I think sometimes that is a barrier to change to because I have always done it that way. And I don't want that, it means I have to change my routine, not that we have a syllabus and on this day we do this and on this way we do this but we have a certain style, and this is interrupting how I like to do stuff (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

This staff member noted that although it was not exclusively a barrier to collaboration, it played a role or barrier to fully engaging in collaborative relationships. The building principal also acknowledged that personal comfort played a role for some of her staff member's ability to collaborate effectively. She stated,

So I think that it is hard for some people to collaborate because they are just introverts. Trying to get them to step out of their comfort zone at times and I try to encourage those types of people to do that, to start to be leaders in there and speak up (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Conceptual Barriers to collaboration were in existence at Pinewood Elementary. These barriers were not surprising in that collaboration takes time and energy and a predisposition. The building principal was aware of these and tended to confront these directly with collaborative influence through coaching and motivation when necessary. It seemed that awareness of these barriers within the school was not enough and that countermeasures were needed to be present to remove or fully minimize collaborative barriers for successful school improvement efforts to exist.

Collaborative Tensions

Collaborative tensions also existed at Pinewood Elementary. Collaborative tensions existed at the organizational level and were more deeply rooted in long-term feelings and dispositions. Tensions are more difficult to address on an individual level and needed collaborative organizational influence to overcome.

Engagement in Unmeaningful Work

One of the costs of engaging in collaborative decision making is the potential to engage in unmeaningful work. This was observed at Pinewood Elementary through various collaborative projects such as the holiday toy drive, Veteran's Program or door decorating contests. These were collaborative endeavors. However, not everyone agreed with the amount of time or energy put into the various projects. One staff member noted,

Some people are fired up about it; some are like great I have to decorate my door for Valentine's Day or whatever it is? I think we really have to walk that fine line of not making too much work for people. Also, make sure that we are not adding "fluff" to our school day. It takes away from instructional time (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

This comment points to the "fine line" of meaningful and unmeaningful work and finding value in the collaborative endeavor. The building principal was also aware of this fine line. She stated, "You know what, we have bumps in the road all the time, it is all about how we can come together, we can fix the problem, and we can move forward." The

principal acknowledged that these tensions need to be addressed and not let to sit and fester.

Loss of Autonomy

Both teaching staff and the building principal recognized that collaboration brings tension with autonomy. By sheer definition, collaboration is meant to co-labor with another party to reach a new shared identity. To do so, you have to give up autonomy to belong to a new collaborative group. This tension surfaced in teacher and principal voice at Pinewood Elementary.

One member of the PLC facilitator group spoke about the loss of autonomy in deciding where to spend work time.

I look at my grade level, and we have some very different styles down there in second grade. I think we are all trying to do our best to meet the needs for the kids but how we want to go about doing that we can kind of clash. There are some people that don't want to look at scores, I just want to teach, and some of us are going well yes, but we have to look at the scores because that is just how things are, but how can we still do the fun things (Interview, December 9th, 2014)?

In this instance, there was a loss of autonomy in being able to do the "fun things" rather than look at the data as directed by collaborative work. Another staff member spoke of over collaborating. When asked to explain further she stated, "You don't want to lose your individuality and your teaching style, so if it gets to a point where you are being told, or it is cookie cutter, then it is not worth it."

The building principal also spoke of a loss of autonomy when practicing collaboration. She specifically stated that it was hard to lose autonomy when looking at

decisions such as hiring. She mentioned, “I think when it comes to staffing, when I need to make staffing decisions for next year. I mean I do open the door a little bit.”

Additionally, she mentioned having to stop collaborative decisions as the building principal. “We can’t go down a path that I don’t feel is instructionally right or I don’t feel it is good for our school. There are times when I have to say no.”

Collaborative Inertia

Another relative tension in collaboration is the less rapid pace of development or collaborative inertia. Huxam (1996,p 4) defines collaborative inertia as “The apparent rate of work output from a collaboration is slowed down considerably compared to what a casual observer might expect it to be able to achieve.” This tension surfaced through staff comments and implicit observations. In a non-collaborative model, inertia can move quite fast through authoritative decision making and resource allocation. Through a collaborative model, ideas and innovations have to pass through multi layers of acceptance and shared identity making. The cost of this shared model is pace.

The slower pace of development was identified in the process of decision making. Staff members acknowledged that it took the time to move new ideas to action. One staff member stated, “Collaboration is great, but it definitely slows things down. I could get it done faster by myself, but it wouldn’t be nearly as good. Collaborating makes us think together and gets a better product.” Another staff member alluded to the slower pace of development in problem-solving students. One member of the Problem Solving team stated, “It’s important that we slow down and think collaboratively about what’s the best intervention for the student.” Another staff member mentioned in a grade level PLC, “Come on, let’s just get it done. We have talked about it enough [laughing]!”

The slower pace of development tended to provide a direct trade of pace of development for the quality of the product. Staff members recognized that this was a necessary tension and seemed to be willing to make the trade.

Staff Burnout

A final tension in collaborating is staff burnout. This exhibited itself at Pinewood Elementary through the building principal's explicit comments. The principal spoke of all of the collaborative work of Pinewood Elementary and its effect on teachers. She stated that they would not be able to accomplish anything without collaboration. She stated,

I wouldn't be able to do the job that I do with 815 kids by myself if I didn't have a collaborative staff. There is no way that I, myself, could sustain the high level of work that is being done by a multitude of committees or task forces or just people (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

She also acknowledged that this pace comes with a cost leading to a tension with collaborative work. She stated,

I think one of the other costs is that teachers work hard, they are tired and at the end-of-the-day I think that sometimes you can close your door and teach, but if you work together there is a lot of energy that gets expended as you are collaborating with people (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Tensions of collaboration are interrelated and had to be collectively minimized. As teachers lose autonomy, slow the pace of development and expend more energy, collaboration can lose a strategic collaborative advantage. Staff at Pinewood Elementary recognized these tensions and focused on the wins of collaboration to provide staff

incentive to engage in collaborative relationships. Perhaps, the building principal summarized this best when she stated, “It is amazing the work that gets done in our schools because of everybody and how they all pitch in.... Everybody just pitches in and nobody complains about it because they know they are a team.”

At Pinewood Elementary, these tensions were present but seemed to be mitigated by the positive climate, the presence of collegiality and shared values of keeping kids first.

Establishing Collaborative Culture

Culture plays an important role in establishing the folkways, or the way things are done in schools (Deal & Peterson, 2009). To establish a positive collaborative culture, Pinewood Elementary followed some essential processes and included essential components to allow collaboration to flourish.

Establishing Mutuality

Another essential cultural process of collaboration is the establishment of mutuality. Establishing mutuality refers to mutual benefits and goals necessary to thrive as a new identity. Thomson and Perry state, “Although information sharing is necessary for collaboration, it is not sufficient for it to thrive. Without mutual benefits, information sharing will not lead to collaboration (2006 p 27).” At Pinewood Elementary, staff showed signs of processing mutuality in overall school goals.

Establishing mutuality showed itself in multiple forms of commitment. The most discernable evidence came in repetitive mentions of an overall outcome for kids at Pinewood Elementary. Staff continually remarked about kids being the highest priority at Pinewood. In multiple instances, staff made verbal commitments to this mutual outcome. The counselor stated, “There is a genuine willingness to help all students

succeed with whole child teaching.” Another staff member of the PLC leaders group stated, “It is because this is an “Our Kids” school, not a “My Kids” school.” New staff members picked up on this mutuality. One new teacher stated, “Academic success for all students is important here. As a new staff member, I don’t want to let down the students, my team members or my school.” This idea of shared success showed an agreed upon mutuality of all members, regardless of individual group assignment or identity. The process of mutuality was reinforced through the collaborative relationships and outcomes of student success. It was evident that staff had a mutual understanding of the success of all kids. It was common to see different grade levels and departments collaborating about students outside of their assigned grade or department. There was mutual benefit in helping all students succeed.

This process of establishing mutuality is important for school leaders to remember in both overall identities, but also in daily collaborative outcomes. The school leader should remember that getting to mutuality is a process that starts with negotiations and ends with consensus. Mutuality is a key element in reaching collaborative relationships and not stalling at lower forms along the continuum of collaboration.

Building Trust and Reciprocity

The final essential cultural collaborative process is building trust and reciprocity. Trust formation is a key component of building successful collaborative relationships. Much literature expands on trust formation in schools as a predictive factor in school improvement (Daly, 2009) (Tschannen-Moran, 2009) (Tschannedn-Moran & Hoy, 2000) (Kochanek, 2005) (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 1999). Even more specific is selected literature on the impact of trust in collaborative settings (Tschannen-Moran, 2001)

(Thomson & Perry, 2006). As a process, trust formation and reciprocity is defined as a willingness to interact collaboratively only if other partners demonstrate the same willingness based on good faith efforts to adhere to collaborative commitments (Thomson & Perry, 2006).

Trust building and reciprocity were evident at Pinewood Elementary throughout the collaborative groups. In one instance, one of the PLC leaders stated, “Well collaboration simply comes down to whether or not you are willing to collaborate or not.” This statement defines a commitment to the process and showing reciprocity within groups. Another member spoke of trust building when she stated, “I think our facilitator group is pretty tight and trusting of each other, and we can be pretty open.” This trust is built over time as a process. Another PLC leader stated, “I think that because we have been doing that work, we are brave enough or comfortable enough to say whatever is on our mind. You know, we are very professional, but we can let somebody know, you know. We have trust.”

The principal also commented on follow through and support in building trust with grade level teams and departments.

And so as a team, if there is something that you need to do, like as grade levels, they are collaborating all the time on curriculum and instruction and if there are things that you need, let me know, I am going to try and find the money or resources to do that (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

These comments from staff members and the principal showed a willingness to get the work done. Increased trust allowed staff members to feel efficacy in self and

others to accomplish collaborative goals. Trust led to a reduction in anxiety and complexity that may be evident amongst teams or groups with lower trust.

Trust formation proved to play a crucial role in strengthening collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary. Trust has been shown to be a key element in building capacity and successful collaboration (Cosner, 2009; Mayer & Davis, 1995; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran, 2001). Pinewood Elementary staff seemed to recognize how collaborative trust was present and played a role in strengthening a collaborative bond.

New staff at Pinewood Elementary recognized the role of trust through early interactions in their tenure and employment. One new staff member stated, “We have team meetings every week. As a new staff member, it helped me get to know my new co-workers and start building trust early.” The school counselor also noted the importance trust played in strengthening collaboration. She mentioned, “By working with the grade levels we develop trust we get feedback to each other.” Follow through and understanding of capabilities seemed to strengthen the collaborative relationships for these staff members and their working relationships with others.

Trust formation and collaborative strengthening also were evident in the PLC facilitator group interview. One member stated, “I think our facilitator group is pretty tight and trusting of each other, and we can be pretty open.” Trust was present in doing the difficult work of leading and setting up systems of success. Another member followed with her own take on trust.

I think that because we have been doing that work, we are brave enough or comfortable enough to say whatever is on our mind. You know, we are very

professional, but we can let somebody know if we don't agree, you know, we have trust (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Trust also strengthened the bond of collaboration by allowing staff members to be vulnerable when seeking help. Again, it appeared that the shared value of helping kids be successful was a top priority and allowed staff members to be vulnerable. In responding to the idea of vulnerability, one PLC facilitator stated,

You can be more vulnerable when you do have that kid who you are like "Oh Help!" You can go to your colleague and say, without saying, I failed miserably, and you can go and your colleague isn't going to judge you because you're a lousy teacher (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Trust strengthened collaboration through the tightening of relationships. This tightening happened through reliability on other members to complete the work. It also allowed staff members to be real in their frustrations and emotions and validated their work on the collaborative team.

Development of Shared Meanings

Shared meanings are a signature attribute to a collaborative relationship. Throughout the field observation, it was evident that there shared meanings were developed regarding students and collaboration.

Shared Language

Shared meanings were established regarding students at Pinewood Elementary. One repeated phrase continued to surface and signaled a shared responsibility for students. Everyone spoke of the kids as "our kids." One PLC staff member confirmed this by stating:

It's because this is an "Our Kids" school. This is not a "My Kids" school; this is an "Our Kids" school, and it has been since I came, but it has only gotten stronger. I think we have all had the mentality that we look out for each other's kids, that we are teaching each other's kids (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Actions and commitments also confirmed shared meanings about collaboration and its purpose and place at Pinewood Elementary. The principal stated, "I think that for my teams of teachers, and as a whole school, collaboration is one of our keywords." Additionally, she stated, "We use it whether it is through our school-wide work or when we are down into committee work, PLC work, grade level work."

Staff members also found collaboration to be a shared meaning. They stated, "There is no part of the day that is absent of collaboration." Another stated, "There is an overall attitude and tone present that supports collaboration." Staff members routinely used collaborative meetings and collaborative language as a shared meaning.

Communal Experiences Building Shared Identity

A communal experience also proved to be a support of collaborative experiences at Pinewood Elementary. Communal experiences were occasions in which collaborative members were able to do things that brought them closer together in a shared identity. Shared identities were previously described as an indicator of collaborative relationships. One member of the icing group described this while describing her experience of visiting neighboring districts to visit "Job Alikes". Members of the icing group were staff members who did not have a similar position in the district. They were the only ones performing a certain job assignment. One member of the icing group stated, "It's just nice to collaborate with someone that gets your job. You don't have to spend time

convincing them of what is important, they just know, and we can move onto the important work.”

The PLC facilitators also spoke to this idea of communal experiences in response to being asked, “Why is it easy for you to collaborate?” One member went on to describe why it is not as easy at a high school or middle school.

I have worked at different levels before. It is just easier here at the elementary. In middle school, it is more factions. There is like factions of people and departments at the middle school because of the different subjects. It’s the same thing at the high school. They don’t see each other, eat with each other or have to work with each other as often. We do. We know what it is like in each other’s classrooms (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Another member added thoughts about communal experiences and the development of trust through experience.

I guess there are some people that I worked with for 12, 13 or 14 years at that grade level and you just kind of know what they are like, what they are thinking. You can shoot ideas off of them only because you have had that same experience. You can go and just discuss, and you can have some of those open discussions. It’s not every year where you maybe get a different person in that changes the dynamic like a little bit, but there is something with some people where I can go in, say what I am thinking (Interview, December 9th, 2015).

In these scenarios, a communal experience allowed staff members to build a higher level of understanding about needs and wants in the collaborative relationships. Staff members shared experiences that fostered empathy and trust. Their common

experiences brought them closer as a group to developing a shared identity. The collaborative relationships, whether formed internally or externally, provided an opportunity to share an identity, establish communal experiences that fortified collaborative partnerships.

Sustaining a Collaborative Culture

Staff members at Pinewood Elementary showed a considerable commitment to sustaining a collaborative culture. Sustaining the collaborative culture was made possible by the collaborative influence of both the building principal and the staff at Pinewood Elementary.

Commitment to Collaborative Practices

Groups and teams showed commitments in their words, collaborative actions, attitudinal norms and communal expectations of behavior. These day-to-day commitments continually reinforced the practices that supported a collaborative culture.

Commitment to Action

Throughout the case study visit, Pinewood staff verbally committed to the success of the school through a commitment to action. Observations of grade level PLC's showed each group set new 90-day goal that was built off of each other's ideas. In one 1st grade PLC meeting, the facilitator asked for a verbal confirmation by asking, "Everybody good with that?" The school counselor added to this commitment to action by talking about other collaborative groups. She stated, "Everyone is involved including parents and paraprofessionals in decision making." When asked about the commitment to collaborative action, the principal stated, "We use it [collaboration] whether it is

through our school-wide work or when we are down into committee work, PLC work, and grade level work.”

Commitment to Attitude

A commitment to collaborative practices was also noted in staff attitude. When speaking with the counselor, she spoke of staff attitude. She mentioned, “The attitude of the staff matters. The attitude of the staff affects the attitude of the kids.” This was also observed in field notes during PLC meetings. Staff would engage in task conflict and challenge each other’s ideas. These challenges were often present but were met with light-hearted response. Staff would challenge each other and follow it with positive body language including smiles and laughing.

The principal noted this as well. She stated, “I think there are a lot of attitudinal things to that [collaboration]. I think there are a lot of good attitudes. Attitudes that really we can work together, we can help with anything.”

Communal Expectations

Finally, staff showed a commitment to collaborative practice through communal expectations. Agendas for PLC grade level meetings contained agreed upon norms of behavior. These norms were followed in staff comments during PLC meetings. One 1st grade teacher commented on breaking norms by stating, “I was immediately thinking, “How can I fix it?”

These expectations were also evident for new staff members in the building. In an interview with new staff members, one teacher stated, “Academic success for all students is important here. As a new staff member, I don’t want to let down the students, my team members, or my school.”

Staff also spoke of the overall commitment of other staff members to collaborative expectations. One new staff member mentioned her observation of other staff by stating, “There is an open door policy here from everyone. Everyone has been so accepting and helpful. The other staff, the principal, the support staff, it makes it easy to work here.”

This was also evident through their commitment to each other. One PLC facilitator stated,

We hone in on one specific area that we all agree, K-4, plus specialists, plus interventionists, we can kind of see where everybody is and then as a facilitator group, then we go back to our own groups and kind of get them on board, which to be honest, is pretty easy at our school (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Auxiliary staff also committed themselves to success for all. The counselor stated, “There is a genuine willingness to help all students succeed with whole child teaching. There is a high expectation for success.” This commitment was also reiterated by the school secretaries. One mentioned in an interview that, “We have pride, and everyone wants to follow along. The teachers are good role models for the kids at Pinewood Elementary; they have committed to a standard of behavior.”

The principal also noted the existence of communal expectations at Pinewood Elementary. She noted that this was a joint endeavor by all staff. She noted that she gathered information from multiple sources.

We developed what the expectations were, what were the by-laws, what was our vision and mission our values our goals for our school. And then we took all that

information that I gathered in my meeting and then we started to create (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

The principal also noted that her expectations played a key role in maintaining norms of collaborative behavior. She eluded through multiple interactions that her job was to realign staff to a collaborative orientation. In a personal interview, she stated,

I think that as the leader you have to state what you expect when it comes to collaboration. This will be a collaborative team, and these are the things I expect from you. It was one of the things they told me over and over that we don't collaborate. We don't get along. I wouldn't say that at all right now (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

The principal mentioned that the collaborative norms and expectations were not by accident. "I really work hard that everybody has something that they are on. Nobody is not on something. Everybody has got a place to contribute for school." She noted about the staff resilience in maintaining a commitment to the norms of collaboration.

You know what, we have bumps in the road all the time, it is all about how we can come together, we can fix the problem, and we can move forward. You know what are your ideas and how can we work together to help solve this problem (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Attitudinal Supports

Study data at Pinewood Elementary identified multiple sources of attitudinal support mechanisms that helped provide positive reinforcements of collaborative culture. This includes positive team environments and professional respect. At Pinewood Elementary, many staff members identified their teams as having positive team

environments and were supported through professional respect. These environments manifested themselves in comments and observed dispositions from staff members.

Positive Team Environments

Positive team environments were verified by the building principal. She stated, “Everybody just pitches in, and nobody complains about it because they know they are a team.” When asked about the origin of these attitudes, the principal felt ownership over these attitudes and behaviors in her school. She mentioned of her role, “I think one of the things as a principal that I believe is that I set the tone for my building for having a positive attitude.” This exemplifies the building leader’s role in providing collaborative influence.

The building problem-solving team showed signs of a highly positive team environment. The group agreed to a focus group session at the end of the work day. This focus group interview occurred outside of the contracted day. Even with this context, staff members were happy, engaging and laughing with each other. When asked specifically about their team environment, one staff member simply stated, “We clearly have fun!”

Another staff member spoke about the environment with further details. She stated, “We have real relationships with each other. When we come to work, it is enjoyable and fun. We work hard, but we also have fun.” This collaborative camaraderie seemed to permeate the staff at Pinewood elementary. Collaborative camaraderie was also evident in the way in which the team represented itself as a unit with other building teachers or groups. One member captured this by simply stating, “We build relationships with the staff.” Positive relationships were attributed to internal collaborative

interactions and extended to the entire staff. Another staff member indicated, “There is generally a high level of professionalism for everyone in our building. The teachers, paras, administration, treat each other with respect.”

Positive team environments were not only localized to one team. Multiple staff members commented on how their team environment plays an important part in being collaborative. This positive environment was extended very early for one new staff member. She stated, “My teammates reached out to me early. As soon as I was hired I had building staff reaching out to me, even during the summer.” She also commented on the building staff in general by saying, “There is lots of encouragement between school members.”

The PLC facilitators group also spoke of positive team environments being a necessary support for collaborative work. They spoke of feeling safe, welcomed and fun in their group. One staff member stated, “I am willing to be vulnerable and open up but just to say, I am having a weakness here, and I am needing help, can you help me?” Another one accurately described their environment on a day-to-day basis through fun interactions and collegial connections and how it was encouraged by the building principal.

I think, here is the bottom line, a lot of times teams are eating together, and a lot of times, sometimes we’ll talk school and sometimes it is just absolute laughing. Like Mrs. Johnson will be like, “I can tell first grade is having lunch together, It’s really loud again today!” It’s not a bad thing, that’s encouraged that we laugh together, and cry together, and support each other and have fun and do stuff

outside of school sometimes that is what makes it easier to do stuff inside school.

It does, it makes it fun (Interview, December 9th, 2014)!

The building principal reinforced this idea by speaking of her staff, “ Nobody complains. They want to help each other. They are here for the right reason.” The principal also recognized that this environment was her responsibility. “I think one of the things as a principal that I believe is that I set the tone for my building for having a positive attitude.”

At Pinewood Elementary, positive team environments supported collaboration by allowing a safe environment for the exchange of ideas, adult learning and growth. This safe environment was set by the principal through collaborative influence. Positive team environment also set a tone as an antecedent for the process of trust-building and reciprocity between collaborative groups. Staff was allowed to share ideas freely in a positive environment rather than one of high conflict and anxiety. Collaborative relationships were built on the exchange of information and ideas. Without a positive team environment, ideas and problem-solving may have been stifled and not allowed to grow.

Professional Respect

Another support for successful collaboration was the climate of professional respect among staff members. Quite often staff members displayed professional respect in the conversations with each other by offering nonverbal feedback such as heads nodding and following up with clarifying questions of the participants. Acceptance and professional respect were evident through verbal and body language. Group members

displayed good listening skills and repeated back ideas for clarification. One staff member on the Problem-Solving team captured this by stating,

Our professionalism is respected and appreciated. I think that is one thing that I really love about working here. I know that I am a professional, even on days when I don't feel like a professional, like the days you show up in jammies [laughing] (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Understanding and empathy were present as evident through body language and verbal cues. Again this support allowed staff members to act and treat others with professional respect in collaborative interactions allowing for continued development of trust. These actions were often reciprocated and helped establish acceptable norms of group interactions for collaborative success.

Strengthening Bonds of Collaboration

The day-to-day operations of collaboration were strengthened through minute daily interactions as well. The inclusion of small nuances strengthened the bond staff had around collaborative practices. Although these were not as intentional as some of the other supports to collaboration such as process, structure and resources, they played a key a role in strengthening collaboration at Pinewood Elementary. Observations and interactions showed that humor, teasing, food and competition were positive influences on collaborative relationships. On a broader level, these were made possible through the strengthening of trust and principal modeling.

Collegial Teasing and Humor

Staff interactions throughout the case study visit showed a high level of collegial teasing and humor were present at collaborative meetings. Staff routinely used humor as a mechanism of bonding. Laughter and collegial teasing were observed in every group observation and group interview. Staff members were quick to tease about each other's classroom spaces, clothes, lunches and even appearances. It was evident that having fun was a highly supportive mechanism at Pinewood Elementary. One PLC member stated,

Like Mrs. Johnson will be like, "I can tell first grade is having lunch together, It's really loud again today!" It's not a bad thing, that's encouraged that we laugh together, and cry together, and support each other and have fun and do stuff outside of school sometimes that is what makes it easier to do stuff inside school. It does, it makes it fun (Interview, December 9th, 2014)!

Having fun was also mentioned by the building principal. The building principal made a concerted effort to provide fun activities at staff meetings and group interactions. One example was the use of Bingo. Each year at holiday time, one staff meeting is dedicated to Bingo with donated prizes from the community. The building principal stated, "It is important to reward and give staff a break. They work hard and need time to celebrate." Also, during the site visit, which was conducted close to a holiday break, the staff lounge was decorated and filled with holiday cards and words of encouragement. This was an annual ritual at Pinewood Elementary. During lunch breaks, all staff was congregating in the lounge and laughing. At one point, the building secretaries had to close the door as it was so full of laughter. This brought attention to another strengthening element of collaboration, communal food.

Communal Food

The staff at Pinewood Elementary used food to strengthen bonds of collaboration. In field observation of collaborative meetings, there was food present at each interaction. The food was shared, passed and encouraged to consume. A wide variety was present including chocolate, fruit, pizza, donuts and candy. The treats were always communal and shared amongst collaborative participants. When asked about the presence of food at these meetings, one member of the site council noted that “Treats are rotated between team members.” Staff members used the food to share and bond communal experience of collaboration. It was also noted that most staff members ate together daily. This informal collaborative context was often used to problem-solve and coordinate daily activities. The food was also used to celebrate personal achievements. One morning, grade level staff members were noted eating cake during breakfast hours to celebrate a birthday. This observation was filled with laughter, smiling and ribbing.

Healthy Competition

Another element that strengthened the bond if collaboration was healthy competition. It was observed and noted that collaborative groups often become in-tune with each other’s classroom progress and achievements. One kindergarten staff member noted, “When we get together, we talk about pacing, about how students are performing. Sometimes I am like, Whoa! I need to get going on this unit; I am behind.” One Problem Solving team member stated,

There are some things like guided reading that is big this year, and we are, some of us are further along than others, and I think us pushing each other is helping in that collaboration. Those that aren’t as far as some of the others ones than their back in the

room saying I really need to get going because those people are going. And that is that competition thing that kicks in, but it is all a good feeling.

Another member of the problem-solving team spoke of the commitment of other staff members on committee work. She stated, "Seeing how people are involved makes me want to be involved" At Pinewood, healthy competition drove collaborative groups to coordinate their efforts and stay together and stay on pace. It set an expectation that this is how things are done and staff members strove to keep pace with building commitments in meeting kids needs and contributing to the shared values of the school.

Principal Modeling

Pinewood Elementary School's principal showed considerable collaborative influence through strengthening the bond of collaborations by modeling. Many staff members at Pinewood Elementary recognized the role that the principal played in strengthening collaborative bonds. The principal routinely modeled collaborative behavior in her interactions with staff by setting collaborative expectations, redirecting unwanted behavior and empowering staff.

The school secretaries took note of the principal's influence on the rest of the school. One stated, "Dianne's leadership helps the school work as a team. She is a good role model for the rest of the staff." They also spoke of the repeated messaging of the principal about school success and working collaboratively. The secretary revealed that, "Mrs. Johnson tells us that success will breed success."

Staff at Pinewood also recognized that the principal modeled collaborative behavior and work ethic. In the PLC Facilitator interview one member stated, "She lets us take the ownership, she models that too. She works just as hard if not harder." This

was confirmed by the school counselor. She stated, “Her leadership style is democratic, it is about working together, we get to have ownership over ideas and innovations.”

The building principal also confirmed the shared values by exhibiting her collaborative influence through her own words. The principal routinely held critical conversations with staff members to reinforce collaborative behavior. She regularly held collaborative meetings with individual staff members to lead them to better student decisions. In one interaction, she retold of one instance.

I just had a critical conversation with a teacher I was going to go observe, and she said, “I think most of my kids know it.” I was like, “Stop, why are we teaching it?” Getting them to start to understand that we need to start to make decisions (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Her actions also modeled collaborative leadership. The principal worked collaboratively with members to co-develop meeting agendas, establish effective teams through the placement of staff members and coaching individual members to speak up at meetings.

Most importantly, teachers understood that the building principal was part of the Pinewood team. In addition, the principal seemed to understand the importance of showing effort and understanding when working with her staff. When asked about this alignment with staff, the building principal stated,

I am right there with them; my teachers would say I am in the trenches with them all the time. I think that show to that I care about the work that they do, that I see us on an equal playing field you know when it comes to working together (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Bonds of collaboration were strengthened on a daily basis at Pinewood Elementary. Small yet powerful elements proved to strengthen collaborative relationships and help to institutionalize collaborative practices for school improvements. Some of these items were subtle such as collegial teasing and humor, communal food and healthy competition.

Other items proved to weigh in with a heavier impact such as trust formation and principal modeling. These items played an important role in strengthening the bonds of collaboration. They providing an engaging daily environment were staff members felt safe to show vulnerability, understood expectations of collaboration and were shown and supported by the building leadership.

Conclusion

The Case Study visit proved to be very valuable in collecting data on everyday practices of collaboration for school improvement.

In addition, the on-site visit showed pragmatic examples of the different types of collaboration including internal and external applications and the value of organic collaboration. Throughout these applications, essential collaboration components were also identified in practice such as process, structures, support mechanisms and leadership.

The site visit showed how to maintain a collaborative culture as well. Maintaining a collaborative culture was the responsibility of the entire organization, but was primarily modeled by the building principal. Maintaining a collaborative culture also included recognizing the barriers and tensions that collaboration creates.

Finally, the site visit showed some of the long-term benefits including positive work environments, positive external perceptions and leadership development.

Collaboration proved to accomplish many facets of positive building outcomes that were not limited to simply accomplish a given task, but related to an overall culture of positivity, efficacy and belief in a larger mission of helping kids succeed.

Establishing and sustaining a culture of collaboration at Pinewood Elementary was an initial intentional focus. Both the staff and principal paid particular attention to developing shared meanings, commitment to behavior and installing predispositions to collaborative behavior. This maintenance allowed Pinewood Elementary to install collaboration as a key expectation of staff work together. This development and nurturing allowed collaboration to thrive throughout the school with little authoritative oversight allowing staff to focus on using collaboration to improve the school rather than focus on collaboration itself.

Chapter 8: Case Study Findings The Effects of Collaboration

Collaboration had both short and long term effects on Pinewood Elementary. These effects gave credence to the collaborative partnerships while improving the school program. The short-term effects included increased teacher efficacy, improved work efficiency and the ability to attain school goals. Long-term effects impacted school and community culture and included positive work relationships, positive external perceptions, and leadership development.

Short Term Wins of Collaboration

Short-term developments of successful collaboration seem to have led to several desirable outcomes at Pinewood Elementary including developing teacher efficacy, promotion of efficiency and reaching school improvement goals. The presence of short-term wins led to increased collaborative inertia and buy-in from collaborative groups by producing tangible collaborative results for partners

Teacher Efficacy

The building of teacher efficacy was noticed through several unique observations. Teacher efficacy was built by enhancing teachers professional knowledge through social exchanges with other team and building members as well as external collaborative partners. Social exchange refers to the exchange of value between collaborative partners. For the social exchange to be successful, members that engage in collaboration must have a positive net social capital or believe in a collaborative advantage. In collaborative terms, this means that the outcome must be greater than the costs of collaborating. Collaborative partners give up such items as autonomy, time and other financial resources to participate. Two short-term outcomes were enhanced at Pinewood

Elementary through social exchange that bore a positive net gain after the loss of autonomy and time.

Professional learning communities were a strong part of the collaborative culture at Pinewood Elementary. Staff routinely engaged in set monthly meetings that centered on student learning, curricular enhancement, and resource allocation. The short-term outcome was about professional learning to problem solve immediate needs.

The professional learning outcomes were intentionally designed before the beginning of the year and each month by a collaborative, interdepartmental team that determined highest priority needs for Pinewood based on student data. The subsequent professional learning has both short and long term effects on teacher efficacy in meeting student needs. One staff member stated,

So, I am new this year, so some of this is all new to me as we are going through the process, but one of the first meetings we had was looking at a bunch of the data, what is the data showing, what areas, for me in second grade do we seem to be struggling a little bit more with and trying to discuss as a whole group ideas. It gives me hope that we can make a difference (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Staff found hope and solace in working together for student achievement by planning around professional learning. Again, shared values surfaced in the value of working together for student success. Professional learning led to the second finding regarding teacher empowerment. Another staff member commented on this theme by stating,

Everybody really hears us, they are here for the right reason, to try and encourage the kids to do better, and it is all about kids, when we go back to our grade levels,

or our specialists group, it is pretty easy just to tell them what we decided, this is our focus. Everybody understands that if we work together, we can get this done (Interview, December 9th, 2015).

Empowerment also showed itself in grade-level observations of PLC meetings. In one meeting, the staff showed signs of verbal commitments when examining the days PLC tasks. One staff member stated explicitly, "I really feel like we can get them done!" While another in the same meeting mentioned, "We are learning a lot!" These types of responses and attitudes were common among Pinewood staff. There was a general sense of optimism about reaching school goals and affecting student achievement.

In a problem-solving team interview, several staff members mentioned empowerment as teamwork. One member stated, "We have a shared team workload. We do this together, and we get it done." Another stated, "We can accomplish so much when we work as a team I wouldn't want to do this any other way." In addition to teamwork, some spoke of empowerment as ownership. One member stated, "I think we have worked just as hard; it is just that we get more ownership over it, rather than being told what to do, we get to help make that choice."

Also, it was also shared that the building principal set the tone for empowerment through her trust. One staff member stated, "She empowers us to do the best by letting us know that our opinions matter. In an interview, the principal spoke of this idea of empowerment. She stated, "You know I think that it is not that I am the principal, and I am going to dictate to you, it about what we feel like as a group." One PLC member mentioned the building principal and empowerment. As stated

earlier, “She lets us take the ownership; she models that too. She works just as hard if not harder.

The building principal showed a belief in empowerment that was afforded to staff members in the democratized approach to decision making and direction. At Pinewood, many staff members felt empowered to make decisions that were best for kids. This empowerment showed to be true as extended from the principal to the staff members.

Work Efficiency

Collaboration also shows short-term effects through providing an environment that is more efficient. At Pinewood Elementary several staff members found collaboration helpful in meeting day-to-day routines and tasks. In several of the field observations of grade-level PLCs, routine tasks were split up for efficiency. Tasks such as copying and filing were joint efforts by members. In one meeting, there was a verbal commitment to collaborating around the workload as staff members stated, “I’ll do that, and get it to you” and “We should split that up.” Another staff PLC facilitator stated, “We also all have our own job within our grade level like, Sara makes the reading copies, and Rita makes the math copies, you know so we all take jobs like that too.”

Also, the school secretaries spoke of the effects of workload reduction. “We have a shared workload; it is expected of us.” They also spoke of the collaborative environment and stated, “It makes the job easier and more efficient.”

Workload reduction promoted efficiency at Pinewood Elementary. The staff was generally concerned about working together. In addition, it seemed to be again an

expectation of the building principal. Although workload reduction is a lower state of collaboration, it signals a shared identity and desire to operate as a functional team.

Attaining School Goals

Pinewood Elementary staff routinely used collaboration as a means to reach school goals. There seemed to be a general understanding that collaboration made goal attainment possible. Pinewood staff used PLC's to reach school-wide goals. The building PLC team met at the beginning of the year to set goals. Each month the PLC facilitators met to collaborate around next steps. These steps were, in turn, carried out in grade level and department PLCs. Further explanation was given by one PLC member,

We hone in on one specific area that we all agree, K-4, plus specialists, plus interventionists, we can kind of see where everybody is and then as a facilitator group, then we go back to our own groups and kind of get them on board, which to be honest, is pretty easy at our school (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

PLC staff talked about the role of collaboration in reaching school goals. One PLC spoke of reaching goals and stated, "A lot of it is having goal setting, common goals where we are going to work on, the main one is reading."

Goal attainment was the main focus of collaborative groups at Pinewood Elementary. The structures and resources were aligned for team members to align building goals with grade level goals. The building principal recognized this and supported this by leading the PLC facilitators in setting building-wide goals.

Collaboration played unique roles at Pinewood Elementary in developing teacher efficacy, promoting efficiency and reaching school goals. The staff and building

principal recognized the utility in these roles and routinely allocated time, structure and resources to allow collaboration to flourish.

Long Term Benefits of Collaboration

Pinewood Elementary showed long-term benefits of fostering a collaborative culture. These established folkways of collaborative culture set a basis for a successful school. Such benefits showed a propensity to affect work relationships, external perceptions, and leadership development. The next sections reflect on the specific ideas found at Pinewood Elementary and their effect on long-term benefits.

Positive Work Relationships

Long term positive relationships were evident through both observations and comments made by staff members. It was clear through observations that the positive relationships at Pinewood Elementary were strong and long lasting. Visible signs of positive relationships throughout the building were found in attitude and disposition towards helping each other with tasks and a willingness to serve. Beyond that, it was clear that friendships played a key role in positive collaborative experiences. Friendships were built upon professional relationships that began to transcend into life relationships. One PLC leader spoke of this idea of friendship when describing a preschool pod meeting. He said, “You build up to that point, we didn’t talk school for 15 minutes; we talked life.” Another second-grade staff member spoke about life friendships by talking about celebrating friendships,

I had my birthday on Sunday and on Friday; one of my colleagues made a cake, at 7:55 we go out and sit in the pod and for 15 minutes we had cake while the kids

were starting to come in. We have always done that (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Professional relationships through collaboration often helped with the building of positive relationships. Through data collaborations and talking about kids, the staff members routinely mentioned the long term benefit of positive relationships that were built. One PLC member stated,

I feel like that is probably beyond the data setting and the trend looking and the strategy hashing out, I feel like the building of relationships with each other as professionals, respecting and understanding that we come from strengths, I feel like that is just huge (Interview, December 9th, 2014).

Another PLC leader mentioned again that relationships were built through collaborative meetings. She stated, “I feel like at facilitator meetings, we get a chance, vertically again, to build those relationships with each other.” The collaborative camaraderie was mentioned as a building block to positive relationships. The collaborative camaraderie was intentionally built through activities in collaborative meetings. A PLC Leader spoke of this initial building through activities, “Last year our theme was “Play, be there and have fun!” We started each PLC meeting with some kind of activity that helped to get to know your teammates a little bit.” Comradery was also built through day-to-day interactions and through weekly PLC meetings. Another PLC Leader stated, “Now it wasn’t as detailed or maybe as focused as PLC’s direct, but you get that camaraderie there, that discussion at least once a week which, I think, has been very helpful. “ Positive relationships seemed to be a byproduct of collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary.

Positive External Perceptions

Positive External Perceptions was also a long term benefit of collaborative relationships at Pinewood Elementary. Staff members alluded to this benefit in both recruiting and hiring of new staff, and the attraction of families to the Pinewood district.

In an interview with the Problem Solving team, one team member stated that she chose to be a part of this district. She practices in a highly sought after position that is hard to fill and stated, “I could work anywhere. I choose to come here because everyone knows this is a good place to work. I drive over an hour to get here every day, but I love it here.” Another PLC member stated, “I worked in other districts, even a parochial school, I wanted to work here.”

This positive external perception also was noted by the school secretaries. In an interview, they stated, “We get inquiries all the time about open enrollment. Parents want to come to his school. They tell me all the time that they heard we are the best.” When asked specifically about the parent perception of Pinewood Elementary they noted that parents want to be a part of the school, they volunteer regularly and even make an effort to dress in the school colors when they come to volunteer. In their words, “Parents feel proud to be a part of this school.”

The building principal also took note of this external positive perception.

You know I think the word is out there that Pinewood Elementary is a great school to come to. I have two open enrollees that started yesterday. We are just getting a lot of open enrollment in the area and I think it is just that the word on the street is that we are doing a good job and that we have great teachers and that we have teachers that care about their kids (Interview, November 25th, 2014).

Positive external perceptions help continue and confirm the work that staff was doing in collaborative work for school improvement. It fed the positive work environment and helped to institutionalize collaborative work as standard work at Pinewood Elementary. The collaborative and collegial atmosphere both contributed to the reputation of Pinewood and continually attracted future staff that contributed to the positive and collaborative atmosphere.

Leadership Development

A final long-term benefit of collaboration at Pinewood Elementary was leadership development. Leadership development was evident through the distributed authority and decision making of committees and principal modeling of behavior. Committees were used as fertile grounds to develop teacher leadership at Pinewood Elementary.

The use of Committee Chairs was used to develop teacher leaders. Much authority was given to chairs in structuring direction and setting agendas. In addition, through observations, it was clear that the committee chairs were not just placeholders, but ran the meetings, even if the principal was in attendance. In one site team meeting, the co-chairs welcomed members to the group, began the meetings and facilitated the discussion. This was also evident through the PLC facilitators group. The principal noted, "Our professional learning communities have PLC facilitators, so of the nine groups that I have, there is one facilitator for each of the nine groups." The principal also stated, "I am a firm believer in building capacity of my staff and creating and empowering leaders."

This development was also confirmed by staff comments. The school counselor noted, "There is definitely inclusiveness in leadership here." Another PLC leader stated,

“She supports us with our leadership!” In speaking of decision making, another PLC members stated, “We have more empowerment to be actively involved in the process, versus, like I said, being told to do this.”

Through empowerment, staff at Pinewood Elementary built their own leadership capacity over time. Staff leadership was evident through their leadership on committee memberships, decision making and empowerment. Collaborative structures at Pinewood allowed leadership to blossom and take root actively changing empowerment, efficacy and moral.

Chapter 9: Conclusions and Implications Regarding Collaboration for School Improvement

This mixed method research study led to a deeper understanding of the implications for school leaders using collaboration for school improvement. The combination of quantitative and qualitative measures gave considerable insight into how to quantify collaboration interactions in elementary schools and identify interactions of collaborative strength, the development of collaboration on a continuum, organizational structures, establishing and sustaining collaborative cultures, and the short and long term effects of collaboration on schools. Table 9.1 summarizes the dimensions of collaborations found through the case study research at Pinewood Elementary.

Table 9.1 Summary of Dimensions of Collaboration		
Organizational Structures	Collaborative Cultures	Tensions And Barriers
Types of Collaboration a. Internal ✓ Formal ✓ Informal b. External ✓ Parents ✓ Community	Establishing Culture a. Mutuality b. Building Trust and Reciprocity c. Development of Shared Meanings	Barriers a. Pragmatic ✓ Time ✓ Financial ✓ Proximity b. Conceptual ✓ Lack of Perception ✓ Collaborative Confidence ✓ Pride ✓ Comfort
Essential Components 1. Essential Processes ✓ Governance ✓ Administration ✓ Organizational Autonomy 2. Communication 3. Representative Structures 4. Support Mechanisms ✓ Transactional Support ✓ Adequate Opportunity ✓ Transformational Support	Sustaining Culture a. Commitment to Collaborative Practices ✓ Action ✓ Attitude ✓ Expectations b. Attitudinal Supports ✓ Positive Team Environments ✓ Professional Respect c. Strengthening Bonds of Collaboration ✓ Collegial Teasing and Humor ✓ Communal Food ✓ Healthy Competition ✓ Principal Modeling	Tensions a. Engagement in Unmeaningful Work b. Loss of Autonomy c. Collaborative Inertia d. Staff Burnout

Summary

Chapter four identified the results of using the Levels of School Collaboration scale to capture staff perceptions of various interaction scenarios. Participants were asked to view themselves in two nested viewpoints, as an individual teacher and as a team. The tool was useful in helping individual sites identify both collaborative strengths and areas of improvement. School leaders could use this instrument when taking inventory of current collaborative practices in their school. Through this tool, Pinewood Elementary emerged as a site of promising practices.

Overall results from the quantitative phase one showed that sites varied on the intensity of collaborative relationships and that no consistent pattern was evident regarding interaction scenarios between sites. However, when individual site interaction scores were added to other scores and averaged at compared using composite collaborative scores, an interesting pattern emerged.

Collaborative composite scores for each interaction scenario decreased as scenarios moved from internal to external stakeholders. The highest score was teacher to teacher collaboration, with the lowest score being team to community. The evidence from this grouping of school seems to support the difficulty in maintaining external collaborative relationships for schools and is linked to the findings on creating and sustaining a shared identity in chapter 7. Further reflection led to the development of the Model of Competing Collaborative interests (Figure 4.1).

The Model of Competing Collaborative interests helps school leaders identify the needed level of collaborative intensity when initiating and maintaining relationships. School leaders should note the increased level of difficulty when traveling from internal to external. School leaders may also need to identify and remove both pragmatic and conceptual barriers in order to continue to move from internal to external collaborative partnerships.

The first steps for school leaders looking to initiate and sustain collaborative partnerships are to take inventory. The Levels of School Collaboration scale gives context and quantifiable results to schools looking to begin or intensify collaborative relationships.

Chapter 5 examined Pinewood Elementary School's use of collaboration as identified on the Collaboration Continuum of Interactions (Figure 5.1). Often, schools refer to any intensity of interactions as collaboration. At times, collaboration is confused as the goal and not the means to a specific purpose. In practice, collaboration occurs at varying levels of intensity including networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition and collaboration. It takes time, energy and skill to maintain high levels of collaboration, but without purpose it is meaningless.

Pinewood Elementary School's intensity was often directed by the specific purposes chosen for collaboration. Purposes identified at Pinewood included curriculum development, program development, student achievement, idea expansion, problem-solving, team development and professional support. Although there are undoubtedly more purposes than identified at Pinewood, purposes played a key role in identifying how much intensity was dedicated to each collaborative relationship at this site.

Chapter 6 examined the organizational structures present at Pinewood Elementary and their role in providing supports for collaborative relationships. Defining structures included the different types and essential components of collaboration.

The building principal seemed to be very mindful of the structural components of collaboration. There was adequate opportunity embedded throughout the school schedule to accommodate internal collaborations, but also time and structure was dedicated to fostering external collaborative relationships. This was in part due to the collaborative influence of the building principal. She dedicated morning contract time to facilitate collaborative meetings, but also used resources to embed collaboration during the school day.

The building principal's collaborative influence also connected external groups with the school. The building principal was very connected to outside agencies such as local faith and community organizations that supported the school. Through her collaborative influence, these informal connections intensified and became formal relationships in supporting students and developing curriculum.

It was also found that particular processes were important in initiating supportive collaborative structures including governance, administration and establishing organizational autonomy. These processes were important in the early development stages of the collaborative relationships. Governance led to the development of committee structures at Pinewood. The committee structures helped governance of initiatives and specific purposes of collaboration. Administration referred to the oversight of the collaborative groups. The use of formal roles such as chairs, note takers, timekeepers delineated specific duties and helped keep collaborative groups on task. Organizational autonomy was an important process in establishing shared identity. Pinewood Elementary did an exceptional job of identifying their roles before engaging in collaborative partnerships. Much attention was given to a school identity at the surface level with school colors and attachment to school identity. Beyond surface level identity, the school had a deep undercurrent of organizational autonomy in the purpose of the school. The school repeatedly recited that kids were the priority and that this was a kids first school.

Throughout the site visit, support mechanisms were in place to support collaborative partnerships. Support mechanisms played an important role of allowing collaborative partnerships to thrive. These supports included transactional supports,

adequate opportunity and transformational supports. Transactional Supports allowed time and resources to be diverted to collaborative partnerships. Adequate opportunity for collaboration was given to staff members. Repeated opportunities allowed staff members to continually reinforce the collaborative culture and meet expectations. Finally, leadership played a key role in supporting collaboration at Pinewood Elementary. Teacher leadership was developed and allowed to make decisions in collaborative partnerships. Also, Principal leadership was crucial in supporting collaboration. The building principal repeatedly guided and recentered collaborative partnerships through words and actions. Staff recognized the leadership of the principal and repeatedly looked to her for guidance and direction. The principal leadership modeled collaborative influence for the staff at Pinewood Elementary.

Chapter 7 recognized the importance of establishing and sustaining a collaborative culture. A key attribute of a collaborative culture is being aware of collaborative tensions.

Pinewood Elementary had a keen understanding of the tensions of collaboration including conceptual barriers such as lack of perceptions, collaborative confidence, pride, and comfort. Lack of attention to the conceptual barriers led to collaborative tensions among staff including engagement in unmeaningful work, loss of autonomy, slowing of collaborative inertia and staff burnout. Staff and leadership at Pinewood mitigated these potential negative effects by establishing and maintaining a collaborative culture.

Collaborative culture at Pinewood Elementary allowed collaboration to be part of the ethos and core values of the school. Early processes of establishing mutuality and building trust and reciprocity helped establish a shared understanding between

collaborative groups and trust to grow. Collaborative exchanges developed shared language and communal experiences that continually added to the collaborative culture.

Finally, Pinewood Elementary sustained a collaborative culture through a commitment to collaborative practices. Commitments to collaborative practices included a commitment to action, attitude, and expectations. It was the collective, collaborative influence of all staff members at Pinewood that sustained collaborative success. Positive team environments and professional respect were evident through numerous interactions on a day-to-day basis. In addition, the bonds of collaboration were strengthened through the presence of collegial teasing and humor, communal food, healthy competition and principal modeling. Pinewood Elementary's dedication to collaborative culture benefited the school's ability to improve and had short and long lasting effects for the school.

Chapter 8 captured the short and long term effects of collaboration at the school. Collaborative cultures have the ability to change schools for the better. Short term wins due to collaboration included teacher efficacy, work efficiency, and attainment of school goals. Short term wins add to the positive collaborative inertia. Long-term effects of collaboration allowed a lasting positive impact on the school. These effects included positive work relationships, positive external perceptions and leadership development.

Implications for School Leaders

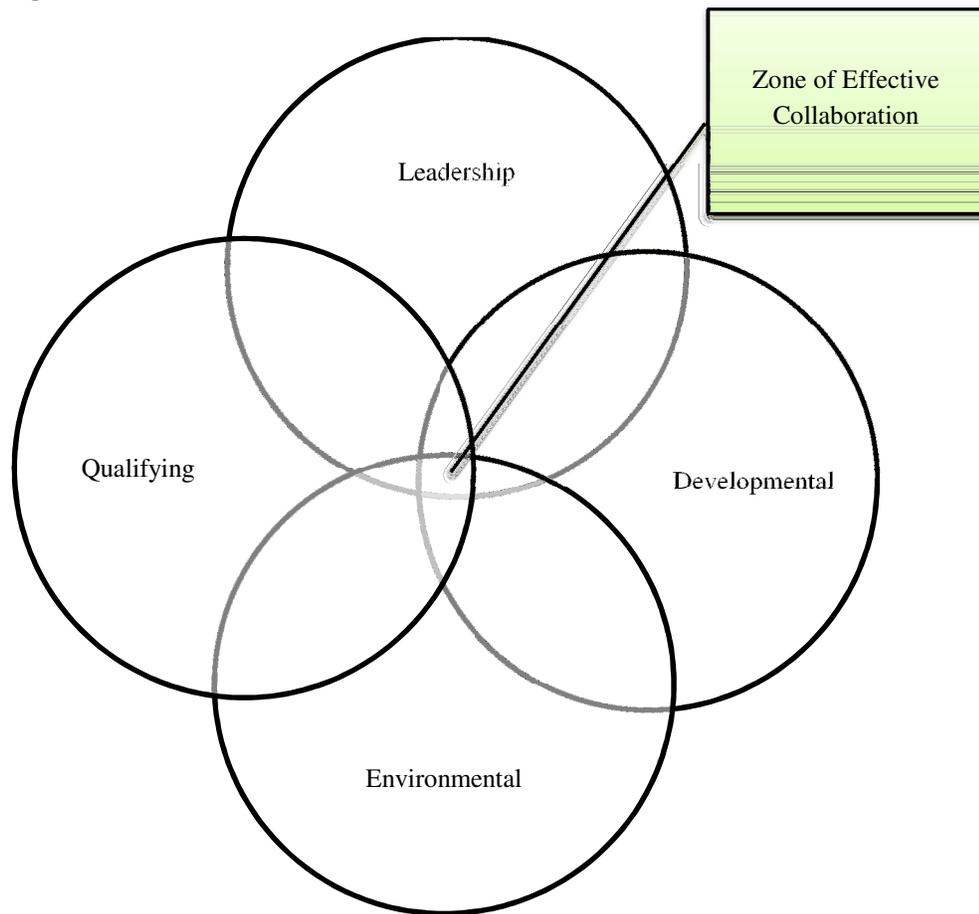
School improvement efforts utilizing collaboration takes mastery, mindfulness, and authentic leadership to create a lasting collaborative culture. School leaders should note the intricacies and nuances in using collaboration for such purpose and not introduce expectations without considerable work and attention to the contexts that are both ready and conducive to collaborative work. Figure 8.1 outlines the four contexts school leaders

need to recognize. These contexts play a critical role in school leader's cognitive awareness when establishing and sustaining collaborative partnerships and are called collaborative contexts.

Recognizing Collaborative Dimensions

The development of collaborative dimensions was from the understanding of both previous literature and insights from this research study. The four contexts give structure and reference points for school leaders looking to systematically and intentionally build a collaborative school. Although there are four dimensions, they are not independent of each other, but rather dependent. At the center or convergence of all four dimensions is collaboration is the zone of effective collaboration

Figure 8.1. Model of Collaborative Dimensions



Qualifying Dimension

The first layer of dimension is referred to the qualifying context. To effectively engage in a collaborative relationship, there needs to be qualifying contexts including a proper identification of purpose, attention to process and acceptable product. A school leader must qualify all three of these to be able to justify collaborative advantage for participating groups.

Purpose includes having a genuinely identifiable purpose for collaborative groups. According to Mattessich et al., (2001) purpose refers to the reasons for the development

of collaborative effort. Through the findings of this case study, purpose included curriculum development, program development, student achievement, idea expansion, problem-solving, professional support and team development. The purpose is not limited to these areas but may be a fruitful area for school leaders to consider when establishing collaborative purpose.

Qualifying process contains considerable attention to the early development of collaborative groups. As previously explained, the process includes the development of Thompson and Perry's (2006) inclusion of collaborative processes including governance, administration, organizational autonomy, mutuality, and norms of trust and reciprocity. Attention and purposeful decision making in collaborative processes can alleviate a school leader's long-term oversight of collaborative groups if proper attention is given at the onset of development. School leaders should strive for early identification of these processes.

The qualifying product is also a prerequisite to purposeful collaboration. School leaders should be able to identify a clear goal or end product when designing collaborative relationships and communicate a clear vision. The end product may be a simple physical artifact but may also be conceptual work including development of processes or program implementation. Without clear and concrete goals, enthusiasm may diminish without a clear progression of success towards a the goal. Short and long term goals should be established early to set clear markers of success. School leaders should spend considerable time to develop this context in a clear and presentable format for collaborative groups before proceeding further.

Environmental Dimension

The next layer of dimensions includes environmental factors. Environmental refers to relationships, political and social climate and supports needed for successful collaboration.

Relationships matter greatly in successful collaborative partnerships. Being mindful of relationships includes thinking critically about membership. School leaders need to be mindful of who is included as an appropriate cross section of members that have been grounded in respect, understanding and trust. Members should also have the ability to compromise and show promise in different modes of communication. These norms of behavior play a critical role relationship building for collaborative partnerships.

Also, the school leader should be mindful of the current political and social climate when bringing a cross-section of members together and be ready to influence particular groups to see collaborative advantage. At this point, collaborative advantage needs to be considered. A school leader must examine the political and social constraints and if members are willing to spend appropriate collaborate costs to gain collaborative advantage. Members must be willing to see collaboration in their self-interest.

Also, the newly formed collaborative group must be seen as a legitimate leader in the area of collaboration. Members need to be both reliable and competent in what is being asked in the collaborative relationship to have perceived collaborative advantage from both participating sides.

Concurrently with relationships, the school leader should be mindful of providing appropriate environmental supports for collaborative success. These supports were found at Pinewood Elementary as both transformational and transactional.

Transactional supports included providing adequate time, funds, and staff materials. Collaborative groups need to have transactional items to meet the first layer process, product, and purpose. The group has to be allowed sufficient time to achieve goals and time to nurture relationships. Particular nuances were found at Pinewood Elementary in the form of communal food and space. School leaders should take note of these nuances and consider the regular presence of communal food while providing supports. Also, collaborative spaces should be considered that are both supportive and neutral for both collaborative parties.

Transformational supports need to be considered and carefully crafted for collaborative success. Transformational supports are identified as an adequate opportunity, professional respect, and positive team environments. School leaders can use transactional supports to help attain transformational supports. A school leader should pay particular attention to influencing and maintaining norms of collegial behavior that support collaborative environments. Trust building and shared understanding of collaborative members needs to be fostered to develop respect for individuals and respective collaborative groups. These can be developed over time, but should also be modeled and reinforced through leadership. The impact of leadership will be discussed in-depth later in the chapter.

Developmental Dimensions

The next subsequent layer of dimensions for school leaders is in regards to the developmental factors of collaborative partnerships. The developmental context refers to the continuum of collaborative interactions and intensity level and the collaborative inertia of collaborative partners.

Collaborative inertia refers to the apparent rate of work output as it slows down considerably compared to individual autonomy (Huxham, 1996). A collaborative group reaches inertia when work slows due to barriers and the developmental rate slows. A school leader should be mindful of recognizing collaborative inertia when focusing on both environment and qualifying contexts. A school leader needs to have a clear understanding of collaborative rate of development in maintaining purpose and focusing on product.

A collaborative state of inertia is reached by difficulties in understanding of qualifying and environmental dimensions. School leaders can mitigate this through mindfulness of potential barriers such as loss of autonomy, time, competition and comfort levels. Collaborative influence can be used to remove barriers at the site level and increase the rate of development. School leaders looking to continually build positive inertia should be mindful of their leadership influence in removing barriers. Removing barriers may mean focusing on culture building activities, increasing supports and resources. It may also mean examining collaborative advantage for individual group members.

Second of all, school leaders need to be mindful that collaboration is practiced on a continuum. As previously explained in Figure 5.1, collaborative interactions occur at different levels of practice including networking, cooperation, coordination, coalition building and pure collaboration. Within these different levels are increasing intensities of shared identity and organization, role definition, communication levels and decision making. A mindful consideration of both qualifying and environmental dimensions should be made when considering appropriate intensities.

Purpose, product, and process should match the collaborative intensity. A school leader's mindfulness of intensity dictates how much time and energy should be influenced in each collaborative relationship.

A school leader should be mindful of the environment and collaborative advantage. Collaborative advantage refers to the net gain from both collaborative partners minus collaborative costs such as time, autonomy and energy (Huxham, 1996). There is a danger to overreach with intensity and over-collaborate. At times; a simple networking opportunity should be provided to begin the collaborative relationship building. At others times, a school leader should recognize that an increased intensity is needed to develop greater results to reach pure collaboration. Attention to recognizing collaborative advantage and appropriate intensity is a mindful skill for school leaders. Collaboration for collaboration sake should be avoided and only implemented when the results are greater than the individual capacity (Hansen 2009). Large, ongoing projects or tasks require a lasting and shared identity for greater results which in turn require a greater intensity of collaborative energy and attention.

A school leader also must be mindful of existing relationships when deciding the intensity of the collaborative partnerships. At Pinewood Elementary, equal opportunity was given to all school members to participate in collaborative relationships. Mindfulness teaches decision making in the absence of judgment (Paulson, 2013). School leaders should leave behind previous judgments of collaborative partners and focus on bringing the right partners to work collaboratively.

At Pinewood Elementary, trust and team development were facilitated through collaborative relationships. School leaders should be mindful of levels of trust and

teamwork when initiating collaboration. If a higher intensity of collaboration is needed, relationships should first be designed to start through simpler networking opportunities. Time and ample opportunity to develop trust and teaming should be given before tackling higher level projects and relationships.

Leadership Dimensions

The final dimension that school leaders should stay mindful of and influence through is that of leadership. Leadership plays an executive role in developing and maintaining a collaborative culture. Collaborative leadership and influence permeate every aspect of successful collaborative schools including providing purpose, defining the type, providing essential components, maximizing effects, maintaining the culture and deriving long-term benefits. The school leader should be mindful of this influence on collaborative leadership and development.

Authority and leadership are both voluntary compliance and exists only in the relationships and in the perception of the engaged parties (Bolman & Deal, 2008). This paradigm exists as collaborative leaders are mindful of whether they model Authentic Leadership or Authoritarian Control in leading or demanding collaboration. Being an authentic collaborative leader is a mindset, and the school leader may choose to be a collaborative influence or a contrived controller.

Leaders should be mindful that organizations are complex, surprising, deceptive, & ambiguous, and that leadership is something to be earned every day. Authentic collaborative leaders require presenting whole-self. Separation of personal self from professional self will not prevail in leading collaborative cultures. Collaborative partners

need to feel invested with their authentic leaders and understand the leaders vision and overall authenticity.

Leaders practicing mindfulness offer themselves space for the non-judgmental awareness and understanding required to lead collaborative partners. Mindful leaders exhibiting collaborative influence can suspend judgments and harness collaborative inertia for positive results. They set aside previous assumptions and build upon strengths of collaborative partners.

An authentic, mindful leader who practices the art of influence recognizes key underpinnings of leadership in context. The first is that mindful authentic leaders understand why they engage in collaborative practices and use it to influence others. The collaborative advantage is about a greater result that can not be achieved without partnerships. Authentic collaborative leaders are incredibly passionate about working together and leveraging strengths of internal and external partners for greater results. They understand both their organization's limitations and their own when engaging in collaborative partnerships and communicate them with authenticity to stakeholders.

Secondly, authentic collaborative leaders understand the power of trust-building and reciprocity. Authentic leaders keep their word when engaging in collaborative partnerships. They deliver promised resources and provide supports to collaborative relationships to help with development and environment. Authentic leaders continually model trust-building with staff and institutionalize the collaborative culture that is needed to maintain and sustain collaborative success.

Also, collaborative leaders should observe and strive to replicate authentic leadership practices that model collaborative relationships to institutionalize collaborative

work. As Hansen (2009) states, “Bad collaboration is worse than no collaboration.”

School leaders should avoid unintentional bad collaboration by being knowledgeable and intentional about their collaborative practices.

Authentic collaborative leaders hold incredible kinetic collaborative energy that is the catalyst for positive school change. Leaders that hold this potential need to be taught to recognize and implement the potential collaborative energy and transform it into a collaborative advantage.

Taking Action with Collaborative Influence

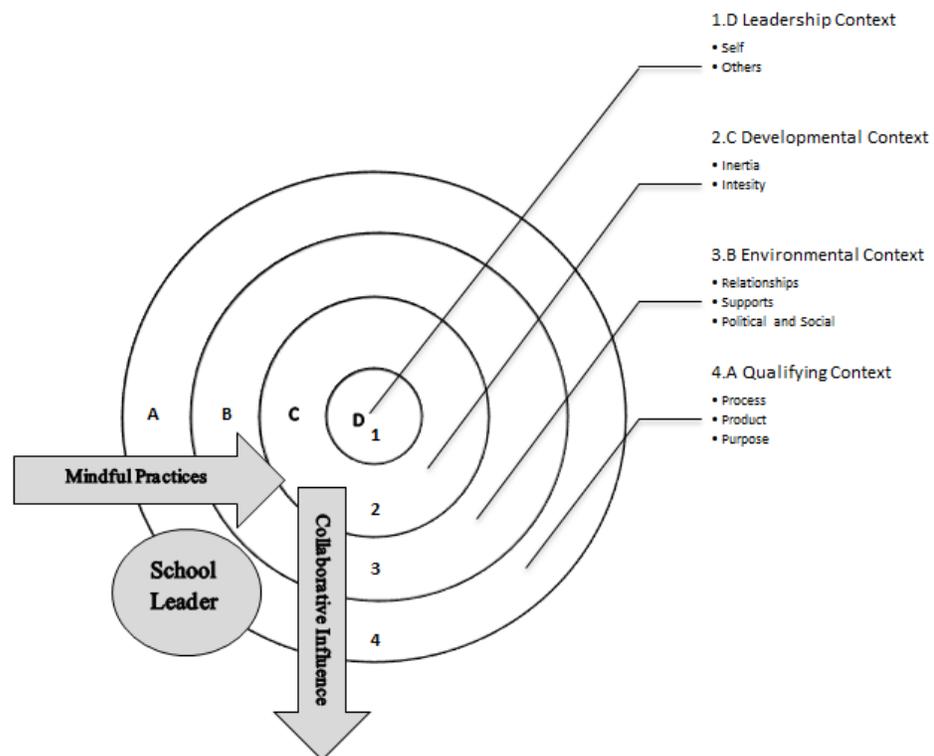
The following sections highlight relevant implications for school leaders taking action to lead collaborative efforts in their contexts for school improvement. These answers to the research questions are especially relevant when answering the why and how of collaborative practices viewed through collaborative contexts.

Mindfulness Matters

Mindfulness refers to purposely paying attention, being present and non-judgmental and knowing what you are doing and why you are doing it (Paulson, 2013). Mindfulness has been used in an application for counseling, education, and healthcare to promote awareness, understanding, and acceptance (Hyland & Terry, 2009; Valentine, Godkin, & Varca, 2010; Mahani, 2012; Benn, Akiva, & Arel, 2012). Mindfulness in these applications has proven to have a positive impact on outcomes ranging from stress reduction to higher rates of contemplation, role conflict, and personal insight. This practice can also apply to school leaders considering school improvement by being highly cognizant of surroundings and context in collaborative practices for school.

Figure 8.2 entitled Model of Mindful Collaborative Influence examines process of moving through contextual relationships. It reminds us that school leaders must be mindful of while using collaboration for school improvement and where to exert collaborative influence. The Model of Mindful Collaborative Influence provides a sequential roadmap for school leaders to follow when using collaboration for school improvement. Mastery and mindfulness of each sequential layer allow an increasing base of sustenance to allow collaboration to grow and flourish. The subsequent sections explain the hierarchal relationship between the model and its impact on school leaders.

Figure 8.2 Model of Mindful Collaborative Influence



Model of Mindful Collaborative Influence

Figure 8.1 uses Mindful Practices and Collaborative Influence as a model to describe the school leaders role in cultivating collaborative success. A school leader needs to operate on both axes concurrently. The Mindful Practices axis moves from outer to inner contexts in the model and exemplifies a state of consciousness of surroundings. Collaborative Influences moves from inner to outer contexts and embodies a state of action in changing collaborative culture. The following sections explain these axes more fully and further expand on the collaborative contexts.

Mindful Practices

Through each of the contexts, the school leader should pay attention and be fully present and non-judgmental regarding their actions and decisions when initiating, supporting and designing collaborative relationships. A school leader practicing mindfulness is fully aware of the needs, environment, and development of the collaborative partners supporting school improvement efforts. A school leader uses this state of consciousness to recognize when and where the action is needed to improve collaborative partnerships.

Collaborative Influence

Collaborative influence refers to the ability of school leadership to influence collaborative culture at varying degrees including developmental rate, environment, and identification of qualifying contexts. While mindfulness is a state of awareness of collaboration, influence is a state of action cultivating collaborative culture through authentic leadership practices. The elements of organizational change theory such as the content, contextual, and process issues are applicable in fostering influence on

collaborative cultures (Weick & Quinn, 1999; Van de Ven & Poole, 1995; Armenakis & Bedeian, 1999). Influence can follow this work in organizational change by identifying the needed change, episodic or continuous or looking at process such as dialectical, life cycle or evolutionary change processes.

In addition, social capital theory can influence the diffusion of collaborative practices from within an organization. By intentionally fostering relationships of previously unlinked individuals or groups, collaboration promotes higher productivity and innovation due to the increase in social capital (Bolino, Turnley, & Bloodgood, 2002; Florin, Lubatkin, & Schulze, 2003). Collaboration can change the environmental dimensions through expansion of positive work relationships, increased collaborative knowledge and experiences.

A school leader must know when and where to leverage particular aspects of collaboration to reach higher levels of development. Through both mindfulness and influence, a school leader can begin to fully actualize the potential of collaborative partnerships for school improvement.

Areas for Future Research

Collaborative practices continue to be an elusive idea for school leaders to harness for school improvement in schools without any formal understanding and training. Future research may lend insight into specific areas that advance a gap of understanding for school leaders including collaborative team facilitation.

Teacher development and evaluation has potential for future areas of research into collaboration. The state of Minnesota recently developed a model for statewide implementation. Districts and local bargaining units had the choice to use the state model

or co-develop their model of teacher evaluation. Future research into the impact of the collaboration between districts and bargaining units may lead to a fruitful conversation on how to improve both schools and districts in reaching agreements. Also, research could be conducted on how teachers use the teacher to teacher collaboration for reflection and professional growth. Collaboration has a high potential to lead to increased professional growth. Collaboration also has the potential to increase positive work environment between co-workers. Collaboration and teacher evaluation can easily join processes and outcomes and should be considered for future research.

Perhaps one of the newest and most exciting areas for future research would be the study of social media and its authentic connection to educational collaboration and professional development. Such areas as the use of online collaboration, the role of collaborative technology and the use of collaborative online forums for educational development would be fruitful areas for exploration.

Collaboration as a stand-alone strategy for school improvement holds no merit without intentional design and appreciation to the nuances that make it a dynamic intervention. School leaders need to be mindful when practicing collaboration for school improvement. School leaders need to recognize their leadership and collaborative influence throughout the stages of collaboration. Collaboration for school improvement is adaptable and flexible to meet the changing contexts of today's school and meet the specific needs of schools within their context or need. The question is not whether collaboration can have an impact on school improvement; it is whether school leaders are ready to impact collaboration in their schools to make it successful.

Appendix A: Levels of School Collaboration Scale

Levels of School Collaboration Scale

The Levels of School Collaboration scale was adapted from the work of Frey, B.B., Lohmeier, J.H., Lee, S.W., & Tollefson, N. (2006) which was first based on the work of other collaboration researchers (Hogue, 1993; Borden & Perkins, 1998, 1999) to measure progress over the five stages of collaboration.

The five stages are described as:

1. Networking-Aware of organizational units
 - Loosely defined roles
 - Little communication
 - All decisions are made independently
2. Cooperation-Provide information to each other
 - Somewhat defined roles
 - Formal communication
 - All decisions are made independently
3. Coordination-Share information and resources
 - Defined roles
 - Frequent communication
 - Some shared decision-making
4. Coalition
 - Share ideas
 - Share resources
 - Frequent and prioritized communication
 - All members have a vote in decision-making
5. Collaboration-Members belong to one collaborative organizational unit
 - Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust
 - Consensus is reached on all decisions

It is also possible that some organizational units have no interaction with other groups, especially at baseline, and this possibility is reflected in the instrumentation by allowing respondents to choose "0" to indicate no interaction whatsoever.

Given the definitions of each level, during the administration of the scale, respondents are asked to what extent they collaborate with each other organizational units. Answer options are on a 0 to 5 scale with 0 indicating "no interaction at all" and 5 indicating the *collaboration* level using Hogue's taxonomy.

Data collected with the *Levels of School Collaboration* scale can be reported quantitatively utilizing different formats and different summations. Collaboration can be reported as the mean level of perceived collaboration across all respondents for all interaction scenarios or by individual strands, or provided as raw data in a table. As the scale assesses perceptions of collaboration, different perceptions by participating teachers are valid responses.

Levels of School Collaboration Scale

Adapted From (Frey, B.B., Lohmeier, J.H., Lee, S.W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring collaboration among grant partners. *American Journal of Evaluation, 27, 3, 383-392.*)

- Using the scale provided, please indicate the extent to which you **currently** view collaboration happening in each interaction scenario in your building.
- Circle the corresponding level of interaction for each scenario

		Levels of School Collaboration and their Characteristics					
Collaborative Intensity		No Interaction	Networking 1	Cooperation 2	Coordination 3	Coalition 4	Collaboration 5
			-Aware of other organizational units -Loosely defined roles -Loosely defined structure -Little communication -All decisions are made independently	-Provide information to other units - Somewhat defined roles -Somewhat defined structure -Moderate communication -All decisions are made independently	-Share information and resources to other units -Defined roles - Defined Structure -Frequent and formal communication -Some shared decision-making	-Share ideas with follow-up to other units -Share resources and explanations to other units -Defined structure using unit organizers/leaders -Frequent and prioritized communication between unit leaders -All members have a vote in decision-making between organizational units	-Members belong to one system -Ideas are co-developed -Frequent communication is characterized by mutual trust between units is used to achieve outcomes for mutual benefit -Defined structure including roles, frequent meetings, and organizers/leaders -Consensus is reached on most decisions between units
Interaction Scenario	No Interaction at All	Networking	Cooperation	Coordination	Coalition	Collaboration	Rating
Teacher to Teacher	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Teacher to Teams	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Teacher to Principal	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Teacher to Parents	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Teacher to Community	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Team to Teacher	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Team to Team	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Team to Principal	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Team to Parents	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Teams to Outside Agency	0	1	2	3	4	5	
Total							
Mean Collaboration Score							

Appendix B: Collaborative Codes

Inductive Coding: Collaborative Coding

- 1. Purpose of Collaboration (Focus)**
 - a. Curriculum Development
 - b. Student Achievement
 - c. Idea Expansion
 - d. Professional Support
 - e. Program Development
 - f. Team Development
 - g. Problem Solving
- 2. Practicing on a Continua of Collaboration**
 - a. Collaboration on a Continuum
 - i. Networking
 - ii. Cooperation
 - iii. Coordination
 - iv. Coalition
 - v. Collaboration
- 3. Types of Collaboration**
 - a. Internal
 - i. Formal
 1. Committee Work
 2. Special Events
 3. Program Development
 4. Team Teaching
 - ii. Informal
 1. Ad Hoc
 - a. Organic
 - b. Self-Interest
 - b. External
 - i. Outside Agencies
 - ii. Outside Schools
 - iii. Outside Community
 - iv. Parents
- 4. Essential Components of Collaboration**
 - a. Processes
 - b. Structure
 - i. Membership
 - ii. Roles
 - iii. Frequency
 - c. Leadership
 - i. Principal Role
 - ii. Teacher Leadership
 - d. Support Mechanisms
 - i. Positive Team Environments
 - ii. Professional Respect
 - iii. Communal Experience
 - iv. Adequate Opportunities
 - v. Resource Allocations
 1. Technology
 - a. Google Docs

- b. Email
- 2. Time
- 3. Financial

5. The Roles of Collaboration

- a. Developing Teacher Efficacy
 - i. Professional Learning
 - ii. Social Exchange
 - iii. Empowerment
- b. In Promoting Efficiency
 - i. Workload reduction
- c. In Reaching School Goals

6. Maintaining a Culture of Collaboration

- a. Development of Shared Meanings
- b. Commitment to behavior
- c. Predispositions to Collaboration
- d. Providing Supports to Collaboration
 - i. Positive Team Environments
 - ii. Maintaining Professional Respect
 - iii. Communal Experiences
 - iv. Adequate Opportunity
 - v. Resource Support
- e. Strengthening Bonds of Collaboration
 - i. The role of Humor and Collegial Teasing
 - ii. Importance of Communal Food
 - iii. Trust Formation
 - iv. Development of Collaborative Language
 - v. Principal Expectations
 - vi. Healthy Competition
- f. Addressing Barriers to Collaboration
 - i. Time
 - 1. Contracts
 - 2. Common Schedules
 - ii. Financial Limitations
 - iii. Adaptability
 - iv. Pride
 - v. Competition
 - vi. Comfort Levels

7. Tensions of Collaboration

- a. Engagement in Unmeaningful Work
- b. Loss of Autonomy
 - i. Principal
 - ii. Teacher
- c. Efficiency/ Rate of Development
- d. Teacher Burnout

8. Long Term Benefits of Collaboration

- a. Positive Work Relationships
- b. Positive External Perceptions
- c. Increased Communication
- d. Leadership Development
- e. Accountability

Appendix C: Principal Interview

Principal Interview

Qual Data Collection

The School Leaders Role in Leveraging Collaboration for Successful School Improvement

1. How is collaboration used in your elementary school? Define the purpose of collaboration such as its unique purpose, vision and goal attainment.
2. What are the various collaborative groups that interact in your school? Explain the various memberships and layers of participation and roles.
3. How often do these collaborative groups work together? What is the pace of development and frequency? Explain any flexibility or adaptability that occurs and the development of roles and policy guidelines.
4. To what extent do these groups affect the daily work of school staff? Explain any affective, behavioral or cognitive influence that collaboration has on the daily work of school staff.
5. What, if any, do you identify as barriers to using collaboration for school improvement amongst these groups? Explain any conceptual, pragmatic, attitudinal or professional barriers that may occur.
6. What supports do you use to lead successful collaboration amongst collaborative groups? Explain any resources, communication or environmental supports used.
7. What actions do you use as principal to support collaboration? Explain how your own affective, cognitive and behavioral actions support the use of collaboration.
8. In what way does collaboration support school improvement efforts in your building?
9. What derived benefits do you perceive through the use of collaboration?
10. What, if any, are the perceived costs of collaboration?
11. How does collaboration affect instructional improvement in your building?
12. How does collaboration affect your staff's everyday work?
13. How does collaboration affect your role as building principal?

Principal Interview Question Matrix*Phase 2 Data Collection*

The School Leaders Role in Leveraging Collaboration for Successful School Improvement

Question	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
RQ1: What is the current state of collaboration in elementary schools in Minnesota? To what extent and with whom is collaboration happening for school improvement?	x	x											
RQ2: What collaborative structures do school leaders report using in elementary schools as part of their school improvement efforts?		x	x										
RQ3: What are the supports and barriers to effective collaboration as reported by principals and staff?				x	x	x				x	x	x	
RQ4: What actions do school leaders use to address barriers and lead successful collaboration?						x		x					
RQ5: What does collaboration mean for the everyday work of instructional improvement of elementary school leaders?				x			x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Appendix D: Research Consent Form

Dear participant,

As part of my final dissertation research I am conducting an investigation into collaborative practices of principals in Minnesota Elementary Schools between various collaborative groups.

This research is being conducted to examine the school leader's role in leveraging collaboration for successful school improvement efforts and completing a final dissertation project at the University of Minnesota. The results of this research will help identify promising practices for school administrators in finding ways to positively impact the use of collaboration amongst varying stakeholder groups. Your participation in this research is voluntary and may cease at any time.

The purpose of this study is to examine the day-to-day impact of using collaboration in meeting local school leader's needs in leveraging successful school improvement efforts. More specifically, this study will help to understand the collaborative levels within different interactions and where principals choose to apply the strategy of collaboration. In context it will examine the different mechanisms that current school leaders use to address barriers and implement supports to successful collaboration amongst school various groups including: individuals, teams, parents, principals and outside agencies to leverage successful school improvement efforts. These findings can help practicing school administrators in their everyday practice of leading effective schools in choosing appropriate change strategies and appropriate applications of collaborative relationships. This research study includes three phases that will be conducted at various times through the remainder of the 2014 school year.

There are three phases that include:

Phase 1: Quantitative

Using the Levels of School Collaboration Scale, elementary teachers will rate their current level of interaction among 10 scenarios. This scale will give insight into the overall mean collaborative score for a building as well as independent scores of collaboration among interaction scenarios.

This rating scale will be delivered at a staff meeting with a short preemptive video to explain how to score the scale.

Approximate time commitment: 15 Minutes

Phase 2: Qualitative

A phone interview with lead building principals to further understand the nature of the

collaborative relationships and identify success stories as identified by phase one research. This survey will examine the barriers and supports that principals use to promote value in collaboration and understand the impact on school improvement efforts. Phone interview will be conducted and scheduled at participant's convenience.
Approximate time commitment: 45 minutes

Phase 3: Qualitative

Phase three will use information gleaned from phase 1 and 2 to identify innovative practices of collaboration to identify potential case study sites. Case study components will utilize interviews of staff members, observations of collaborative meetings and document review.

Approximate time commitment: 1-2 days of site visit by the principle investigator. This study may have implications for school principals looking to build a coalition of stakeholders to embrace collaboration in the efforts of school improvement. It may help school leaders effectively quantify the varying levels of interaction occurring in schools. In addition, these findings may help school leaders understand the dynamics and frameworks of implementing collaboration, remove barriers in future efforts and understand the impact on the everyday lives of school personnel. It may help school leaders to identify appropriate collaborative relationships for corresponding specific outcomes of collaboration.

Possible risk factors for your participation are no greater than your normal school activity. If you consent to participation in the study, you are completely free to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time.

Any information obtained in connection with this study that can be identified with you or your school will remain confidential. Any data obtained will be bound by a strict code of confidentiality. Any disclosure of such information will use a pseudonym in order to protect your and your school's identity.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at 320-492-3462 or skansone@rocori.k12.mn.us

Thank you very much for your willingness to participate

Sincerely,

Eric Skanson

Skansone@rocori.k12.mn.us

Cold Spring Elementary Principal

ROCORI Schools

University of Minnesota, Twin Cities, Doctoral Candidate

CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATION IN SOCIAL AND BEHAVIORAL RESEARCH

I consent to participate in research entitled:

The School Leader's Role in Leveraging Successful School Improvement Efforts

Eric Skanson, Cold Spring Elementary Principal & Principal Investigator

Eric Skanson has explained the purpose of the study, the procedures to be followed, and the expected duration of my participation. Possible benefits of the study have been described, and I acknowledge that I have the opportunity to obtain additional information about it.

Furthermore, I understand that the consent of participants is required for the tape recording of interviews, and that I am free to withdraw consent at any time and discontinue participation in the study without prejudice to myself.

My signature indicates that I have read the information above and have given permission to participate for myself in a study of collaboration that will be conducted as part of the regular school day. A letter describing the study has been given to me.

Participant Signature Date

Researcher Signature Date

Please return to:

Eric Skanson

Cold Spring Elementary

601 Red River Ave North

Cold Spring MN, 56320

Or Electronically to:

Bibliography

- Abelmann, C., Elmore, R., Even, J., Kenyon, S., & Marshall, J. (1999). *When accountability knocks, will anyone answer?* Philadelphia: Consortium for Policy Research in Education.
- Adler, P. S., & Kwon, S.-W. (2002). Social Capital: Prospects for a New Concept. *Academy of Management Review*, 27(1), 17-40.
- Ainscow, M. M. (2006). Collaboration as a strategy for improving schools in challenging circumstances. *Improving Schools*, 192-202.
- Anderson, K. D. (2004). The Nature of Teacher Leadership in Schools as Reciprocal Influences Between Teacher Leaders and Principals. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 15(1), 97-113.
- Armenakis, A. A., & Bedeian, A. G. (1999). Organizational Change: A Review of Theory and Research in the 1990's. *Journal of Management*, 25(3), 293-315.
- Baker, D. P., & Stevenson, D. L. (1986). Mothers' Strategies for Children's School Achievement: Managing the Transition to High School. *Sociology of Education*, 156-166.
- Barth, R. S. (2002, May). The Culture Builder. *Educational Leadership*, 59(8), pp. 6-11.
- Bauch, P. A. (2001). School-Community Partnerships in Rural Schools: Leadership, Renewal, and a Sense of Place. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 76(2), 204-221.
- Bemak, F. (2000). Transforming the Role of the Counselor to Provide Leadership in Educational Reform through Collaboration. *Professional School Counseling*, 3(5), 323-332.
- Benn, R., Akiva, T., & Arel, S. (2012). Mindfulness Training Effects for Parents and Educators of Children With Special Needs. *Developmental Psychology*, 48(5), 1476-1487.
- Bolino, M. C., Turnley, W. H., & Bloodgood, J. M. (2002). Citizenship Behavior and the Creation of Social Capital in Organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 24(4), 505-522.
- Bouillion, L. M., & Gomez, L. M. (2001). Connecting School and Community with Science Learning: Real World Problems and School-Community Partnerships as Contextual Scaffolds. *Journal of Research in Science Teaching*, 38(8), 878-898.
- Briscoe, C., & Peters, J. (1998). Teacher Collaboration across and within Schools: Supporting Individual Change in Elementary Science Teaching. *Science Education*, 81(1), 51-65.

- Bryk, A. S., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in Schools: A Core Resource for Improvement*. New York: Russel Sage Foundation.
- Buiding Site Team, T. (2014, December 10). (E. Skanson, Interviewer)
- Burke, W., & Litwin, G. (1992). A causal model of organizational performance and change. *Journal of Management, 18*, 523-545.
- Bushe, G. R. (2009). *Clear Leadership: Sustaining Real Collaboration and Partnership at Work*. Boston, MA: Davies-Black, an Imprint of Nicholas Brealey Publishing.
- Cook, L., & Friend, M. (1991). Principles for the practice of collaboration in the schools. *Preventing School Failure, 35*, pp. 6-9.
- Cosner, S. (2009). Building Organizational Capacity Through Trust. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 248-291*.
- Daly, A. J. (2009). Rigid Response in an Age of Accountability. *Educational Administration Quarterly, 45(2)*, 168-216.
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2000). Teacher Quality and Student Achievement: A review of State Policy Evidence. *Education Policy Analysis Archives, 8(1)*, 1-44.
- Deal, T. E., & Peterson, K. D. (2009). *Shaping School Culture: Pitfalls, Paradoxes, & Promises* (2nd ed.). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- DelliCarpini, M. (2008). *Teacher collaboration for ESL/EFL academic success*. Retrieved from ITESLJ: <http://iteslj.org>
- Dolfsma, W., & Dannreuther, C. (2003). Subjects and Boundaries: Contesting Social Capital-Based Policies. *Journal of Economic Issues, 40*, 541-3.
- E., W. K., & Sutcliffe, K. M. (2006, Jul-Aug). Mindfulness and the Quality of Organizational Attention. *Organization Science, 17(4)*, 514-524.
- Ebmeier, H., & Nicklaus, J. (1999). The Impact of Peer and Principal Collaborative Supervision of Teachers' Trust, Commitment, Desire for Collaboration, and Efficacy. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 14(4)*, 351-378.
- Elmore, R. F. (2000). *Building a New Structure For School Leadership*. Albert Shanker Institute.

- Elmore, R. F. (2008). *School Reform from the Inside Out: Policy, Practice, and Performance*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Education Press.
- Epstein, J. L. (1995, May). School/ family/ community partnerships: caring for the children we share. *Phi Delta Kappan*, p. 701.
- Florin, J., Lubatkin, M., & Schulze, W. (2003). A social capital model fo high-growth ventures. *Academy of Management Journal*, 46, 374-384.
- Foley, M. W., & Edwards, B. (1999). Is it Time to Deinvest in Social Capital? *Journal of Public Policy*, 141-173.
- Frey, B. B., Lohmeier, J. H., Lee, S. W., & Tollefson, N. (2006). Measuring Collaboration Among Grant Partners. *Americal Journal of Evaluation*, 383-392.
- Fullan, M. (1993). *Change forces: Probing the depths of educational reform*. New York: Falmer.
- Fullan, M. (1993, March). Why Teachers Must Become Change Agents. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 12-16.
- Gajda, R. (2004). Utilizing collaboration theory to evaluate strategic alliances. *American Journal of Evaluation*, 65-77.
- Goddard, Y. L., Goddard, R. D., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (2007). A Theoretical and Empirical Investigation of Teacher Collaboration for School Improvement and Student Achievement in Public Elementary Schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109, 877-896.
- Guest, G., Namey, E. E., & Mitchell, M. L. (2013). *Collecting Qualitative Data*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE.
- Guiney, E. (2001). Coaching isn't just for athletes: The role of teacher leaders. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 740-743.
- Hancock, D. R., & Algozzine, B. (2011). *Doing Case Study Research: A Practical Guide for Beginning Researchers*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.
- Hansen, M. T. (2009). *Collaboration: How Leaders Avoid Traps, Create Unity, and Reap Big Results*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

- Hedeen, T., Moses, P., & Peter, M. (n.d.). *Encouraging Meaningful Parent/ Educator Collaboration: A Review of Recent Literature*. Eugene, OR: Center for Appropriate Dispute Resolution in Special Education (CADRE).
- Henderson, A. T., & Berla, N. (1994). *A New Generation of Evidence: The Family is Critical to Student Achievement*. Washington, D.C.: National Committee for Citizens in Education.
- Hibbert, P., & Huxham, C. (2010). The Past in Play: Tradition in the Structures of Collaboration. *Organizational Studies*, 525-554.
- Hoy, W. K., & Tschannen-Moran, M. (1999, May). Five Faces of Trust: An Empirical Confirmation in Urban Elementary Schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 184-208.
- Hoy, W. K., Gage, C. Q., Tarter, & John, C. (2006, April). School Mindfulness and Faculty Trust: Necessary Conditions for Each Other? *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 42, 236-255.
- Hoy, W. K., Tarter, C. J., & Kottkamp, R. B. (1991). *Open Schools/ Healthy Schools Measuring Organizational Climate*. Beverly Hills, CA: SAGE.
- Huffman, D., & Kalnin, J. (2003). Collaborative inquiry to make data-based decisions in schools. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 569-580.
- Huxham, C. (1996). *Creating Collaborative Advantage*. London: Thousand Oaks.
- Hyland, & Terry. (2009). Mindfulness and the Therapeutic Function of Education. *Journal of Philosophy of Education*, 43(1), 119-131.
- Izzo, C. V., Weissberg, R. P., Kaspro, W. J., & Fendrich, M. (1999). A Longitudinal Assessment of Teacher Perceptions of Parent Involvement in Children's Education and School Performance. *American Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(6), 817-838.
- Kochanek, J. R. (2005). *Building Trust for Better Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press.
- Krell, M. (2014, November 25). Principal Collaboration Interview . (E. Skanson, Interviewer)
- Kruse, S. D., & Louis, K. (2009). *Building Strong School Cultures: A Guide to Leading Change*. Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press.
- Kvale, S. (1996). *InterViews: An Introduction to Qualitative Research Interviewing*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

- Langer, E. J. (1989). *Mindfulness*. Cambridge, MA: Perseus Books.
- Leithwood, K. A. (1992, February). The Move Toward Transformational Leadership. *Educational Leadership*, pp. 8-12.
- Leithwood, K., & Jantzi, D. (1999, December). The Relative Effects of Principal and Teacher Sources of Leadership on Student Engagement With School. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 35, 679-706.
- Leithwood, K., Leonard, L., & Sharratt, L. (1998). Conditions Fostering Organizational Learning in Schools. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 34(2), 243-276.
- Lewin, K. (1951). *Field Theory in Social Science*. New York, NY: Harper and Row.
- Little, J. W. (1982). Norms of Collegiality and Experimentation: Workplace Conditions fo School Success. *American Educational Research Journal*, 19, 325-340.
- Louis, K. S., Marks, H. M., & Kruse, S. (1996). Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools. *American Educational Research Journal*, 33, 757-798.
- Louis, K., Dretzke, B., & Wahlstrom, K. (2010). How does leadership affect student achievement? Results from a US survey. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 21(3), 315-336.
- Mahani, S. (2012). Promoting Mindfulness Through Contemplative Education. *Journal of International Education Research*, 8(3), 215-222.
- Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. (2001). *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. Saint Paul: Fieldstone Alliance.
- Mattessich, P. W., Murray-Close, M., & Monsey, B. R. (2001). *Collaboration: What Makes It Work*. St. Paul, MN: Fieldstone Alliance.
- Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (1995). An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 709-734.
- Miles, J. A. (2012). *Management and Organization Theory*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Moolenaar, N. M. (2012). A Social Network Perspective on Teacher Collaboration in Schools: Theory, Methodology, and Applications. *American Journal of Education*, 7-39.

- Nye, B., Hedges, L. V., & Knstantopoulos, S. (2000). The Effects of Small Classes on Academic Achievement: The Results of the Tennessee Class Size Experiment. *American Educational Research Journal*, 37(1), 123-151.
- Paulson, S. D.-Z. (2013). Becoming conscious: the science of mindfulness. *Annals Of The New York Academy Of Sciences*, 87-104.
- Peterson, K. D., & Deal, T. E. (2009). *The Shaping School Culture Fieldbook* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: John Wiley & Sons, Inc.
- Peterson, N. (1991). Interagency collaboration under Part H: The key to comprehensive, multidisciplinary, coordinated infant/toddler interventions series. *Journal of Early Intervention*, 15(1), 89-105.
- Reb, J., Narayanan, J., & Chaturvedi, S. (2014). Leading Mindfully: Two Studies on the Influence of Supervisor Trait Mindfulness on Employee Well-Being and Performance. *Springer*.
- Roberts, S., & Pruitt, E. (2009). *Schools as professional learning communities: Collaborative activities and strategies for professional development*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Rubin, H. (2009). *Collaborative Leadership* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin.
- Saldana, J. (2013). *The Coding Manual for Qualitative Researchers*. Los Angeles: SAGE.
- Sastry, M. (1997). Problems and Paradoxes in a model of punctuated organizational change. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, 42, 237-275.
- Scott, J. J., & Smith, S. C. (1987). Collaborative Schools. *ERIC*.
- Senge, P. (1990). The leader's new work: Building learning organizations. *Sloan Management Review*, 7-23.
- Sethi, D. (2009, Winter). Mindful Leadership. *Leader to Leader*(51), pp. 7-11.
- Sheldon, S. B. (2003, June). Linking School-Family-Community Partnerships in Urban Elementary Schools to Student Achievement on State Tests. *The Urban Review*, 35(2), 149-165.
- Sheldon, S. B., & Epstein, J. L. (2002). Improving Student Behavior and School Discipline with Family and Community Involvement. *Education and Urban Society*, 4-26.
- Stolp, S. (1994, June). Leadership for School Culture. *ERIC Digest*, 91.

- Strahan, D. (2003, November). Promoting a Collaborative Professional Culture in Three Elementary Schools that Have Beaten the Odds. *The Elementary School Journal*, 104(2), 127-146.
- Teddlie, C., & Tashakkori, A. (2009). *Foundations of Mixed Methods Research*. Los Angeles: Sage.
- Thomson, A. M., & Perry, J. L. (2006, December). Collaboration Processes: Inside the Black Box. *Public Administration Review*, 20-32.
- Tschannedn-Moran, M. (2001). Collaboration and the need for trust. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 308-331.
- Tschannedn-Moran, M., & Hoy, W. K. (2000). A Multidisciplinary Analysis of Nature, Meaning, and Measurement of Trust. *Review of Educational Research*, 70(4), 547-593.
- Tschannedn-Moran, M., Uline, C., Woolfolk-Hoy, A., & Mackley, T. (2000). Creating Smarter Schools Through Collaboration. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(3), 247-271.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2001). Collaboration and the Need for Trust. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 308-331.
- Tschannen-Moran, M. (2009). Fostering Teacher Professionalism in Schools. *Educational Administration*, 217-247.
- Tschannen-Moran, M., & Woolfolk Hoy, A. (2000). Collaborative Learning: A Memorable Model. *Teacher Education*, 36(2), 148-165.
- Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental Sequence in Small Groups. *Psychological Bulletin*, 384-399.
- Tyack, D., & Cuban, L. (1995). *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform*. London: Harvard University Press.
- Valentine, S., Godkin, L., & Varca, P. E. (2010). Role Conflict, Mindfulness, and Organizational Ethics in Education-Based Healthcare Institution. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 94, 455-469.
- Van de Ven, A. H., & Poole, M. S. (1995, July). Explaining Development and Change in Organizations. *The Academy of Management Review*, 20(3), 510-540.
- Vangen, S., & Huxham, C. (2011). The Tangled Web: Unraveling the Principle of Common Goals in Collaborations. *Journal of Public Administration Research*, 731-760.

- Walberg, H. J. (1984, February). Families as Partners in Educational Productivity. *Phi Delta Kappan*, pp. 397-400.
- Walker, A. (1994). Teams in Schools: Looking Below the Surface. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 8(7), 38-44.
- Weick, K. E., & Quinn, R. E. (1999). Organizational Change and Development. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 50, 361-386.
- Welch, M. (1998). Collaboration: Staying on the Bandwagon. *Journal of Teacher Education*, 49(26), 26-37.
- Wohlstetter, P., Datnow, A., & Park, V. (2008). Creating a system for data-driven decision-making; applying the principal-agent framework. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 19(3), 239-259.
- Wraga, W. G. (1999). The Educational and Political Implication of Curriculum alignment and standards-based reform. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision*, 15(1), 4-25.