# TEACHER ATTITUDES TOWARD WORK: A MIXED METHODS CASE STUDY OF COLLABORATIVE WORK GROUP INFLUENCES

A Dissertation Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Jennifer Leigh Beavers

May 2016

Copyright © 2016 by Jennifer Leigh Beavers

All rights reserved.

## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, without whom I could not have completed it. To my husband, Matt, thank you for encouraging me to begin this endeavor and for continuing to encourage and support me when it seemed it would never end. To my parents, Jon and Gladys, thank you for the endless hours you spent caring for my son and my dog while I was in class or had my nose buried in a book and my fingers glued to a computer keyboard. And last, but not least, to my son, Pence, may this dissertation serve as evidence that with hard work, determination, and perseverance, you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. May you have the courage to do so.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Aside from the support of my family and friends, the single greatest influence on the successful completion of this endeavor was my committee chair, Dr. Pamela Angelle. From the time I stepped into your office eight years ago, you have been my greatest source of encouragement. You inspired me to join the program, taught me how to be the leader I am today, and helped me shape my research dream into a viable dissertation. You are fun and personable Big Chief Pam, and you are the utmost professional. Your classes are challenging and your lessons spot on. I use daily what I have learned from you. Your workload is immense, yet you always made time for me and my endless questions. Your patience with and dedication to your students and work is second to none. I am not exaggerating when I say I could not have done this without you. From the bottom of my heart, thank you.

## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this mixed method, multisite case study was to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups described by Little in 1981 was used as a conceptual framework. The sample consisted of three principals, one school counselor, and twenty-seven teachers across three high schools in the same southeastern state. Participants were interviewed and their collaborative work groups observed during which time artifacts were also collected.

Findings indicated teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by eight variables: the support they received from their administrative team, their perception of the administration's consistency and values, their relationship with their principal, the behaviors of their coworkers, their experiences with teacher collaboration, the internal feelings they had about teaching, and the external forces that affected their careers. While these eight variables were relatively consistent across the three schools, the extent to which principals supported the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups varied. There was also variance in the schools' adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups which coincided with teachers' overall attitudes toward their work. Teachers working at the school with greatest adherence exhibited the most positive attitudes, and teachers working at the school with least adherence exhibited the least positive attitudes.

More so than collaborative experiences alone, teachers' attitudes toward their work were primarily influenced by the relationships they held with their peers, students,

and administrators. The findings of this study indicate that strong, positive relationships among teachers and between faculty and administrators create a mutual trust and respect that is not only necessary for collaboration to be effective but also provides a foundation from which teachers can grow professionally. Furthermore, when teachers use those professional interactions to influence organizational change, their pride, sense of empowerment, and loyalty to their school, students, and leaders is solidified.

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY ..... 1
Statement of the Problem ..... 2
Purpose of the Study ..... 3
Research Questions ..... 3
Operational Definitions ..... 4
Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions ..... 4
Delimitations ..... 5
Limitations ..... 5
Assumptions ..... 6
Significance of the Study ..... 6
Organization of the Study ..... 7
Summary of the Chapter ..... 8
Chapter 2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE ..... 9
The Search Process ..... 9
Conceptual Framework ..... 10
Teacher Collaboration ..... 13
Initial Commonality ..... 14
Discussion ..... 16
Unified Norms ..... 19
Collective Ingenuity ..... 21
Deprivatization of Practice ..... 23
New Commonality ..... 25

Necessary Resources ....26
Summary of Teacher Collaboration ....31
Conclusion....32
Chapter 3. METHODOLOGY....34
Type of Design....35
Rationale for the Design....35
Case Study Design....37
Examining Multiple Sites....37
Mixing Methods ....38
Concurrent Triangulation Design....41
Role of the Researcher ....42
Site and Sample....43
Data Collection....45
Qualitative Data Collection ....45
Quantitative Data Collection....47
Data Analysis ....48
Qualitative Data Analysis....48
Quantitative Data Analysis....50
Methods of Verification ....50
Protection of Human Subjects....58
Summary of the Chapter ....58
Chapter 4. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL ....60
South High School ....61
Student Demographics and Academic Progress....62

The Principal .....63
Research Question 1: South High School .....64
Nature of the Leadership .....66
Nature of the Coworkers .....73
Nature of the Work .....95
Summary of Research Question 1 .....100
Research Question 2: South High School .....101
Time .....101
Structure .....107
Leadership .....109
Decisions .....112
Summary of Research Question 2 .....114
Research Question 3: South High School .....115
Group S-A .....116
Group S-B .....119
Group S-C .....122
Cross-Group Analysis at South High School .....125
Research Question 4: South High School .....125
Summary of Analysis for South High School .....127
Chapter 5. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : NORTH HIGH SCHOOL .....129
North High School .....130
Student Demographics and Academic Progress .....132
The Principal .....132

Research Question 1: North High School .....133
Nature of the Leadership .....135
Nature of the Coworkers .....144
Nature of the Work .....165
Summary of Research Question 1 .....170
Research Question 2: North High School .....171
Time .....172
Structure .....176
Leadership .....179
Decisions .....182
Summary of Research Question 2 .....184
Research Question 3: North High School .....185
Group N-A .....186
Group N-B .....188
Group N-C .....190
Cross-Group Analysis at North High School .....192
Research Question 4: North High School .....193
Summary of Analysis for North High School .....195
Chapter 6. ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : WEST HIGH SCHOOL .....197
West High School .....198
Student Demographics and Academic Progress .....199
The Principal .....200
Research Question 1: West High School .....201

Nature of the Leadership .....203
Nature of the Coworkers .....213
Nature of the Work .....230
Summary of Research Question 1 .....236
Research Question 2: West High School .....236
Time .....237
Structure .....242
Leadership .....245
Decisions .....251
Summary of Research Question 2 .....253
Research Question 3: West High School .....254
Group W-A .....255
Group W-B .....256
Group W-C .....258
Group W-D .....259
Cross-Group Analysis at West High School .....261
Research Question 4: West High School .....263
Summary of Analysis for West High School .....265
Chapter 7. CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS .....266
School Contexts .....267
Student Demographics and Academic Progress .....268
The Principals .....268
Research Question 1: Cross-Case Analysis .....271

Nature of the Leadership .....273
Nature of the Coworkers .....279
Nature of the Work .....290
Summary of Research Question 1 .....293
Research Question 2: Cross-Case Analysis .....300
Time .....301
Structure .....305
Leadership .....307
Decisions .....309
Summary of Research Question 2 .....311
Research Question 3: Cross-Case Analysis .....315
Research Question 4: Cross-Case Analysis .....321
Summary of Cross-Case Analysis .....322
Chapter 8. DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS .....325
Discussion .....325
Relationships with Peers .....326
Relationships with Administrators .....328
The Role of Relationships in Effective Teacher Collaboration .....332
Implications .....334
Recommendations .....337
Conclusion .....339
REFERENCES .....341
APPENDICES .....352

Appendix A: Summary of Sources Reviewed.....353
Appendix B: Permission to use Figure 1.....356
Appendix C: Teacher Interview Protocol.....357
Appendix D: Principal Interview Protocol.....359
Appendix E: Group Observation Protocol .....361
Appendix F: Site Selection Checklist.....363
Appendix G: Collaborative Work Group (CWG) Selection Checklist .....365
VITA.....367

## LIST OF TABLES


Table 1: Studies Identifying Three or More Elements of Effective Collaborative Work Groups ..... 11

Table 2: Alignment of Data Sources with Research Questions ..... 40

Table 3: Development of Teacher Interview Questions ..... 46

Table 4: Code Mapping Process for Research Question 1 ..... 51

Table 5: Code Mapping Process for Research Question 2 ..... 54

Table 6: Achieving Trustworthiness ..... 56

Table 7: South High School Interview Participant Demographics ..... 65

Table 8: Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-A ..... 117

Table 9: Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-B ..... 120

Table 10: Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-C ..... 123

Table 11: Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at South High School ..... 127

Table 12: North High School Interview Participant Demographics ..... 134

Table 13: Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-A ..... 187

Table 14: Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-B ..... 189

Table 15: Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-C ..... 191

Table 16: Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at North High School ..... 195

Table 17: West High School Interview Participant Demographics ..... 202

Table 18: Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-A ..... 256

Table 19: Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-B ..... 258

Table 20: Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-C..... 259

Table 21: Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-D..... 261

Table 22: Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at West High School ..... 264

Table 23: Cross-Case Analysis of Student Demographics ..... 269

Table 24: Cross-Case Analysis of Academic Progress ..... 270

Table 25: Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Participants ..... 273

Table 26: Reasons Teachers Liked Meaningful Collaboration ..... 284

Table 27: Teachers' Attitudes Regarding the Nature of the Leadership in Their Building ..... 295

Table 28: Coworker Behaviors Present ..... 296

Table 29: Presence of Critical Elements for Effective Collaborative Work Groups .... 297

Table 30: Social Resources Necessary for Effective Collaboration ..... 298

Table 31: Contributing Factors to Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Careers ..... 299

Table 32: Principals' Experience in Education ..... 301

Table 33: How Principals Supported Time for Observed Collaborative Work Groups 312

Table 34: How Principals Provided Structure for Observed Collaborative Work Groups ..... 313

Table 35: Extent to Which Principals Provided Leadership for Observed Collaborative Work Groups ..... 314

Table 36: Extent to Which Principals Provided Decision-Making Authority to Collaborative Work Groups ..... 315

Table 37: Observation Frequency Counts by Group ..... 317

Table 38: Average Group Frequency Counts by School ..... 318

Table 39: Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work: Cross-Case Analysis..... 322

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Study Design .....36

Figure 2: Depiction of Little's (1981a) Findings.....333

Figure 3: Model of the Role of Relationships in Effective Teacher Collaboration.....334

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

Since the release of *A Nation at Risk* (Gardner, 1983) nearly three decades ago, the American public has grown increasingly concerned with the state of public education. Under the *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB) of 2001 (NCLB, 2002), schools and districts were mandated to meet minimum student achievement levels for all subgroups of students or face takeover by state or local governmental bodies. The ultimate goal of NCLB was for 100% of American youth to achieve proficiency on state mandated assessments by the year 2014. Though states began receiving in 2012 various amounts of flexibility in achieving that goal, the quest to improve outcomes for all students remains.

Strategies for raising student achievement, such as implementing smaller learning communities, were mentioned in the legislation, but the emphasis lay in heightened accountability for schools and districts. Nonetheless, the enactment of NCLB (2002) rejuvenated a discussion in American education about strategies that schools could and should employ to raise student achievement. Existing literature by Levine and Lezotte (1990), Rosenholtz (1985), and others indicated several strategies shown to increase student achievement. One such strategy was teacher collaboration. Many school-effectiveness research studies make reference to the way that teachers in effective schools work together rather than in isolation. Researchers both before and after the enactment of NCLB have documented increases in student achievement, as well as teacher retention, as a result of teacher collaboration (Brown & Schainker, 2008; Goddard, Goddard, & Tschannen-Moran, 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Popkewitz and Myrdal (1991) and Talbert and McLaughlin (1994) found that teacher

collaboration also led to increased levels of teacher collegiality and professionalism. Thus, if collaboration is a strategy that schools can and should employ to raise student achievement, are schools effectively implementing teacher collaboration?

## Statement of the Problem

Since the enactment of NCLB (2002), schools have been held accountable for their level of student achievement. The single most influential school-level factor on student achievement is the classroom teacher (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005; New Leaders for New Schools, 2009). Ensuring that teachers have everything they need to maximize student learning is imperative. One such necessary resource is time for collaboration. Teacher's need time to work together on issues regarding curriculum, instruction, and professional development (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2005; Goddard et al., 2007).

Merely having the opportunity to collaborate, however, will not in itself generate student success. Effective collaborative work groups that bring about substantial improvements in student achievement have a shared understanding of and commitment to a common set of goals for student learning (Penuel, Riel, Krause, & Frank, 2009; Rosenholtz, 1989). Additionally, student achievement is more likely to improve when teachers express positive attitudes toward their jobs (Griffith, 2004; Patrick, 2007; Turner, 2007). Different collaborative experiences create varied attitudinal differences among teachers (Penuel et al., 2009). Hence, principals should be mindful of the aspects of collaborative work groups that improve or hinder teachers' attitudes toward their jobs; i.e., the satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or other feelings teachers have in regard to their job.

What is it about collaborative work groups that make teachers like their work more or less? Further analysis was needed to answer this question.

## Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this mixed method, multisite case study (Yin, 2009) was to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. For the purposes of this study, teachers' attitudes toward their work include the satisfaction, dissatisfaction, or other feelings teachers have in regard to their work. The qualitative phase of this study examined how teachers' attitudes were influenced by the critical elements found in effective collaborative work groups as well as how principals supported the structural elements needed for collaborative work groups to be successful. The quantitative phase of this study further examined the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met and how that adherence influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work.

## Research Questions

The research questions for this mixed method, multisite case study focused on exploring how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. Each question was rooted in the literature base on effective collaborative work groups and was narrowed by the conceptual framework for the study (see Chapter 2). The specific research questions were as follows.

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)

2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

## Operational Definitions

To enhance the reader's ability to understand the study that follows, it is necessary to clarify the definition of *collaboration* and other key terms as they will be used in this study. For this reason, the following operational definitions are provided.

1. *Collaboration*: The constructive dialogue, reflective practice, and cooperative exchange of knowledge that occurs between teacher colleagues for the purpose of establishing common goals and expectations for the improvement of teaching and learning within the teachers' classrooms.
2. *Core-content subjects*: English, Science, Mathematics, and Social Studies.
3. *Teacher*: A regular certified classroom instructor of a core-content subject.
4. *High school*: A school offering instruction in grades 9 – 12.

## Delimitations, Limitations, and Assumptions

Every research study carries its own set of delimitations, limitations, and assumptions. The following were the delimitations, limitations, and assumptions specific to this study.

## Delimitations

This study sought to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. Elementary and middle grades teachers were not included nor were teachers who were employed at private, alternative, or vocational schools. The study was further delimited to include only those teachers employed at one of three purposively selected (Greene, Caracelli, & Graham, 1989) secondary schools in a southeastern state. Teachers included in the study were both regular education teachers and special education teachers. One school counselor was also included.

## Limitations

The data for this study was gathered both qualitatively and quantitatively through teacher interviews, observations, and artifacts. Each of these methods of data collection has its own strengths and weaknesses. While observations can help confirm the self-reported data collected through interviews, my mere presence at group meetings may have affected the climate of the meetings and potentially limited data collected through those observations (Merriam, 2009). The interpretation of data collected from direct observations and physical artifacts was also limited to my etic viewpoint and did not incorporate participants' insights and perspectives that were evident in self-reported data collected from interviews (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002). The three sources, then, worked together to overcome their individual weaknesses and provide triangulation. Still, this study was conducted using only one interview and observation session with each participant. Though I remained engaged in the field until saturation was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985), the study is limited to the snapshot view that it provides of

teachers' attitudes and experiences with collaborative work groups during the time of the study.

**Assumptions**

All data collected in this study was analyzed under the assumption that participants responded openly and honestly to the interview questions. It was also assumed that participant responses provided adequate information to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups.

## Significance of the Study

Over the last three decades, teacher collaboration has been widely studied. In the beginning, most of the literature on teacher collaboration was housed in the findings of effective schools research. Authors such as Little (1981b) and Rosenholtz (1985) consistently concluded that effective schools were those in which teachers worked together rather than in isolation. In the development and further analysis of these findings, researchers began exploring which aspects of collaboration contributed to the success of a collaborative work group (Boyd, 1992; Kruse, Seashore, & Bryk, 1994; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Most of the research that followed came in the form of qualitative case studies of teachers' collaborative experiences (e.g., Beers, 2009; Goddard et al., 2007; Murata & Tan, 2009). Yet little research exists that describes the influence that these various aspects of collaborative work groups have on teachers' attitudes toward their work. This study seeks to address that gap in the literature.

Exploring how various aspects of collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work has multiple benefits. In addition to contributing to the

overall knowledge base on teacher collaboration, this study will also help principals better assist teachers in establishing and sustaining collaborative work groups that improve teachers' attitudes and maximize their productivity. Happier teachers who work together rather than in isolation will have higher student achievement scores and will be more likely to remain in their current positions producing continued positive results for the foreseeable future (Brown & Schainker, 2008; Goddard et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004).

## Organization of the Study

Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 begins with a review of related literature on teacher collaboration. It summarizes the constructive dialogue, reflective practice, and cooperative exchange of knowledge that occurs between teacher colleagues for the purpose of establishing common goals and expectations for the improvement of teaching and learning within the teachers' classrooms. The conceptual framework that was used to further narrow the focus of the study is also described.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology. It addresses the appropriateness of the concurrent, triangulation, mixed method, multisite case study design with a QUAL + quan approach and explains in detail the means by which data was collected and analyzed. The role of the researcher, methods of verification, and the protection of human subjects are also addressed.

Chapter 4 explicates the findings of the study at South High School. The first set of findings establishes how the critical elements of collaborative work groups influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work. The second set of findings examines how principals supported the structural conditions of collaborative work groups. The third set

of findings determines the extent of adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of collaborative work groups. The final set of findings explicates how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of collaborative work groups were met. Chapters 5, 6, and 7 follow the same pattern of findings for North High School, West High School, and a cross-case analysis for all three schools, respectively.

The study concludes in Chapter 8 with a summary of major findings and conclusions. This chapter addresses implications for these findings on the part of researchers and educational leaders. It further provides recommendations for practitioners and future research.

## Summary of the Chapter

This introductory chapter provided a brief overview of the study that follows. The problem existing from a lack of information regarding how teachers' attitudes are influenced by their collaborative experiences was explained as it relates to both the field of education and the body of literature in which that problem is situated. The purpose of the study and the research questions were developed to address that problem. The chapter included a description of the study's delimitations, limitations, and assumptions, and concluded with an explanation of the study's significance.

# CHAPTER 2

# REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The purpose of this study was to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. To achieve this purpose, an examination of existing literature on teacher collaboration was conducted. The review begins with the conceptual framework that was used to narrow the scope of the study. A comprehensive look at seven elements of effective teacher collaboration as described in the literature is then presented. The review concludes with the identification of gaps in the literature that demonstrated a need for the further research that was conducted in this study.

## The Search Process

The literature that is presented herein was obtained from a variety of sources. An initial search in the Education Resource Information Center (ERIC) using the term *teacher collaboration* produced myriad articles. From the reference lists of these articles, additional sources in the form of books, dissertations, reports, and articles were uncovered. In the end, Google Scholar, Google Books, Amazon, the National Center for Education Statistics, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory, and the Center on Organization and Restructuring Schools were all used to find sources that provided a comprehensive examination of the research that exists to date on the topic of teacher collaboration.

Most of the literature on teacher collaboration was divided somewhat evenly between qualitative studies and theoretical pieces. Together these works consistently mentioned some combination of the seven elements of effective teacher collaboration

provided in this review. Due to the qualitative and theoretical nature of these pieces, a variety of terms were used to discuss the same phenomenon. Searching for each of these terms independently proved to be less beneficial than searching for the overarching topic of teacher collaboration. Thus, the review that is provided represents one large synthesis of these works rather than seven independent literature reviews on each element of effective teacher collaboration. For a complete list of the literature that was reviewed, please see Appendix A.

## Conceptual Framework

As is evidenced by this review, there are a multitude of authors who have significantly contributed to the research base on teacher collaboration (e.g., Boyd, 1992; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Kruse et al., 1994). However, Table 1 provides evidence that Little's 1981 case study of three high schools and three elementary schools varying in success and collaborative activity offers the most succinct description of what must be in place for teacher collaboration to be successful. Hence, the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups described by Little provided the conceptual framework for this study.

Over the course of a 19-week period, Little (1981a) interviewed 105 teachers, fourteen school-level administrators, and fourteen district-level administrators in addition to observing teachers while they taught and interacted with one another. Findings were then characterized as having occurred at a school that was a) high success, high involvement, b) high success, low involvement, or c) low success, high involvement. Little found four classes of interactions to be crucial for success.

Table 1

*Studies Identifying Three or More Elements of Effective Collaborative Work Groups*

| Author (Year) | Initial Commonality | Discussion | Unified Norms | Collective Ingenuity | Deprivatization of Practice | New Commonality | Necessary Resources |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Attard (2012) | √ | √ | | √ | | | |
| Boyd (1992) | √ | | √ | | √ | | √ |
| DuFour and Eaker (1998) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | | √ |
| Hord (1997) | | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Kruse et al. (1994) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Little (1981a) | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Little (2003) | | | | | √ | √ | √ |
| Newman and Wehlage (1995) | √ | | | √ | √ | | √ |
| Senge (1990) | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ |
| Wenger (1998a) | | | | √ | | √ | √ |

First, teachers must engage in frequent, continuous talk about teaching practice. This talk must be precise and concrete, distinct from conversations about teachers' personal lives and complaints about students and their families. By engaging in appropriate dialogue, teachers build a shared language about the practice of teaching. The usefulness of collaborative interactions and the extent to which teachers experiment with new and meaningful strategies "is a direct function of the concreteness, precision, and coherence of the shared language" (Little, 1981a, p. 7)

Second, teacher observations must extend beyond those conducted by administrators. Teachers must also observe each other in practice and provide each other with meaningful feedback. Being present while another teacher delivers instruction provides both teachers with shared referents which enhance the shared language between them. The more precise and concrete the observation and resulting feedback, the more beneficial the teacher talk will be.

Third, teachers must plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together. Because these endeavors are the manifestation of a shared idea that brought them together, the teachers share the burden of teachers' work while simultaneously solidifying their shared understanding of their joint approach. By working together, teachers set joint standards of expectations for themselves as well as their students.

Finally, teachers must teach one another. In the most successful schools, teachers are encouraged to share their knowledge with others. This allows schools to maximize their own resources and contributes to the shard language that is continually being developed.

## Teacher Collaboration

Much of what is known about the dynamics of effective teacher collaboration comes from two bodies of literature, both of which situate the topic within the context of teacher community. The first body of literature includes the work of renowned authors Bryk, Kruse, Seashore Louis, Marks, Newman, Wehlage, and others who conducted their research through the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools (CORS) in the 1990s. The second body of literature centers on the work done around the same time by DuFour, Hord, Boyd, and others pertaining to Professional Learning Communities. Together, these two bodies of literature and additional work conducted by Warren Little and Garmston provide a framework for understanding what must be in place for teacher collaboration to be successful.

Successful teacher collaboration is a continuous, sustained endeavor willingly entered into and developed by and for teachers (Boyd, 1992; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kruse et al., 1994; Little, 1981b). According to Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002), the collaboration itself grows out of an initial common domain of interest. From that commonality, a dialogue begins. The dialogue ultimately results in the establishment of a set of norms that will guide the collaborative effort and simultaneously spawns the collective ingenuity of the group. Because the nature of the dialogue is reflective, members of the collaboration are constantly seeking to evaluate the success of their endeavors. For teachers, this requires a deprivatization of practice (Kruse et al., 1994). As teachers observe one another and meet to discuss what they saw, they develop a common set of experiences and referents that become unique to their group. This new commonality generates new discussion, adjustment of norms, and additional ingenuous

solutions and consequently establishes the cyclical nature of the ongoing collaborative endeavor.

**Initial Commonality**

The most successful collaborative endeavors are born out of the passions and aspirations of their members (Wenger et al., 2002). Together these members have a shared purpose, something very specific that they want to achieve, and it is this commonality that initially draws them together (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Members express strong commitment to the shared purpose because it is a natural extension of their own personal goals (Boyd, 1992). The commonality among members, however, must encompass more than just their vision; they must also share similar beliefs and values about issues at the core of their purpose. For teachers, these issues often concern student learning, the use of school time and space, and the roles of parents, teachers, and administrators (Kruse et al., 1994). Senge (1990) asserted that without this common "mental model" (p. 146) the collaborative endeavor becomes stressful and risks losing direction.

In her analysis of 78 Tennessee elementary schools, Rosenholtz (1989) found that student achievement was higher among schools in which teachers shared a common set of goals and collaboratively pursued professional growth. Rosenholtz went on to explain that while having a common set of goals was important in its own right, it also served as the catalyst through which teachers in effective schools sought the latter mentioned collaboration. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) warned that these goals must be clear and explicit. Examining interdisciplinary ventures at two universities in London and Beijing,

Feng (2012) confirmed that when the purpose of the collaboration was made explicit, members were more likely to respond and to achieve that purpose.

The collective focus for the collaborative endeavor described by Emmett and McGee (2012) at West High School in Bakersfield, California, was to help freshman students complete a successful first year of high school. Teachers were motivated by their belief that having a successful freshman year increased students' chances of successfully completing high school. This purpose served as the basis from which the group performed every action and made every decision. By adopting these research-based strategies, teachers reaped the fruits of their labor. Each year student reading levels increased, promotion rates increased, and suspensions decreased.

Vanasupa, McCormick, Stefanco, Herter, and McDonald (2012) did not experience the same success. Rather than employing a grassroots effort in which a group of people with common beliefs and values came together and collectively decided to undergo a joint effort, Vanasupa requisitioned the other faculty members for help in fulfilling a grant requirement that called for professors from different disciplines to work together for the improvement of engineering education. The team encountered great diversity in their professional beliefs, values, and motivations for the project. Members maintained their individual agendas for participating but failed to establish one clear collective and united vision, which ultimately caused the demise of the project. In conclusion, Vanasupa et al. noted that, "A true collaboration requires individuals to relate as equal co-creators with shared goals, rather than contracted agents who are serving someone else's goals in exchange for a personal gain" (p. 178).

Inasmuch as collaborative efforts at effective schools are not guided by the purpose of a single group member, they are also not controlled by administrators. Hargreaves (1994) cautioned that contrived collegiality causes collaborative enterprises to become "stilted, unproductive and wasteful of teachers energies and efforts and… suppress[es] the desire that teachers have to collaborate and improve among themselves" (p. 247). Reeves (2009) referred to such enterprises as "level one: contrived networks" (p. 246) and alleged that they "create the illusion of communication without the reality" (p. 246). Instead, Reeves called for "level five: value-driven networks" (p. 249) in which members feel empowered by a focus that is both personal and collective and often transcends organizational objectives. When teachers participate in such networks, they find that the purpose is relevant (Attard, 2012) and creates a synergy among everyone involved (Murata & Tan, 2009). Such a purpose is powerful enough to guide every decision yet flexible enough to encourage debate, discussion, experimentation, and growth (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995)

**Discussion**

The common mental model shared by members of a collaborative endeavor serves as the foundation from which conversation begins. Teachers naturally discuss students, instruction, and classroom management. What makes successful schools different is that these conversations are intentional, precise, and reflective (Little, 1981b). Osterman (1990) distinguished this reflection as "far more than leisurely speculation on one's own successes and failures, and far more than the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake" (p. 134). Instead, Osterman argued, such reflection is a challenging, focused, and critical assessment of professional behavior for the distinct purpose of improving practice.

Before growth can begin, members must increase their awareness of the tacit knowledge that affects their professional practices (Imel, 1992). Included in this tacit knowledge are assumptions, feelings, and opinions that drive members' thoughts and actions. In any given conversation, what an individual member hears, says, and understands is based on the assumptions that individual holds (Palus & Drath, 2001). Any given word can take on a different meaning depending on who is using it and who is receiving it (Bakhtin, 1986). For that reason, it is imperative that those underlying beliefs be suspended in front of the group for all to inspect (Bohm, 1990). Once the origin of these beliefs has been identified, the group can collectively explore them from new and varied perspectives (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Making these assumptions explicitly known to oneself and others, however, takes courage. In doing so, individuals are opening up their thoughts and beliefs for criticism, which can at times result in a feeling of attack on their personal identity. This opening up, though, is necessary to provide perspective for those involved and to allow oneself to be transformed as a result of participation (Isaacs, 1999; Shotter, 2005).

True dialogue occurs when individuals pose questions for which they earnestly have no answer and do not force an answer from other participants. Through this inquiry and openness, learning occurs and genuine community is built (Garmston, 2007; Hord, 1997). As members question and listen to one another, they come to understand each other more fully and begin to use that knowledge to reflect upon their own practice. Not to be restricted to statements that end in question marks, the most effective means of inquiry may in fact come from the simple request, "Tell me more" (Ueland, 1998, p. 2)

because as Ueland states, “When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand. Ideas actually begin to grow within us and come to life” (p. 1).

Teachers desire such productive interaction with their peers. In a survey conducted by the National Education Association (Bacharach, Bauer, & Shedd, 1986), teachers rated consultation with other teachers as more effective than inservice training, workshops, or conferences in attaining job-related skills and knowledge. Most new teachers meet at least once a month with more experienced colleagues to discuss teaching while veteran teachers convene at approximately the same rate to discuss student data (MetLife, 2008). According to Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001), “the improvement of professional practice is the most common rationale for the formation of teacher community” (p. 951).

Of all the collegial interactions observed by Little (1981b), discussion of classroom practice was one of the most instrumental factors in professional development. Though continuously clarifying matters of personal and professional importance can lead to principled disagreement, conflict, and sometimes difficult dialogue, teachers must be able to rely on this type of professional assistance, advice, and philosophical debate in order to grow professionally (Kruse et al., 1994; Senge, 1990). Members of a structured learning community studied by Attard (2012) attested that “being exposed to alternative viewpoints was an immense learning opportunity and a strongpoint [of the learning community]” (p. 203).

The benefits of collaborative dialogue have been documented among new and veteran teachers alike. While new teachers cite improved professional confidence and responsiveness as a result of “advice from colleagues… offered in an atmosphere of

collegial support and collaboration" (Cajkler & Hall, 2012), veteran teachers attribute mentoring with increased opportunities to reflect upon their own practice and that of their immediate professional community in order to explain and justify such practices to student teachers (Woodgate-Jones, 2011). To better understand the relationship between such collaborative experiences and increased student achievement, Moolenaar, Slegers, and Daly (2012) explored the mediating role of teachers' collective efficacy among 53 Dutch elementary schools. Results indicated that even though the density of advice networks was not directly related to student achievement, positive relationships existed between advice network density and collective efficacy as well as collective efficacy and student achievement. Such findings suggest that collective efficacy may serve as an intervening variable in explaining how dense social networks among educators ultimately benefit student achievement.

The fundamental assumption of a collaborative culture is that dialogue serves as the catalyst through which professional learning and improvement occur. Once an initial commonality brings a group of professionals together and dialogue begins to flow, members begin to debate their beliefs and practices. From this debate results a unified set of norms that guides the group's collective practice and ignites its collective ingenuity.

**Unified Norms**

For a collaborative endeavor to be successful, group members must remain focused on results (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Evaluating the relative success of those results would be futile without a guiding set of norms explicating that which is and is not acceptable to the group. Garmston (2007) described such norms as the foundational tools

that enable groups to dialogue, engage productively in conflict, make decisions, exercise creativity and innovation, and solve problems.

Explicitly defining, monitoring, and reviewing a unified set of group norms communicates to both new and existing members what behaviors are expected in order to maintain membership within the group (Boyd, 1992; Garmston, 2007). Furthermore, it provides a visual image of the culture the group intends to achieve (DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Because members are consciously aware of these common expectations, they voluntarily monitor both themselves individually and the group as a whole (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Garmston, 2007). They establish an "operational trust" (Senge, 1990, p. 236) in which members are constantly aware of one another and can be counted on to act in ways that are consistent with group norms. Developed out of a shared purpose and belief system, group members are far more likely to follow these unified norms than a set of lofty, impersonal bureaucratic rules (Kruse et al., 1994).

Beers (2009) encountered this type of accountability in the year prior to and during her first year of teaching. Beers's preservice experience consisted of a co-teaching assignment that she shared with a fellow preservice teacher and an experienced teacher at a large urban high school in the Northeast. While she did not co-teach with another adult during her first year of inservice teaching, she extended her co-teaching experience to incorporate her students as her co-teachers. In both circumstances, she credited shared responsibility, agreed upon actions, accountability, and follow-through with her ability to build relationships with students and to develop the necessary structures required for effective teaching and learning to occur.

In a lengthy project that brought 22 English and social studies teachers, a special education teacher, and an English as a Second Language teacher from the same urban high school together over the course of two and half years, Grossman et al. (2001) were able to examine the construction of a collaborative endeavor from its inception. The researchers recruited participants with the lure of a stipend rather than witnessing the formation of a grass-roots effort. Consequently, they discovered that the establishment of unified norms for such a group was not a natural occurrence. Instead, the project progressed for six months amid unresolved tension, conflict, and frustration before the researchers gathered four members together to express their concern for the potential failure of the project. At the next meeting, group members sought to establish a set of norms that could be used to guide discussions. As warned by both DuFour and Eaker (1998) and Garmston (2007), though, such changes were not perfected immediately. Time and practice were required for these newfound expectations to become the norm.

In effective schools, the collective focus of most collaborative endeavors is on student learning (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Kruse et al., 1994). This focus manifests itself in more than just norms for professional behavior, but also norms for practice including instruction, student learning, and student behavior. Discussions that bring about the establishment of these norms involve idealisms. The group's collective ingenuity manifests itself from these conversations.

**Collective Ingenuity**

Senge (1990) explained that the difference between what a group wants and how close they are to achieving that want produces a creative tension that causes the group to constantly seek resolution. Overcoming that difference requires creativity, innovation,

and collective ingenuity that results in an ever-evolving plan of action (Kruse et al., 1994). Successful collaborations are characterized by this ongoing desire to make creative decisions that solve current and relevant problems (Hord, 1997).

Effective schools are notably different from their less effective counterparts in the extent of collaboration and experimentation they employ (Little, 1981b; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). In a study of three elementary and three secondary schools of varied success in a major metropolitan district in the western United States, Little found that teachers in more successful schools routinely planned, designed, researched, evaluated, and prepared teaching materials together. Synthesizing data from the School Restructuring Study, the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988, the Study of Chicago School Reform, and the Longitudinal Study of School Restructuring, Newmann and Wehlage found that high quality learning occurred not only when teachers engaged in joint planning and curriculum development, but also when they experimented with creative and innovative ideas such as alternative scheduling and classroom grouping that better met the needs of their students and aided in the achievement of school goals.

The tendency to brainstorm solutions and resolve problems occurs naturally in the context of collaborative endeavors. In his ethnographic case study of a learning community, Attard (2012) noted that "practically every written reflection focused on some aspect of change in teaching practice" (p. 207) and Cajkler and Hall (2012) described "projects that responded to school challenges" (p. 222). Collaborative team members have come together with a common purpose, a desire to accomplish a particular goal and to engage in particular enterprise (Wenger, 1998a). Their solutions are a

reflection of their values and purpose (Kruse et al., 1994). To do nothing would negate their existence.

Strong professional communities encourage teachers to work together (Kruse et al., 1994). Together, they produce materials and activities and implement new approaches that improve instruction, curriculum, and assessment. Emmett and McGee (2012) described their collaboration as one that produced cooperatively designed curricular units and formative assessments as well as alternative strategies for redirecting student behavior. The types of examples and innovative approaches are myriad. Their success, however, is only possible when followed by constant evaluation and redirection (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Wassell & LaVan, 2009). This requires a deprivatization of practice in which teachers make their practice public to one another in an effort to make individual and collective improvements.

**Deprivatization of Practice**

Sharing, reflecting upon, and dialoguing about decontextualized accounts of classroom events are clearly beneficial to and commonplace in teacher collaborations. Yet these depictions of classroom practice are open to differing interpretations by all those involved in the sharing and listening process. Little (2003) described these accounts as "generally opaque by comparison to lived or observed classroom practice" (p. 936). For this reason, the most productive teacher collaborations incorporate frequent and reciprocal observations of one another's teaching, curriculum, and assessment practices (Little, 1981b; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

While the observing teacher stands to benefit from the mere act of observation, the practicing teacher under scrutiny only learns from the experience once the observer

shares his or her reactions. Though these reactions by their very nature have informal evaluative undertones, they are meant to be "peers helping peers" (Hord, 1997, p. 16). Commonly practiced in Japanese lesson study, the purpose of these observations is to generate pedagogical content knowledge through cycles of evidence-based classroom action (Pang & Ling, 2012). Maintaining a focus on practices as opposed to teachers helps to preserve self-respect and eliminate barriers to discussion; the usefulness of a practice is thus separated from the competence of a teacher (Little, 1981b).

In a study of four secondary science teachers who were engaged in a six-month cycle of reciprocal observations at a large, diverse high school in the northeastern United States, Danielowich (2012) discovered four categories of responses that observers offered to one another—self-critiques, compliments, questions, and critiques. Participants recognized how their responses to others' work provided an opportunity for individual and collective learning. Furthermore, as the teachers became more familiar with their peers' work, their group dialogue helped them anticipate, negotiate, and understand their own professional self-defensiveness. They came to value the dialogue that occurred in group settings as multiple voices offering the same critique proved more powerful than a single dissenting opinion. To these teachers, such consistent responses from multiple participants demonstrated a clear need and opportunity for professional change.

Other benefits of peer observation were documented by Wassell and LaVan (2009) in their follow-up case study of two first year teachers (Ian and Jen) whose preservice experience employed a co-teaching model in which each preservice teacher was paired with a fellow preservice peer. Once teaching solo, both teachers expressed how much they missed the opportunities for shared reflection that could only be garnered

from shared experiences within the classroom. Ian found solo teaching to be lonely and boring and struggled to find value in the perspectives offered by teachers who were not present during his instruction. He longed for someone to bounce ideas off of who understood the context of his lessons—his students, his style, and his classroom environment.

Though criticism can be hard to take at times, teaching and learning are more likely to improve when teachers willingly participate in the collective questioning of ineffective teaching routines (Boyd, 1992; Little, 2003). By doing so, they will learn new ways to discuss their practice and will strengthen their relationships with one another (Kruse et al., 1994). They will build a new commonality amongst themselves based on the common experience that they have shared through the collaborative endeavor.

**New Commonality**

As members of a collaborative endeavor participate in dialogue, develop common expectations, and share common experiences, they develop a shared language that at times can only be understood by the participants themselves (Little, 2003). Together they build a repertoire of shared referents, stories, styles, and vocabulary (Wenger, 1998a). They share a collection of communal resources such as tools, artifacts, and problem-solving techniques that members have collectively honed over time (Wenger, 1998b). True dialogue is born out of the common meaning that exists among them (Senge, 1990).

While researching two independent subject-oriented collaborative endeavors—Algebra and English—occurring among high school teachers, Little (2003) observed participants using vocabulary without clarification in a way that suggested other members of the group should and did understand what those terms meant. Six years later, Beers

(2009) explained how cogenerative discussions in which she and other teachers, administrators, or students collectively generated understandings and future plans of actions based on shared classroom experiences were her most valuable resource for professional improvement. More recently, Grierson et al. (2012) described the shared understandings that they constructed within their self-study learning community. Their meetings resulted in a shared memory that allowed for more effective evaluation, created abundant opportunities for ongoing discussion, and enhanced collegial collaboration.

Strong, productive collaborative endeavors represent a sustained cyclical process of double-loop learning (Argyris & Schon, 1974). Team members unite behind a common goal that is constantly being publicly assessed and revised through reflective dialogue, establishment of expectations, creative innovations, and constructions of shared knowledge. Such endeavors rarely exist in total isolation. In order to succeed, these groups have specific needs that must be met both internally and externally.

## Necessary Resources

Several conditions foster the success of collaborative endeavors. These conditions can be grouped into two categories. First are the structural and social needs of the group that must be met externally by organizational leaders. These needs include but are not limited to time, proximity, authority, encouragement, support, and respect. Second are the social needs that must be fulfilled internally by the group itself. Such needs include trust, respect, competence, and commitment among others.

### *External Resources*.

An organizational leader can provide structural support to a collaborative team by arranging time for the team to meet, organizing team members in close physical

proximity to one another, facilitating communication with other individuals and groups within the organization, and granting the team power to make decisions that affect the team and the overall productivity of the organization. While 63% of teachers who responded to the MetLife (2008) survey acknowledged discussing practice with other teachers at least once a month, new teachers were 1.5 to 2 times more likely to engage in such dialogue at least once a week than teachers who had six or more years of experience. This inconsistency is contrary to the recommended amount of time needed for effective collaboration. To achieve effective school improvement, groups must meet frequently to plan together and discuss practice (Hord, 1997; Little, 1981b; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). They need their administrators to organize the school day in such a way that provides collaborative groups with substantial and regularly scheduled blocks of time almost daily for the purpose of engaging in ongoing dialogue and reflection (Kruse et al., 1994). In a study on organizational transition, Finnish vocational teachers indicated that lacking this time was a limiting factor in their collaborative endeavor with feeder schools (Jappinen & Maunonen-Eskelinen, 2012). Inversely, preservice teachers and their mentors credited the regularity of their conversations with the success of their collaboration in a study conducted by van Velzen, Volman, Brekelmans, and White (2012).

Time for collaboration can be maximized by physical structures that encourage collaboration and reduce isolation (Boyd, 1992; Kruse et al., 1994). Administrators can increase teacher contact by simply creating team planning rooms or common spaces used to discuss educational practice. Furthermore, when teachers who are involved in collaborative projects have classrooms closer to their team members, they find it easier to

conduct their collaborative business, to observe one another, and to discuss what they see in those observations.

Collaborative efforts are also more successful when they have the opportunity to communicate and exchange ideas with other teams in the same organization (Kruse et al., 1994). Together these teams develop and facilitate a more encompassing shared purpose for the organization (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). The learning of one group can foster the learning of another group until such a culture permeates the organization (Senge, 1990).

Yet none of this would be possible without the power and authority to make decisions that affect both the group and the productivity of the organization as a whole (Boyd, 1992; Sergiovanni, 2000). This requires that organizational leaders believe in the capacity of their members to share the leadership of the organization and that those leaders be willing and ready to relinquish that power (Hord, 1997). It is the role of administrators to remove bureaucratic barriers like those faced by Vanasupa et al. (2012) that undermine the purpose of teacher collaborations and secure an environment in which collaborative teams can make the decisions they need to improve the quality of teaching and learning within their building (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Senge, 1990). Research shows that when teachers are granted the flexibility to respond accordingly to the specific needs of their students, they feel more responsible for those students' learning (Kruse et al., 1994).

Collaborative teams are also more successful when they enjoy certain social resources provided by their organizational leadership. Teams need external leaders who are caring and respectful and support their experimentation (Hord, 1997; Newmann &

Wehlage, 1995). They must be able to trust and feel trusted by those leaders. Senge (1990) described a covenantal relationship that exists between the two entities in which both express a shared commitment to organizational goals and management processes. Teachers must feel supported to take risks and try new techniques and ideas (Kruse et al., 1994). They look to their principals to create a climate that legitimizes both their project and any resulting change that it brings to the organization (Boyd, 1992).

***Internal Resources***

A similar set of social needs must be met internally by the group members themselves for a collaborative project to succeed. Participants must be confident, competent, committed, caring, and supportive (Boyd, 1992; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Kruse et al., 1994; Little, 1981b; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Senge, 1990; Wenger, 1998a). Their meetings must be characterized by trust and respect and, if they expect the project to be sustainable, the group must have socialization measures in place to welcome and ease the transition for new members to join the group.

A group is only capable of learning if the individuals within it are capable of learning. For this reason, collaborative efforts are more effective when the individuals involved exhibit high levels of personal mastery (Senge, 1990). Members must demonstrate proficiency with both their cognitive and technical abilities (Kruse et al., 1994). The Finnish vocational teachers in Jappinen and Maunonen-Eskelinen's (2012) study found counselors' out-of-date knowledge about current vocational education and the world of work to be a challenge in accomplishing their collaborative goal of easing student transitions between organizations. Likewise, if a collaborative effort of teachers

was therefore aimed at improving teaching and learning, it must be based on effective teaching (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

A second factor critically necessary for valuable dialogue to occur is that of respect. Members of a collaborative team are more likely to be successful when they view and treat one another as colleagues and friends (Senge, 1990). Hierarchy has no place within a collaborative group (Bohm, 1990). All members are treated as equals regardless of age or experience (Hord, 1997). Exercising this notion of a flat relationship, preservice teachers and mentors alike in van Velzen et al.'s (2012) study indicated that their mutual trust and respect for one another's expertise allowed both parties to grow professionally.

Grierson et al. (2012) spoke of trust and respect as well. They described their meetings as a respectful "safe place" (p. 100) in which members could feel comfortable and supported in sharing their thoughts and opinions. Usually occurring hand in hand, respect and trust build professional commitment, something that is necessary for ongoing improvement but impossible to mandate (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kruse et al., 1994). The type of commitment needed here is intrinsic and more likely to be found among smaller rather than larger groups (Hord, 1997; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Senge, 1990).

Successful collaborative groups are described by their members as full of support for one another's growth and social-emotional needs (Little, 2003; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995). Even though they extend these welcoming, positive attitudes to newcomers, navigating a shared language and practice steeped in experience and tradition can be difficult for individuals who join the team midstream. Collaborative teams must

remain mindful of how their interconnectedness can have the unintended consequence of isolating others and work to prepare thoughtful strategies for including newcomers (Little, 1981b). Members of a team will eventually leave the organization and without the possibility of sharing those traditions, resources, and practices with fresh faces, the purpose of the team would leave with them. In order for the vision to remain sustainable, it must be passed on (Kruse et al., 1994).

**Summary of Teacher Collaboration**

In 1987, Little posed the following questions:

> Is it that lesson planning improves as people press each other to say not only what they do with students, but why? Is it that the toughest, most persistent problems of curriculum, instruction, and classroom management get the benefit of the group's experience? Is it the combined sense of confidence and obligation that teachers carry into the classroom? Is it the peer pressure to live up to agreements made and ideas offered? Is it that in making teaching principles and practices more public, the best practices are promoted more widely and the weakest ones are abandoned? Is it simply that close work with colleagues affords a kind of stimulation and solidarity that reflects itself in energetic classroom performance and holds talented teachers longer in the profession? (p. 494)

Twenty-five years later, these questions have been answered. Put simply, the answer is yes. When colleagues willingly come together with an initial commonality of purpose, beliefs, and values, conversation naturally flows. What makes effective collaborations different is that these conversations are intentional, precise, reflective, and dialogical. As a result, effective collaborations establish a unified set of norms that

define the expectations of their practice and serve as a standard against which their endeavors will be evaluated. From fruitful dialogue collective ingenuity is spawned. In schools, the product of this ingenuity ranges from classroom activities to major reforms in educational practice. To evaluate the success of these endeavors and further professional growth, teachers deprivatize their practice and welcome others into their classrooms for observations. The dialogue that occurs as a result of such observations creates a new commonality among the group. They develop a repertoire of shared referents, vocabulary, and artifacts that is unique to their group. Without the necessary resources, achieving their purpose can be difficult. To succeed, these groups need organizational leaders who are willing to provide the structural and social resources necessary for the group to thrive. Internally, team members must be committed, competent, and supportive. If all of these factors are in place, school improvement is sure to prevail.

## Conclusion

This chapter provided a review of literature on teacher collaboration as well as the conceptual framework that guided the study. Effective teacher collaborations were described as those that arise out of an initial commonality, participate in reflective dialogue, establish a unified set of norms, exercise collective ingenuity, deprivatize practice, and develop a newfound commonality uniquely based on the shared experiences of the collaborative group. The resources needed to achieve such collaborations were also addressed. Little research exists, however, that describes the influence that these various aspects of collaborative work groups have on teachers' attitudes toward their work. This study seeks to address that gap in the literature.

Chapter 3 provides a detailed description of the research methodology. It addresses the appropriateness of the concurrent, triangulation, mixed method, multisite case study design with a QUAL + quan approach and explains in detail the means by which data will be collected and analyzed. The role of the researcher, methods of verification, protection of human subjects, and the manner in which the conceptual framework influenced the study are also addressed.

# CHAPTER 3

# METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. To achieve this purpose, the following research questions guided this study:

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)
2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of fidelity to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the fidelity to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Little's 1981 case study on successful teacher collaborations which will serve as a conceptual framework for the study was presented in Chapter 2. While research suggests which critical elements and structural conditions must be present for collaborative work groups to be effective (Boyd, 1992; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Kruse et al., 1994; Little, 1981b), research to date has failed to explore how the extent to which those critical elements and structural conditions are met influences teachers' attitudes toward their work. This concurrent, triangulation, mixed method case study addresses that gap. Chapter 3 provides a description of the research methodology that was employed to achieve the study's purpose. The chapter addresses the appropriateness of the research

design and identifies the role of the researcher. It provides the sample for the study and places that sample in the context of both the population from which it was derived and the sampling frame and method from which it was extracted. An explanation of the instrumentation that was used for data collection and the strategies that were used to analyze that data is disclosed. Also included are the methods that were employed to ensure the validity and reliability of the study as a whole. Finally, the chapter concludes with a summary of the research methodology presented.

## Type of Design

This study utilized a concurrent, triangulation, mixed method, multisite case study design (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann, & Hanson, 2003; Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Yin, 2009). A QUAL + quan approach was used indicating that although the study was qualitatively focused on exploring how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups, both qualitative and quantitative methods were employed and data from both sources were collected concurrently (Morse, 2003). As shown in Figure 1, data was analyzed separately and then integrated for interpretation (Creswell et al., 2003).

## Rationale for the Design

Multiple data collection and analysis strategies were considered for this study. In the end, it was the purpose of the study and the literature base in which it is founded that led to the selection of the concurrent, triangulation, mixed method, multisite case study design described in this chapter. The rationale and appropriateness of each component of this design are addressed herein.

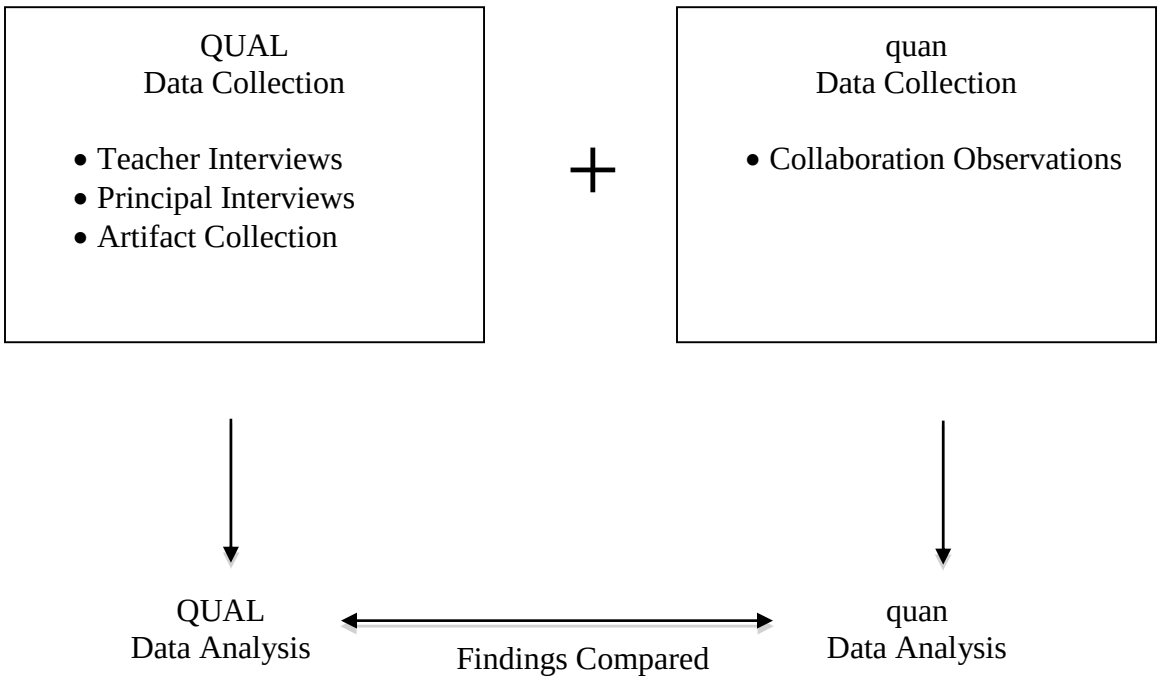


*Figure 1.* Study design. From "Advanced Mixed Methods Research Designs," by J. W. Creswell, V. L. Plano Clark, and W. E. Hanson, 2003, in A. Tashakkori and C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of Mixed Methods in Social and Behavioral Research*, p. 226, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage. Copyright [2003] by Sage. Adapted with permission (see Appendix B).

## Case Study Design

Yin (2009) described a case study as "an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context" (p. 18). Merriam (2009) added that the phenomenon must be studied in a bounded system that can be "fenced in" (p. 40). The phenomenon in question for this study is how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The real-life context is the high schools in which that collaboration occurs. By bounding the study to the teachers who work at these schools rather than the population of teachers as a whole defines this research as a case study.

Stake (2000) sorted case studies into two categories—intrinsic and instrumental. This study is the latter. As described by Stake, the case itself (these particular teachers in these particular schools) is of secondary interest. By purposefully selecting sites that engage in collaboration, the case is used instead to facilitate an understanding of how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The case was studied in depth and its activities and contexts detailed and scrutinized all for the purpose of understanding the phenomenon rather than these individual teachers.

## Examining Multiple Sites

Because the nature of this case study is more instrumental than intrinsic, it was logical to extend the study to multiple sites (Stake, 2000). Addressing the same research questions with identical data collection and analysis strategies at multiple sites enhances the ability of case study research to generalize its findings while preserving its characteristic in-depth description (Herriott & Firestone, 1983). Each additional site

beyond the first inherently provides comparative data, whether those sites are chosen to predict similar or contrasting results (Yin, 2009). The sites in this study were analyzed as such. Results garnered from the second site were instantly compared and contrasted with the first site. Likewise, results from the third site were instantly compared and contrasted to the first two. Data analysis continued in this manner until saturation was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

**Mixing Methods**

Case study research does not by design indicate the use of a particular methodology (Merriam, 2009). Instead, the purpose of the study and the research questions that guide it dictate which method(s) should be employed (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Current literature does not provide an adequate quantitative instrument that measures how the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work or how principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups. To understand this experience it must be articulated by the teachers and principals themselves and, therefore, required qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). By incorporating qualitative data collection and analysis strategies, the study was also more flexible to unexpected changes and allowed for the discovery of additional variables that were not originally under consideration (Patton, 2002).

Similarly, current literature does not provide an adequate quantitative instrument that measures the extent to which collaborative work groups adhere to the critical elements and structural conditions necessary for collaborative work groups to be successful. Instead, an observation protocol inspired by the conceptual framework for

this study (Little, 1981b) was employed to measure that fidelity and provide triangulation among data sources. Because the sample for the study was small and purposefully chosen, the findings from this observation protocol are not generalizable to a larger population (Yin, 2009). The quantitative findings were analyzed separately from the qualitative findings to provide a measure of the extent of adherence and then the two methodologies were compared (Creswell et al., 2003) to further explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by that adherence.

Thus, the study employed a mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods. Born out of a pragmatist ideology, mixing methods is a tool used by researchers to maximize the best of both qualitative and quantitative worlds in answering the questions that drive their research (Maxcy, 2003). Such designs allow the researcher to compensate for the weaknesses in one methodology with the strengths in the other (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Corroborating evidence from multiple sources (i.e. teacher interviews, principal interviews, observations of collaborative work groups, and artifacts) and multiple methodologies (i.e. qualitative and quantitative) increases the strength and trustworthiness of the study (Anfara et al., 2002). Table 2 provides a detailed outline of how each data source will be used to answer the study's research questions. Please see Appendix C, D, and E, respectively, for a copy of the teacher interview protocol, principal interview protocol, and group observation protocol.

Table 2

*Alignment of Data Sources with Research Questions*

| Research Question | Teacher Interview | Principal Interview | Group Observation | Artifact Collection |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? | x | | | |
| 2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? | x | x | | |
| 3. What is the extent of fidelity to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? | | | x | x |
| 4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the fidelity to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? | x | x | x | |

**Concurrent Triangulation Design**

Greene et al. (1989) contended that there are five purposes for mixing methods—complementarity, development, initiation, expansion, and triangulation. Studies that seek complementarity use one method to elaborate upon, enhance, or clarify the findings achieved from the other method. Development studies use the results from one method to make an informed decision regarding use of the second method, such as sampling or instrument development. In initiation studies, the goal is to discover any paradoxes that might exist among contradictory results. A study with an expansion intent is one that uses each method to assess a different component of a phenomenon, whereas a triangulation study uses each method to assess the same component of a given phenomenon.

Using these aforementioned definitions, this study can be categorized as a triangulation study. The quantitative method was applied to measure the extent of adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups in hopes of confirming the qualitative data also collected on the same topic (Morse, 2003). Such corroborating evidence provided triangulation in the classic sense of the term, thus enhancing the validity of the study (Greene et al., 1989). Additional benefits include the reduction in method and researcher bias accomplished by using two independent methods to measure the same construct (Greene et al., 1989).

To achieve the purposes of a triangulation study, both methods must be implemented simultaneously (Greene et al., 1989). For this reason, Creswell et al. (2003) classified such studies as "concurrent triangulation designs" (p. 224). In studies employing this design, data analysis is conducted separately and the results integrated for

interpretation. While Greene et al. and Creswell et al. recommended that both methods be given equal priority in the study, Morse (2003) acknowledged and Creswell et al. confirmed that one method generally drives a study. This base method is more relevant to the phenomenon in question and usually identified from the outset. Qualitative data collection and analysis strategies steered the findings for this study.

## Role of the Researcher

While a quantitative observation protocol was used for one portion of this study, most of the remainder of the study focused on qualitative data collection and analysis. In qualitative research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2003; Merriam, 2009). Consequently, a human instrument introduces human bias into the study. According to Merriam (1998), "all observations and analyses are filtered through that human being's worldview, values, and perspective" (p. 22).

The ontological foundation of qualitative research suggests that there are multiple realities at play—my own as well as the study's participants (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004; Merriam, 1998). The final product represents my interpretation of the participants' views filtered through my own views. I ultimately decided what the story was, or at least what was included in the report (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000).

Qualitative researchers take on roles ranging from complete participant to complete observer (Merriam, 2009). Though my role was that of complete observer, such detachment does not remove my own bias. I have served as a public secondary educator for 14 years, eleven of which have been heavily characterized by teacher collaboration. As founder and team leader of my school's Freshman Academy, I have

encountered firsthand many of the components laid out in the conceptual framework for this study. For the last nine years, I have also served as the mathematics department chair. In this capacity, I have sought to create an environment consistent with the principles of effective collaboration. My experience of team members' and non-team members' seemingly varied attitudes toward their work led to my interest in this study.

During the data collection and analysis for this study, I had to be aware of the impact that my own biases could cause. For that reason, the conceptual framework was an essential tool that guided my interviews, observations, and interpretations. Additionally, the use of a quantitative observation protocol to corroborate my findings aided in overcoming any such bias.

## Site and Sample

While redundancy and variety are both important, the sites chosen in this study were purposefully selected for their varying levels of collaborative activity. A purposeful sample is appropriate in qualitative studies, and especially case studies, because it leads to greater discovery and better understanding of the phenomenon in question (Greene et al., 1989; Stake, 2000). Because both quantitative and qualitative strategies were employed simultaneously, the quantitative sample for this study was purposeful as well.

Three high schools in a southeastern state were selected for participation in this study based on the level of collaboration that they exhibited as measured by the Site Selection Checklist provided in Appendix F. Schools located in the same region of the state but in four different districts were considered for selection. After obtaining permission from the university office of research and the school districts, district level personnel—including the Superintendent, Assistant Superintendent, Director of

Secondary Education, Career and Technical Education Coordinator, Instructional Supervisor, and Supervisor of Secondary Education—were asked to complete the Site Selection Checklist for every high school within their district. Schools were ranked based on the results of this checklist and divided evenly into three categories—highly collaborative, moderately collaborative, and minimally collaborative. Principals of each school were then contacted by electronic mail requesting their participation in the study. One principal from each category chose to allow their school to participate in the study.

Once principals granted permission for their schools to be included in the study, principals were asked to complete the Collaborative Work Group Selection Checklist provided in Appendix G. Principals were also asked to grant and consequently provided permission to observe and interview the teachers in the collaborative work groups. Because groups scored so similarily to one another, three groups from each school were initially selected at random for participation in the study. In order to achieve saturation, all four groups at one school were selected for participation.

At the beginning of the group observation, group members were asked to and consequently did provide informed consent for their participation in the study. Group members were given an opportunity at that time to indicate whether or not they were willing to participate in the interview portion of the study. Interviews continued among each group's members until saturation had been achieved within that group (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The principal for each school was also interviewed. Those teachers and principals who participated in an interview formed the qualitative sample for the study. The total number of teachers in the observed groups comprised the quantitative sample for the

study. The population consisted of the collective group of school principals and observed teachers participating in the study.

## Data Collection

This study achieved its purpose through the use of a concurrent, triangulation, mixed method, multisite case study. As the name of this design suggests, quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously (Creswell, et al., 2003; Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Yin, 2009). Utilizing a QUAL + quan approach (Morse, 2003), the primary focus of this investigation lied with the qualitative data whereas the quantitative data were used to provide triangulation for the qualitative findings.

### Qualitative Data Collection

Yin (2009) suggested that case study evidence comes from six sources—documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts. The qualitative data for this case study were collected through interviews and physical artifacts. Because most case studies, including this one, explore human affairs, Yin argued that interviews are one of the most important sources of case study evidence. The insights of those involved in the activity provide an invaluable emic perspective on the phenomenon in question.

Though interview questions for a case study follow a formal protocol, the interview itself should be conducted much like a conversation (Yin, 2009). When participants gave vague or tentative responses, I probed for more information. Thus the need for flexibility mandated that the interviews for this study follow the semistructured design described by Merriam (2009). Protocols were developed for teacher interviews (see Appendix C) and principal interviews (see Appendix D) based on the conceptual

framework and purpose of the study but were adjusted as needed based on the constant comparison of data upon collection (Glaser & Strauss, 2007).

Table 3 indicates which teacher interview questions were generated to gauge teachers' attitudes towards their work versus those that were generated to provide a better understanding of teachers' experiences with collaborative work groups. Questions regarding collaboration were structured in such a way to distinguish which elements of effective collaborative work groups identified by Little (1981a) were present in teachers' collaborative experiences. Teacher interviews continued until saturation had been achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Table 3

*Development of Teacher Interview Questions*

| Question | Attitudes Toward Work | Experiences with Collaborative Work Groups |
|---|---|---|
| 2 | √ | |
| 3 | √ | |
| 4 | | √ |
| 5 | | √ |
| 6 | | √ |
| 7 | | √ |
| 8 | | √ |
| 9 | √ | |

*Note.* Question 1 requested that teachers give oral informed consent to participate in the study. Question 10 provided participants the opportunity to add any additional information not covered by any of the previous questions.

Only one principal interview was conducted at each site. The interview protocol consisted of seven questions. The first question requested that principals give oral informed consent to participate in the study. Questions 2 and 3 were grand tour questions (Spradley, 1979) designed to learn more about the principals' backgrounds and the principals' perceptions of their school and faculty. Questions four through six were structured in such a way to distinguish how principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups identified by Little (1981a). Question seven provided participants the opportunity to offer any additional information not covered by any of the previous questions.

In addition to interviews, any physical artifacts relating to the study were also noted. Yin (2009) maintained that these artifacts may be collected or observed. Artifacts were collected or noted during both observations of the collaborative work groups as well as teacher and principal interviews. Using the conceptual framework for this study as a guide, the types of artifacts collected or noted included handouts, emails, Google Docs, and Power-Point presentations. The importance of these artifacts lied in the physical evidence that they provided about the collaboration and attitudes of participants.

**Quantitative Data Collection**

Emic perspectives provided through interviews are limited by their self-reported nature (Yin, 2009). To reduce this bias, observations of participants' involvement in collaborative activities were also conducted. The protocol for these observations (see Appendix E) was organized into seven categories reflecting the seven critical elements of effective collaborative work groups that were described by Little (1981a) and used as the conceptual framework for the study. Within each category, however, were specific

observable actions mentioned by Little as well as others who have conducted extensive research on the subject of collaborative work groups (e.g., Boyd, 1992; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Hord, 1997; Kruse et al., 1994).

Each observation was conducted on two simultaneous levels. First, I looked for the existence of each descriptor among the group as a whole. A check mark was placed in the appropriate column and any anecdotal notes recorded accordingly. Second, I made specific anecdotal notes when interview participants showed evidence of a given descriptor. This allowed me to analyze the collaborative level of the group as a whole as well as the individual levels of participation in the collaboration that were exhibited by the interviewees.

## Data Analysis

Because data for this study was collected at multiple sites, both within-case and cross-case analyses were conducted (Creswell, 2007). The qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed simultaneously. Findings from each case were compared during the cross-case analysis. The following sections describe how the qualitative and quantitative data were analyzed.

### Qualitative Data Analysis

Merriam (2009) described how qualitative research differs from quantitative research in its "emergent" (p. 169) rather than predetermined nature. Data analysis does not follow data collection, but is rather a cyclical process in which data are collected and instantly analyzed so as to guide further data collection and analysis. This cyclical process was followed during as well as between the collection of qualitative data via interviews and physical artifacts.

During qualitative data collection, each principal being interviewed was labeled according to the school at which he worked, e.g. Principal W was the principal at West High School. In addition to a letter representing the school at which they worked, interviewed teachers were also labeled by their collaborative work group, e.g. Teacher N1A was the first teacher interviewed at North High School in Collaborative Work Group A. Likewise, each physical artifact was also labeled according to the school and collaborative work group in which it was observed, e.g. Artifact S2B was the second artifact observed in Collaborative Work Group B at South High School.

At the conclusion of each interview and the collection of each artifact, the data from that source was analyzed for findings and compared to the findings from previous sources. Each finding was coded with an accurately descriptive name and was entered into a qualitative data analysis software called Dedoose. These data were the equivalent of the "first iteration" of data analysis described by Anfara et al. (2002, p. 32). Each new code was then be used to "tag" (Anfara et al., p. 33) new information found in future sources that matched the given code. As each additional source was constantly compared to previous sources, patterns among codes emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 2007). Codes that exhibited a given pattern were grouped together in the creation of a larger variable. These variables represented the second iteration of data analysis as described by Anfara et al. It is from these variables that themes were formed regarding the purpose of the study to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. While the first iteration of data analysis was initially conducted on an individual school level, it concluded with a cross-case analysis of the codes discovered for each of the schools in the study. The second and

subsequent iterations of data analysis were then conducted on the collective list of all codes included in the first iteration. This process of transforming data from codes into themes answering Research Questions 1 and 2 is mapped out in Table 4 and Table 5, respectively.

### Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative data for this case study was collected in the form of direct observation. Each quantitative data source was analyzed in the form of frequency counts to determine the extent of adherence exhibited to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups. These results were triangulated with interview responses and physical artifacts for consistency. Qualitative findings from research questions one, two, and three were triangulated with the quantitative findings from research question three to answer research question four.

## Methods of Verification

Statistical measures such as validity and reliability cannot easily be used to judge the rigor of qualitative work (Anfara et al., 2002). Instead, Lincoln and Guba (1985) established a substitutive criteria that they referred to as trustworthiness. Because the emphasis of this study lies in its qualitative data, Lincoln and Guba's substitutive criteria was used. The transition from statistical terms to terms of trustworthiness as expressed by Lincoln and Guba (p. 42) are illustrated in Table 6 along with the means by which they were achieved in this study.

Table 4

*Code Mapping Process for Research Question 1*

| Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| FIRST ITERATION | | SECOND ITERATION | THIRD ITERATION |
| S-Care<br>S-Help<br>S-Trust<br>S-Loyalty<br>S-Understanding<br>S-Open Communication<br>S-Praise<br>S-Honesty | W-Tense<br>W-Trust<br>W-Barrier<br>W-Fear<br>W-Unpredictable Reactions<br>W-Lack of Trust | Relationship with Administrator | Nature of the Leadership |
| S-Awareness<br>S-Organization<br>S-Efficiency<br>S-Leadership<br>S-Goal-driven<br>S-Vision<br>S-Expectations<br>W-New Evaluations<br>W-Misunderstandings about Common Core<br>W-Lack of Communication | W-Lack of Understanding about Special Education<br>N-Disorganized [School]<br>N-Lack of Clear Directives<br>N-Interruptions<br>N-Lack of Structure<br>N-Upredictable Events<br>N-Lack of Communication | Perceived Administrative Competence | |
| S-Support<br>S-Lack of Consistency<br>S-Attentiveness<br>N-Quantity<br>N-Division of Leadership<br>N-Discipline<br>N-Visibility<br>N-Lack of Support<br>N-Awareness | N-Teachers Not Heard<br>W-Support<br>W-Discipline<br>W-Training<br>W-Lack of Support<br>N-Lack of Consistent Discipline<br>N-Different Rules for Different Students | Administrative Support | |
| S-Values<br>N-Lack of Accountability<br>N-Community Involvement | N-Unknown<br>N-Appeasing Parents<br>W-Learning<br>W-Kids<br>W-Rules | Administrative Values | |

Table 4. Continued.

| Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| FIRST ITERATION | | SECOND ITERATION | THIRD ITERATION |
| S-Lengthy Relationships<br>S-Family-like<br>S-Friendships<br>S-Care<br>S-Consideration<br>S-Help<br>S-Professional Feedback<br>S-Respect<br>S-Teamwork<br>N-Family-like<br>N-Teamwork | N-Help<br>N-Cooperation<br>N-Disconnectedness<br>N-Personality Conflicts<br>N-Passivity<br>W-Lengthy Relationships<br>W-Family-like<br>W-Friendships<br>W-Help<br>W-Professionalism<br>W-Philosophical Differences | Coworker Behaviors | Nature of the Coworkers |
| S-Initial Commonality<br>S-Discussion<br>S-Collective Ingenuity<br>S-New Commonality<br>S-Necessary Resources<br>N-Initial Commonality | N-Discussion<br>N-Necessary Resources<br>W-Initial Commonality<br>W-Discussion<br>W-Necessary Resources | Collaboration | |
| S-Subject Area<br>S-Teaching<br>S-Independence<br>S-Schedule<br>S-Workload<br>S-Paperwork<br>S-Students<br>S-Personal School Experience<br>N-Teaching | N-Independence<br>N-Schedule<br>N-Subject Area<br>N-Personal School Experience<br>N-Students<br>N-Workload<br>W-Teaching<br>W-Students<br>W-Paperwork | Internal Feelings about Teaching | Nature of the Work |

Table 4. Continued.

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| S-Pay<br>S-Technology<br>S-Funding<br>S-Additional Responsibilities<br>N-Facilities<br>N-Pay | N-Politics<br>N-State Initiatives<br>N-Demonization of Teachers<br>W-Common Core<br>W-Evaluation Model<br>W-Pay | External Forces | |

Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work?

| FIRST ITERATION | SECOND ITERATION | THIRD ITERATION |
|---|---|---|

*Note.* Adapted from "Qualitative Analysis on Stage: Making the Research Process More Public," by V. A. Anfara, Jr., K. M. Brown, and T. L. Mangione, 2002, *Educational Researcher, 31*, p. 32.

Table 5

*Code Mapping Process for Research Question 2*

| Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| FIRST ITERATION | | SECOND ITERATION | THIRD ITERATION |
| S-Planning Periods<br>S-Classroom Proximity<br>S-Departmental Lunch Times<br>S-In-service Days<br>N-Planning Periods<br>N-In-service Days | N-Lunch<br>N-Classroom Proximity<br>W-In-service Days<br>W-Classroom Proximity<br>W-Lunch<br>W-Teacher Workroom<br>W-Phone Calls | During School Hours | Time |
| S-Parent Teacher Conference Night<br>S-After School | W-Before School<br>W-After School | Outside School Hours | |
| S-Frequency<br>S-Duration<br>S-Time Limit | N-Frequency<br>N-Duration<br>W-No Time Limit | Requirements | |
| S-Not Too Small<br>S-Small Group | S-Large Group<br>N-Small Group | Size | Structure |
| N-Group Composition | W-Group Composition | Organization | |
| S-No Review of Previous Meeting<br>S-Gripe Time | S-Rotating Roles S-Lack of Set Plan<br>N-Coaches Excused | Requirements | |
| S-Principal-designated Teacher Leaders<br>S-Assign Administrator to Attend<br>S-Accountability<br>S-Principal Led<br>N-No Accountability<br>N-Assistant Principal Leaders | W-Principal Led<br>W-Principal-designated Teacher Leaders<br>W-Administrator Attendance<br>W-Lack of Accountability<br>W-No Expectations | Principal's Responsibilities | Leadership |

Table 5. Continued.

Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups?

| FIRST ITERATION | | SECOND ITERATION | THIRD ITERATION |
|---|---|---|---|
| S-Agenda<br>S-Group Assisgnments<br>S-Model<br>S-Motivate Participation<br>S-Provide Direction<br>S-Administrator Participation<br>N-Motivate Participation | N-Provide Direction<br>N-Listen<br>N-Administrator Involvement<br>N-Consistency<br>W-Model<br>W-Agenda<br>W-Advanced Notice of Topics<br>W-Summary Notes | Leader's Responsibilities | Leadership (continued) |
| S-Competence [CWG]<br>S-Administrator Investment<br>S-Disorganized [CWG]<br>N-Administrator | N-Organized [CWG]<br>N-Competence [CWG]<br>N-Administrator Investment<br>W-Flexibility | Leader's Characteristics | |
| S-Opinions Only<br>S-Principal Makes Final Decision<br>S-No Decisions<br>N-Teacher Voice<br>N-Ideas | N-Input<br>N-No Decisions<br>W-Ideas<br>W-No Decisions<br>W-Input<br>W-Teacher voice | Decisions Affecting the School | Decisions |
| S-Meeting Dates<br>S-Meeting Times<br>S-Rotating Roles<br>S-Agenda<br>S-Process<br>N-Curriculum<br>N-Pace<br>N-Student Awards<br>N-Grading | N-Discipline<br>N-Deadlines<br>W-Meeting Dates<br>W-Meeting Time<br>W-Meeting Location<br>W-Prom<br>W-Graduation<br>W-Fundraisers | Decisions Affecting the CWG | |

*Note.* Adapted from "Qualitative Analysis on Stage: Making the Research Process More Public," by V. A. Anfara, Jr., K. M. Brown, and T. L. Mangione, 2002, *Educational Researcher, 31*, p. 32.

Table 6

*Achieving Trustworthiness*

| Statistical Term | Trustworthiness Term | Means of Achievement |
|---|---|---|
| Internal Validity | Credibility | Prolonged Engagement in the Field<br>Triangulation |
| External Validity | Transferability | Purposive Sampling<br>Thick Description |
| Objectivity | Confirmability | Reflexivity |
| Reliability | Dependability | Audit Trail |

Credibility for this study was primarily achieved through triangulation. The core premise underlying triangulation is that all methods have inherent biases and limitations (Greene et al., 1989). By mixing both quantitative and qualitative methods and incorporating multiple sources of evidence—interviews, observations, and artifacts—these biases and limitations were neutralized (Anfara et al., 2002). To accumulate sufficient data from these multiple methodological sources, a prolonged engagement in the field is necessary. Thus, the credibility of this study was strengthened by remaining in the field until a point of saturation or redundancy was reached (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The external validity of quantitative studies is typically achieved through generalizability. Because the sample for this study was not randomly selected from a

given population, the results are not statistically generalizable to that population (Yin, 2009). This is acceptable in a case study as findings are frequently offered as a case against which future researchers can compare their own findings rather than a list of rejected or failed to be rejected hypotheses (Merriam, 2009; Stake, 2000). Purposefully selecting information-rich cases from multiple sites enhanced the thick description that enables the reader to transfer the study's findings to his or her own context and experience within a similar sample (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

The foundations of quantitative research emphasize a separation between the knower and that which is known. Durkheim (1982) suggested that this separation frees the findings of quantitative research from prejudice and subjectivity. Qualitative findings, on the other hand, are inherently inseparable from the human instrument that collected them (Smith, 1983). As suggested by Merriam (2009), I have been open about the biases that such inseparation brings into this study on my behalf. It was through the continued practice of reflexivity throughout the study that confirmability was achieved (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Finally, Anfara et al. (2002) expressed concern that although many a researcher makes claims about prolonged engagement in the field, triangulation, purposive sampling, and reflexivity among other good intentions, evidence of such procedures is rarely provided: "They are invoked as if magical incantations and the reader must simply believe and trust the researcher—a leap of faith that is sometimes hard to accomplish" (p. 29). To address this legitimate concern, an audit trail was established. Included in this audit trail is any documentation regarding the selection of sites; the interview protocols,

recordings, and transcripts; the observation protocol and field notes; physical artifacts; and evidence of the coding process that was used to arrive at final theoretical conclusions. In other words, it is through the deprivatization of the research process that this study achieved dependability.

## Protection of Human Subjects

The human subjects in this study were protected in accordance with the rules set forth by the Institutional Review Board of the University of Tennessee. Upon granting informed voluntary consent (see Appendix H and Appendix I), participants were recorded during interviews and observed during group meetings. Physical artifacts were retrieved from members of the collaborative work groups as well as the principal. Though the nature of this study did not allow for all data to be collected anonymously, every effort was made to ensure confidentiality. As such, all recordings, transcripts, field notes, and physical artifacts are kept in a secure location on the Knoxville campus of the University of Tennessee.

## Summary of the Chapter

Chapter 3 provided a detailed description of the research methodology that this study employed to achieve the purpose of exploring how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. It explicated the rationale for selecting the concurrent, triangulation, mixed method case study design with a QUAL + quan approach as well as the means by which the site and sample were selected and the data collected and analyzed. The role of the researcher and the methods that were used to ensure the trustworthiness of the study and the protection of human subjects were also addressed.

Chapters 4 thru 6 detail the individual case analysis and findings for each of the three schools included in the study. Chapter 7 provides the cross-case analysis & findings for the three schools combined. The study concludes with implications for practice and recommendations for further study in Chapter 8.

# CHAPTER 4

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : SOUTH HIGH SCHOOL

Chapter 4 is the first of four chapters detailing the qualitative and quantitative data and analysis both within and across three cases. This multi-site case study was designed to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)
2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Findings at each site were based on interviews, observations, and artifacts. Each collaborative work group was observed once, and from that group teachers were selected for interviews until saturation was achieved. Principals were also interviewed. Artifacts included handouts from observed group meetings and documents created as a result of observed group meetings. For a complete review of data collection methodologies, please see Chapter 3.

The three schools that served as cases for this study were located in a southeastern state. All three were public high schools providing instruction in grades 9-12. A rich thick description of each school's specific context and demographics will be provided in the respective chapter so that the reader can more easily transfer the study's findings to his or her own context and experience from a similar sample (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

## South High School

South High School is the first of two schools included in this study that were located in the same school district in a southeastern state. Though the school district boundary begins almost immediately after exiting the interstate, it is a 14-mile drive down a four-lane divided highway from the interstate to South High School. Though the drive still has signs that this was once a rural farming community, it is evident that a major tourist destination lies ahead. Both sides of the road are occupied by restaurants, hotels, and shopping venues with the density increasing exponentially upon arrival at the school. Nestled at the base of the mountains, the city where South is located is a vacation destination with something for everyone to enjoy. Myriad condos and resorts with views of the mountains are available for rental in close proximity to amusement parks, shopping outlets, and outdoor activities such as hiking, skiing, and horseback riding. During the year this study was conducted, the city had a record year grossing a billion dollars in tourism revenue with more plans for growth on the horizon. Such increases in revenue over the past few decades have led to an increased standard of living for the city, including the creation of South High School.

Established in 1999, South High School is a relatively modern, one-story building built in a revitalized section of the city that was once home to a popular water park. Upon removal of the water park, the land was used to build South High School and other amenities for tourists and residents such as restaurants, shopping, miniature golf, a community center, a public library, and a feeder middle school. Upon entering South, pride and activity were immediately evident. The front doors opened up to a commons area decorated in school colors with mascot footprints. This area was the heart of the school. It included seating for lunch and the entrance to the gymnasium, as well as the front office, the wall of fame, a television scrolling pertinent student announcements, and a section for any individuals conducting student business (military recruiters, students participating in fundraisers, etc.). From here students only have two choices: to go left to their classes in the north wing (business, science, related arts, or career and technical education classes [CTE]), or to go right to their classes in the south wing (English, social studies, foreign language, or mathematics). Yet amid all this activity, order was evident—exterior doors and inner-office doors were locked and principals kept a visible, watchful eye over student behavior.

**Student Demographics and Academic Progress**

At the time of this study, South High School served a total of 722 students, 89% who were Caucasian, 8% who were Hispanic or Latino, and 2% who were Black or African American. Sixty percent of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, and 10% were students with disabilities. The school had a graduation rate of 92.9%, average daily attendance rate of 95.9%, and average ACT composite score of 19.8. During the 2013-2014 school year, South exceeded average district achievement

scores on all but one end-of-course (EOC) assessment—Biology 1, and exceeded average state achievement scores on all but two EOC assessments—Algebra 2 and Biology 1. Though South struggled to meet four of its five goals set forth by the state for academic achievement—Algebra 1, English 2, English 3, and graduation rate—and one of its three goals for gap closure—all students' versus economically disadvantaged students' numeracy achievement—the school had an overall value added composite score of 5 out of 5 for exceeding expected amount of student growth.

**The Principal**

While the principal of South High School had only been in his current position for three years, his history with the school was significant. He began his career in education 15 years ago as a high school English teacher. He taught his first year at an out-of-state school before moving to South where he taught for the next five years. He then served as an assistant principal at South for five more years before being transferred to another school in the district. After serving as assistant principal at that school for one year, he returned to South to assume the role of principal. Having spent 13 years of his 15-year career at South gave him an in-depth understanding of the school's history as well as the faculty that worked within the school. His love and passion for the school was notable and infectious. He was constantly walking the halls, visiting teacher workrooms and classrooms, smiling, and saying, "Go, Lions (pseudonym for school mascot)!" For the purposes of this study, the principal of South High School will henceforth be referred to as Principal S. Similarly, teachers at South will be coded by school (S), number (1-11), and by collaborative work group (A-C).

## Research Question 1: South High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? Data for this question were collected from 11 teacher interviews (20% of the teaching staff) from three of the school's four collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as PLCs. At the time of this study, South High School had only existed for 15 years. Though the principal indicated that he had recently been able to hire graduates of South to join the faculty, none of the teachers interviewed indicated being alumni of the school. However, six of the eleven teachers who were interviewed had an attachment to either the school or the community. Three teachers mentioned having been with the school since its inception (Teacher S5A, Teacher S11A, and Teacher S9C), while three others either worked at or attended other high schools in the district (Teacher S1A, Teacher S2B, and Teacher S8B). Together, the eleven teachers interviewed had an average of 14 years of experience and a tenure of 8 years at South. More information regarding interview participants is provided in Table 7.

For this stage of data analysis, all teacher interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 1 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at three major themes, Nature of the Leadership, Nature of the Coworkers, Nature of the Work. The code mapping process for Research Question 1 is shown in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

Table 7

*South High School Interview Participant Demographics*

| CWG* | Participant Code | Gender | Subject | Leadership Position | Teaching Experience+ | Tenure at South+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | S1A | Female | English | None | 4 | 3 |
| | S4A | Male | Science | None | 20 | 7 |
| | S5A | Female | Social Studies | Department Head | 16 | 15 |
| | S11A | Female | Foreign Language | Department Head | 16 | 15 |
| B | S2B | Female | Social Studies | None | 2 | 2 |
| | S3B | Male | Mathematics | None | 7 | 4 |
| | S6B | Female | Science | None | 1 | 1 |
| | S8B | Female | Special Education | Department Head | 29 | 13 |
| C | S7C | Female | Science | None | 12 | 4 |
| | S9C | Female | English | Department Head | 15 | 15 |
| | S10C | Female | Special Education | None | 44 | 5 |

* *Collaborative Work Group*

+ *Measured in Years*

## Nature of the Leadership

When qualified employees are guided by effective leadership, they feel empowered to complete their work, they exhibit a stronger sense of achievement, and they indicate higher levels of job satisfaction (Mason, 1999). Careers in education are no exception. When speaking fondly of their job, 8 of the 11 teachers interviewed at South referenced their administration. Teachers spoke of how much they "love" (Teacher S2B, Teacher S8B) the administration and described them as "wonderful" (Teacher S3B) and "good people" (Teacher S11A). Teacher S10C credited the administration with creating a "fun" working environment, and noted the change in administration since she started working at South. Teacher S5A echoed that sentiment, "I mean, I love this school. It's a great place to be. We had a change in administration a few years ago, and definitely that has made me love it more." Under the overarching theme of leadership, teachers' attitudes toward their work at West were specifically influenced by their perceptions of administrative competence, support, and values, as well as their relationship with Principal S. A more detailed analysis of each of these variables is explored further in the sections that follow.

### *Relationship with Administrator*

The teachers at South believed that Principal S trusted them. Teacher S10C said that if she called Principal S to let him know she was covering another teacher's class due to an unexpected need to leave school, he would say, "That's good. We're good. If you hear from her, let me know." To Teacher S4A, that trust was a necessity, "They pretty much leave me alone to teach as long as they think I'm teaching what I'm supposed to be

trying to cover… I would not like working under an administrator that was a micromanager. I would probably leave."

Because of the genuine care Principal S exuded, the teachers reciprocated their trust in and loyalty to him. Teacher S9C told a story about a lengthy summer training that she and some other teachers reluctantly attended.

> He's very accommodating to say, "I get it. I get that this stinks that you're being asked to do this, and it's not fair. But what can I do to try to make it a little better and a little bit more agreeable to the group, because it's important to me that you go?" And I feel a sense of obligation to him. I told him that, "I'm going because I feel obligated to you, not because I feel like I owe anybody at the county or state anything." That's pretty important, too, that you kind of feel that sense of loyalty. "I don't like the rest of them, but because you asked me to do it, I'll do it."

Communication between Principal S and teachers at South contributed to that sense of trust. In addition to the opportunities teachers were given to voice their own needs and concerns as previously mentioned, Principal S openly shared his expectations with his staff and communicated pertinent information with them. According to Rosenholtz (1986), teachers need to feel clear about the goals that are set forth for themselves and their schools.

The teachers at South also valued Principal S's honesty with them. While Teacher S6B mentioned getting the occasional, "Because I said so," from Principal S, Teacher S10C credited Principal S with being good about sharing why an idea will or will not work. The fact that dialogue continued to occur after criticism was offered was a testament to the ongoing cycle of dialogue that occurred among the staff as a whole. "If

you disapprove of [an idea], we'll come up with something else" (Teacher S10C). In addition to an overall positive relationship with Principal S, teachers at South also felt supported by him. This variable is discussed next.

***Administrative Support***

Teachers at South High School believed that Principal S genuinely cared about them and supported them. "You can really tell that they stand for their teachers and they want to help you… They want to make your job easier" (Teacher S6B). As stated by Teacher S7C, "That's really important to have."

Principal S's attentiveness to the needs of new and struggling teachers was especially noted. "If he sees you in the hall, he checks with you and makes sure that you're okay. He'll send people down to see if you need anything," or check with a teacher during parent-teacher conferences just to ask, "Hey, what do we need to do? How can I help you?" (Teacher S2B). Teacher S11A added, "If they see somebody that's in need of help or a mentor, they might pick somebody and just, 'Hey, would you mind to keep an eye on so-and-so and if they need anything just help them out?'"

Conversely, a criticism offered regarding expectations at South was that consistency could be improved. Though Principal S was open about his expectations for the school and staff, enforcing those expectations seemed to be a struggle.

> The only thing that really frustrates me, and it's something that he's been really working on a lot, is making it into a little bit more consistent place. Sometimes with the administration this kid's clothes are okay today. Tomorrow they're not. She wears the same thing today she wore yesterday. Yesterday, it was fine. Today, it's bad. That's difficult. Some teachers do their side work—bus duties,

> tardy sweep—really well. Some others may not even show up. I think that the administration might could help with some of that. (Teacher S3B)

Regardless of this criticism, the teachers' overall impression of Principal S was that he was doing a good job. The next section will speak specifically to the competence that the teachers perceived Principal S to have.

***Perceived Administrative Competence***

The relationship between Principal S and the teachers at South High School was enhanced by, if not based on, the perceived competence that the teachers saw in Principal S. While no principal can be omniscient, Principal S seemed to have a good handle on what occurred in his building, and that awareness influenced where and in what ways he got involved in faculty matters. Teachers commented that "he knows how hard we work" (Teacher S5A), and that the administration did not have to mandate teacher collaboration because "he's aware that we help each other out" (Teacher S2B). Teacher S11A also credited Principal S with "doing a marvelous job with hiring."

Teacher S9C appreciated Principal S's organizational skills and the efficiency with which he operated the school day. Speaking especially about the alternative bell schedules pre-set for various school events and delayed starts due to weather, she liked the amount of thought he put into creating reasonable solutions and keeping the school day "very predictable." Furthermore, she liked the competence he demonstrated in regard to technology. She complimented his use of email and Google Docs to disseminate and collect information in a timely manner as opposed to hand-written notes and copied documents left in teachers' boxes to only be checked once a day.

The awareness that Principal S demonstrated extended beyond his own building to leadership as a whole. When Teacher S3B spoke about the strategy Principal S used to change the culture at South, "If you go too hard, too fast, everybody jumps ship and you lose everybody. He's done a really good job with that." So far, this strategy of gradual change had been successful for Principal S. He had used it to help his staff prepare for the upcoming change to Common Core standards, and Teacher S11A acknowledged that saying,

> He knows it's coming down the pike. We've got to deal with Common Core, and he wants his school to be successful. So, therefore, he wants his teachers to be successful and to be able to be successful we have to have the knowledge and experience to put it into practice.

In addition to the groups that were observed for this study, teachers were also required to attend after school sessions once a month with their similar-subject peers (e.g. social studies with English, math with science, etc.) to focus on academic improvement regarding current state assessments and to prepare for the transition to Common Core. In those meetings as well as at faculty meetings and on in-service days, the principal's agenda revolved primarily around academic standards, student writing, and achievement testing—reflection, preparation, and resources. Principal S had been able to communicate his values and expectation for success to his staff and in large part his faculty supported those values. This final variable is discussed next.

***Administrative Values***

Teachers at South approved of Principal S's expectations and how he supported those expectations. According to teachers' perceptions, Principal S had three main

priorities—students, academics, and overall school improvement. Teacher S5A liked "the fact that we have an administrator that values the academics over other things" while Teacher S9C commended his dispersion of funds "for really relevant purposes." Teacher S3B found it helpful that "the things you get praised are sometimes the things that go right along with the goals you're going for because that's what you're looking for." Teachers bought in to the culture he was creating with these priorities and were proud to be a part of the success the school was experiencing as a result. "I feel that they are trying to achieve a goal here and that we are on the same page as they are. I believe that we do not have managers here. We have leaders here, and they lead in a good way" (Teacher S8B).

The first priority established was that student success drives all decisions. "He always says, 'Whenever you make a decision, think about is it good for the kids? That's your first question'" (Teacher S1A). Five teachers spoke to this priority. They mentioned initiatives such as credit recovery during the school day, better technology for students to use, earlier dispersion of progress reports to allow more time for improvement of grades, library availability before school and tutoring availability after school, increased Advanced Placement course offerings, advisory programs to not let students "slip through the cracks" (Teacher S7C), and creating a socially inclusive environment for students with special needs. Additionally, as an observer at the school, I saw and heard multiple announcements made in various formats reminding students of scholarship opportunities, deadlines, and requirements.

The second priority was academic achievement. Ten of the eleven teachers interviewed spoke to the emphasis that Principal S placed on academics. They believed

this to be a priority because of the time Principal S invested in it, and they were proud of the success that they had seen as a result of that investment. Teacher S3B explained,

> Our school has gotten in the last couple years, has won some acclaim. I think we're the best school in the county. We're one of the top whatevers in the state. We've been a really good school. We've made some really good strides. I think he wants to keep those things going.

Teacher S5A applauded the direction in which Principal S was headed and his vision for the school, noting how important student academic success and the protection of class time was to him. Teacher S9C concurred,

> It's clear to me that his priority is academics. We have meetings on a regular basis. He discusses test scores. He discusses theory and practice and workshops and methods and things. That wasn't language before that we were accustomed to, and that was a shift.

The third priority—overall school improvement—had become apparent to the faculty over the last three semesters and was still a work in progress. After the last evaluation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the principal asked teachers to "pinpoint one of our weaknesses and focus on that" (Teacher S7C). Teachers were divided into groups to focus on an area of their choosing. Teacher S10C mentioned, "reaching out into the community more," and Teacher S8B added, "trying to find ways to engage our stakeholders to have more people come, more parents involved, more businesses involved with our school." Teacher S3B spoke more about in-house initiatives like cutting down on student tardiness and improving prom. Though the staff had only begun to work on these goals, it is important to note that it was the staff as a

whole that was working to resolve these issues. All three administrative priorities were top-down directives, but the teachers bought in to those directives because they were included so thoroughly in the process. Their input was valued and they knew that. "He's interested in what his people have to say. He isn't trying to sit there just to be a dictator saying you do because I want, period, go. He is trying to get information to help him do a better job so that he can help us do a better job" (Teacher S3B).

The relationships that the teachers in all three observed groups at South have with Principal S and the faith they placed in him as a result of their perception of his competence and values were strong contributors to their attitudes toward their work. However, it was more than just strong leadership that made these teachers want to come to work every day. Their colleagues were also an instrumental part of their satisfaction. This second theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Coworkers**

Hu, Kaplan, and Dalal (2010) named co-workers as one of four "particularly meaningful and significant features of work" (p. 2). At South High School, teachers' interactions with their peers were an important contributor to teachers' attitudes toward their work. Specifically, teacher's attitudes toward their work were influenced by coworker behaviors and collaboration. Teacher S5A noted, "The good feelings I have about my job probably have a lot to do with the positive collaboration and the positive rapport between me and the teachers here. I think it's important." Teacher S2B shared a similar sentiment.

> The collaboration, though—collaboration with my department especially—I probably wouldn't like this job if it wasn't for that because they make me feel

> we're all involved. It's a great support system, just emotionally but professionally, as well… At first I was like, "Oh my gosh," because this is like the rivalry of the high school that I went to but they say that if you can find a group of people that you enjoy working with to stay there. So, even if I could teach at [my alma mater], I wouldn't leave.

Other teachers felt the same way about working at South. Teacher S8B mentioned considering other educational job opportunities but ultimately staying at South because "this is just a good place to work. It makes me want to stay here because I love all the people." Teacher S11A stated,

> I love teaching at this school. This is not the only school that I have taught at, but the comradery between the teachers and the ability of this staff—and I mean across the board from one end of the building to the other—to be able to get along with each other and work with each other and do what's best for the students in this building is just absolutely amazing and as far as I'm concerned it's the best in the [district] and I've been at three schools.

Each of these variables—coworker behaviors and collaboration—are explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

***Coworker Behaviors***

All of the teachers interviewed at South High School described a good relationship with their colleagues, though some were more emphatic than others. Both Teacher S1A and Teacher S8B said that they "love" the people they work with. Teacher S4A described the faculty as "a pretty good group to work with." Though the school was departmentalized, teachers noted that their colleagues on the other side of the building

still expressed an interest in their personal lives and professional well-being. Teacher S5A credited the smaller size of the school with aiding in those relationships, "It's a small school so we pretty much know everybody." Others believed that it was the length of their relationship that created such a strong bond. "Well, I think it was the fact that we started off as a young faculty and we knew that we didn't have all the answers individually and it would be easier if we divide and conquer and work together" (Teacher S11A). Teacher S11A estimated that approximately 50% of the staff had been with the school since its inception. Teacher S9C later added that, "most of us [department heads] have taught here the entire time the school has been here."

Regardless of the reason, the faculty at South High School shared a "close" relationship (Teacher S1A, Teacher S2B). Teacher S2B explained that this relationship extended beyond just the teachers, "I'm very, very close with special ed and with our janitors and the rest of the staff and secretaries. The nurse and I are really close." It was just an overall "positive" culture (Teacher S9C). "[We] just seem to have a good atmosphere working together" (Teacher S7C).

Several of the teachers described the environment at South as a "family" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S7C, Teacher S8B). Teacher S8B went on to say that it isn't just that it's a family-type atmosphere, but that she almost feels like her colleagues *are* her family. She added, "I see some of them much more often than I see my own family." Though Teacher S4A stopped short of referring to his colleagues as friends, others did not. Teacher S6B was the least experienced teacher interviewed, and she commented that she was "building friendships" with her colleagues. Teacher S8B and Teacher S10C further described the time they spend with colleagues outside of school socializing and travelling

with one another and their families. Because of this closeness, teachers at South felt "comfortable with each other" (Teacher S8B). Their friendships provided a healthy foundation for handling conflict. Teacher S10C was quick to point out that the staff are not necessarily close because they are alike. "You have those quieter ones that don't say a whole lot, and that's perfectly okay because it takes all kinds. And then you have ones like me that can just clamor all day long. I think it's a good balance." Together, they have "gelled as a faculty" (Teacher S9C).

Teachers at South were considerate of one another and seem to generally care about and look out for each other. Teachers S1A, Teacher S2B, Teacher S3B, and Teacher S8B all told stories of teachers helping one another out in times of personal crisis, celebrating together in times of personal joy, and supporting one another professionally. Teacher S7C described a circumstance in which she was expected to teach class until the bell rang, conduct hall duty and tardy sweeps during the transition to the next class period, and be at a meeting by the time the next class period began. Other team members noticed her struggle to arrive on time, and rather than criticize, they just asked, "Is that time okay? Is it working out? Maybe we should push it back. Would it help you if we gave you an extra five minutes to get down here?" She said, "Yes, that would be great."

Ultimately, this care and concern was a manifestation of the faculty's overall desire to help one another. Over half of the teachers interviewed talked about helping others. While the school's positive culture was noted by faculty members, teachers' personal belief systems seemed to create the underlying foundation for that culture.

> Why shouldn't other people benefit if I find a lesson that's really good? If I do a lesson and it goes really well, why shouldn't I say, "I did this and it was awesome. Do you want it?" (Teacher S1A)

Though not always explicitly stated, the Golden Rule was brought up by more than one teacher.

> You kind of treat people how you want to be treated. It's called the golden rule somewhere along the line, and that's important to me. When I do get carted out in a box, I want these people to remember that she filled in for me like for working ball games or whatever. And, if I can, I've got this. I don't know how many times I've gotten a call from [other teachers] that have young kids that say, "He's throwing up." Okay. I'll take your first period. Why not? Why would you not? (Teacher S10C)

Teacher S11A agreed,

> You help other people out because you don't know when you're going to need that back in return for you. If you're willing to work with a group and help the group out, then a group is generally willing to do the same for you.

Yet, it was not just that teachers at South offered their help to others. They were not afraid to ask for help when they needed it, either. They desired and sought out help from their peers. Teacher S1A mentioned her role as a travelling teacher her first year at South. Being in another teacher's room, she asked that teacher for feedback regarding her instruction. Teacher S2B spoke to the transition to Common Core. As a history teacher, she wanted to help her English colleagues with cross-curricular integration but knew this was a weakness for her. She noted, "if they want cross-curricular things

happening, I need help from that department and we've made that pretty clear. It's more work for them, but they seem to be very willing to do that." Furthermore, Teacher S11A noted that professional feedback was welcomed because it was grounded in "good intentions" aimed at professional improvement.

Often, the help that teachers described at South came in the simple form of sharing—sharing ideas, sharing resources. Teacher S3B and Teacher S6B discussed sharing tests and lesson plans within their departments. Having experienced a great deal of support during her student teaching at another school in the district, Teacher S1A was worried about not having that support when she came to South. She was relieved when others approached her with, "I teach freshmen, too. Here's what I do. Here's the order I do things in. Here's the things I use, and if you want to use them that's fine. And if you don't that's fine, too." Teacher S2B described a similar experience. Her first job as a teacher began two weeks into the school year at South. She noted, "they all gave me stuff for the room. They gave me their powerpoints. They gave me their lesson plans, and that was really cool."

Open communication, humor, and flexibility were among the key components to the relationships that teachers fostered with one another at South High School. Teacher S10C also described a lack of jealousy among faculty members. Though some teachers could be more "adamant" or "overbearing" (Teacher S9C) than others, they still respected one another. They believed that they were all "in it together" (Teacher S8B) and that they were on the "same page" (Teacher S3B) working toward the "same goal" (Teacher S4A, Teacher S6B, Teacher S7C).

Clearly, the faculty at South High School valued their colleagues and the relationships that they shared with them. They considered their fellow teachers to have a major influence on their attitudes toward their work. In addition to simply being fond of their colleagues' behavior, they were also fond of the time they spent collaborating with their colleagues. This variable is explored more in-depth in the following section.

***Collaboration***

Teachers at South High School participated in multiple types of professional interactions. There were two formal gatherings that Principal S required each teacher to attend. First, they gather every two weeks with the other teachers who shared their plan time for what the principal referred to as a PLC meeting. Second, they stayed after school once a month for a meeting with their department and another department of a similar genre, e.g. math met with science, English met with social studies, etc. Additionally, the principal met with department heads on parent-teacher conference nights and in-service days and with a select group of teachers on occasion. Informally, some departments and teachers met with one another as needed.

When interviewed, all teachers were asked to describe the types of collaborative activities in which they engaged. Though all teachers were required to attend the PLC and genre meetings, not all teachers mentioned both. When I questioned their omission, teachers began to describe their definitions of collaboration. In general, they viewed collaboration as a two-way endeavor. It was not one person disseminating information to another, but instead a time for teachers to work together to plan lessons or learn from one another.

Meaningful collaboration influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work in a positive way. When teachers described meaningful collaborative experiences, they used words such as "helpful" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S3B), "useful" (Teacher S3B, Teacher S4A), "beneficial" (Teacher S6B), "like" (Teacher S1A), "enjoy" (Teacher S2B), and "great" (Teacher S5A). Teacher S1A believed that collaboration helped minimize her job-related stress, and Teacher S10C added, "I don't know how I'd get through my day without it." Teacher S8B also described how important collaboration was to her.

> If I couldn't collaborate with the teachers, I think that it would just be a job. It would just be a job. Me coming in, I don't think I would feel as involved with the school. I might feel like I was just on an island, you know, doing my job. I would still love my job, but it would be a job. To me, I don't feel like I'm coming to work. I don't feel like I'm working. I feel like I'm doing something, a hobby. It's fun, and I just really enjoy it.

Specifically, teachers liked getting new ideas from one another and learning useful information about upcoming initiatives, assessments, and resources. Teacher S3B, Teacher S4A, and Teacher S9C preferred the face-to-face interactions they were able to have in small group settings more than e-mail communications and large faculty meetings, whereas Teacher S6B, Teacher S7C, and Teacher S10C appreciated the opportunity to interact with other adults across the building and engage in discussions beyond the content in which they spend their day engulfed. Teacher S6B added that meaningful collaborations were especially beneficial to her as a first year teacher. Though she enjoyed participating in the PLC group, she especially valued the time she

was able to spend with her department getting answers to her questions about curriculum, pacing, and instructional ideas.

In contrast, when teachers engaged in collaborative activities that are not meaningful to them, they described those experiences much more negatively. Almost every teacher interviewed had phrases that they used to describe those types of interactions. While some used words like "stupid" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S5A) and "waste of time" (Teacher S3B), others generally viewed these experiences as "something extra to do" (Teacher S2B), "just another meeting" (Teacher S4A), and "one more thing to do" (Teacher S7C). Specific comments were made about how these encounters "tak[e] away from time that you could be using for something" (Teacher S9C) like "grading papers" (Teacher S10C).

The most meaningful collaborations in which teachers at South High School engaged had several common components. They began with some sort of initial commonality, continued with valuable discussion, manifested collective ingenuity, resulted in a new commonality, and were supported by certain necessary resources. Each of these components are discussed more thoroughly in the paragraphs that follow.

For some teachers, the initial commonality came in the form of pre-existing relationships, common subject areas, or common students. For others, it was that the group members shared a common purpose, goal, or mere desire to attend. Teacher S1A explained that some teachers resented the PLC meetings "because they feel like it's forced." Perhaps as a further explanation, Teacher S2B stated, "If I'm going to have a meeting, I want it to have a purpose, not just for the sake of, oh, we have to get our six PLC meetings in."

Teacher S11A and Teacher S3B both expressed a desire for PLC time to be organized by department so that "they could collaborate about their work and their students." Instead, each of the PLC groups at South had a different purpose aimed at achieving a school-wide goal. Teachers explained that groups were asked to "pinpoint one of our weakness from the SACS evaluation" (Teacher S7C). By focusing on those weaknesses, teachers would be able to implement "school-wide policies we might either change or adopt or move toward to try to bolster student achievement" (Teacher S4A). According to group members, PLC S-A selected a Common Core-oriented goal. Teachers were exploring students' use of text-based evidence in grammatically correct written responses to teacher-selected questions. PLC S-B was working to improve community involvement and stakeholder engagement. PLC S-C was devising a plan to improve student support through a school-wide advisory program.

Not only could teachers at South articulate the purposes of their own PLC groups, they were also aware of the goals on which other PLC groups were focused. Furthermore, they saw the value in having those groups be comprised of teachers from various subject areas for the sake of achieving a school-wide purpose. Some teachers theorized that this diversity may have been one of the principal's purposes in implementing the PLCs.

Teachers at South only mentioned two departments that met as singular departments on a regular basis—Science and Special Education. Teachers in those departments described purposes that were very specific to the needs of their own departments. Teacher S4A and Teacher S6B described funding and curriculum-oriented agendas in the science department meetings. The special education department chair

described her department's meetings as a time to ask one another, "What's going on today" (Teacher S8B), to check on students, and to address any problems that may have arisen throughout the day.

Though not all departments met on their own, all teachers were required to attend a genre meeting. The purpose of those meetings was primarily to disseminate information. Teachers learned how to "navigat[e] websites" (Teacher S4A) sponsored by the state Department of Education regarding student information and test projections as well as other resources to help teachers prepare for upcoming state assessments. They talked about Common Core "and how we can incorporate primary source documents" (Teacher S2B) and "implement Common Core standards better in our particular subject matter" (Teacher S7C). They also spent time completing professional development through an online software program. Teacher S8B added, "And if there's nothing going on that needs to be made better, it's just a cheering section. We have to encourage each other."

Teacher S3B and Teacher S9C both discussed meetings they had with Principal S. Teacher S3B described a group of teachers that served as an advisory council of sorts for the principal in which teachers helped the principal evaluate recent changes and "brainstorm" additional ideas. The types of meetings that Teacher S9C described consisted of department heads and Principal S. In those meetings, teachers "advocate for what our people need" and discussed the progress of their PLC groups. They also had discussions about funding and event planning. Overall, Teacher S9C felt that this was a time for department heads to be "in the know" so that they could answer questions that may arise within their departments.

The final type of collaboration that teachers discussed was teacher-to-teacher collaboration between teachers at South High School as well as with teachers at other high schools. The purposes of these interactions included those that were requested by the principal and those that were not. Teacher S1A was asked by the principal to work with another teacher on developing a writing-across-the-curriculum program for the school to implement. Teacher S3B discussed working with other math teachers to share instructional advice. Teacher S5A, along with two other teachers from South, received a professional development grant to attend seminars and receive extra resources through a program called Teach America History. She explained that the purpose of that collaboration was "to increase the amount of primary source documents used in the classroom and increase teacher knowledge of resources out there." Teacher S9C mentioned a network in which she shares materials with teachers at two other schools in the district as well as teachers in her own building and their friends at other schools, while Teacher S10C was working with another teacher in the building to meet the social, emotional, and physical needs of a student whom they shared.

For the teachers at South High School, discussion was an integral part of each of the types of teacher collaboration mentioned. For the collaboration to be worthwhile, teachers expected their colleagues to participate in the discussion. Nearly all of the teachers interviewed discussed the importance of "equal participation" (Teacher S1A) and "professional banter" (Teacher S3B). Teacher S2B said, "Even if your idea isn't great, come up with something." Nonetheless, teachers recognized that personality played a role in how much they and their collaborative partners engaged in discussion. They acknowledged that some teachers were more extroverted while others were more

introverted. Teacher S3B and Teacher S9C both spoke about some teachers' naturally assertive personalities and how important it was to recognize when to speak up and when to let those teachers take the lead.

Some teachers participated more in certain collaborative settings than others. Teacher S7C explained that she was less comfortable contributing in groups where she did not know the other teachers as well. The only group that she felt completely comfortable in was the science departmental meetings. Teacher S4A stated that his minimal participation in the PLC meeting was more of a political issue than one of comfortability. He was opposed to the concept of Common Core and had voiced those opinions, but group members chose not to dwell on that topic and to "go on anyways" with how to begin preparing for Common Core. "So, I just don't say a whole lot most of the time, but it's okay. Sometimes I do, but a lot of times I am kind of quiet."

Because teachers recognized the differences among themselves, they also recognized that some teachers would naturally be more vocal than others. However, they did expect equal participation and engagement from all members. Teacher S8B explained that not everyone is capable of fulfilling the same role, but that "everybody should give 100% effort. It hinders the whole group when everybody doesn't give the same amount of effort." Teacher S4A added that it was important for every to "try to participate just a little bit."

Teacher S6B did not notice any participation problems at all, "As far as my PLC goes, it's been great. Everybody usually comes ready and willing to participate." Teacher S8B agreed and expressed that even the more quiet teachers eventually loosened up and

joined in with the group. Other teachers had different opinions. Some felt frustrated by their collaborative partners' inadequate participation.

> Our PLC is kind of difficult. We have some people in there that don't want to do any of it which is aggravating. In our group, it's more like the talkers and the nontalkers. There are like four or five of us who kind of do all of the talking, and then I look and there are five or six other people who haven't said anything. But what are you going to do? We're adults. You can't scold them like you do a child. (Teacher S1A)

Teacher S2B admitted being annoyed with some of her collaborative partners when she described them as being "worse than students sometimes when you ask a question and nobody says anything. I would just like a little more involvement." Teacher S5A agreed,

> You have certain people who will speak and others who will just sit there and not say anything unless you specifically ask them a question and then sometimes they'll even shrug their shoulders and say I don't know. I would probably feel better about it if I felt like everyone was equally invested and putting forth the same amount of effort. I think that if we're told this is what we're going to do, we should all just do it and not try to fight it because we're going to have to do it anyway. And it just makes it harder on everybody else that's trying to do it when certain people try to fight it.

Though three teachers recognized this as a problem, only two took responsibility for how the situation might be improved. Teacher S2B shared about a discussion she had with a group member in which the two planned to take more of a "back seat" in the future in hopes of "get[ting] some more people involved." Teacher S5A acknowledged that her

group had done an "okay job" rotating jobs (meeting leader, time keeper, note taker) but that an effort needed to be made to "[get] some more people in the corner to participate."

Depending on the collaborative group, discussion took many different forms at South. The teachers in PLC S-B provided the best description of how their PLC operated. All three team members described some sort of "assignment" (Teacher S2B) or "research" (Teacher S8B) that was to be conducted between meetings and shared next time the group convened. These assignments generally involved researching solutions other schools had used and discussing as a group the advantages and challenges of those solutions. The group could then decide the viability of such a solution at South.

Discussions in other collaborative settings were described, as well. The genre meetings seemed to center around Common Core—how to implement the use of primary source documents and prepare for new styles of assessment. Teacher S4A explained that the science departmental meetings were somewhat of an instructional show-and-tell. When Teacher S3B met with the principal and other teachers, the time was spent sharing ideas as was Teacher S8B's teacher-to-teacher collaborations.

What teachers at South seemed to like best about collaborative discussion was the ideas that they got from their colleagues both in and outside of South High School. Teacher S1A and Teacher S5A reciprocated an appreciation for the cross-curricular integration ideas they got from their PLC meetings while Teacher S8B was excited about some ideas she had gathered from a recent district-wide meeting. Teacher S6B expressed a desire to have more time like this with her department. "I kind of wish that the department could meet at least semi-monthly maybe because, for me as a first-year teacher, I really need that time with them to bounce ideas off of them."

Included in this exchanges of ideas was a reflective assessment of practice in which teachers discuss strategies they used in the classroom and offered critiques of those experiences. Teacher S5A participated in a history-based professional development program with two other teachers from South. After attending professional development sessions together, the three teachers often implemented what they learned using similar lesson plans in each of their classrooms. This gave them an opportunity to ask one another, "How'd it go," or brainstorm other ideas for future lessons. Teacher S6B mentioned that the science department would often "give each of our classes a common assessment or a common written comprehension thing, and then we'll bring them in on [to the next meeting] and kind of look at everybody's results and see how we can move forward." As a non-English teacher, Teacher S11A was slightly afraid of Common Core but determined to do a good job. She valued the time in PLC meetings where

> teachers share their experiences [with texts and text-dependent questions] and tell what worked with their kids, what didn't work with their kids, what they did, how they changed it the next time. Did it work any better? That way you can get ideas of what type of text to use and how to formulate the text-dependent questions. The reason I'm vocal is because I don't know what I'm doing, and I want to know how to get there and do it right. And if I don't share what's going on and give the people that do know the opportunity to tell me how to change what I'm doing to make it work better, then I'm never going to learn and grow.

Teachers at South also shared resources with one another. More than half of the teachers interviewed spoke of such exchanges including worksheets, lesson plans, PowerPoint presentations, lab equipment, and tests. Teacher S9C credited this sharing of

materials for encouraging her to try something new in her classroom. As an English teacher, choosing to teach a new piece of literature meant devising all new assignments and assessments. When another teacher down the hall offered her an entire notebook of materials, quizzes, tests, vocabulary, literary terms, and audio CDs, it made the transition significantly easier.

As one might imagine, teachers' willingness to open themselves up to professional criticism can sometimes lead to conflict. Teacher S3B and Teacher S4A both shared their perspectives about a conflict that had arisen between the math and science teachers at a genre meeting. From Teacher S3B's perspective,

> That got interesting because we had science and math together in the same meeting and the goals and needs were different amongst the two. It was really funny. You got science teachers trying to tell how to teach math. It got funny. It was just funny.

Teacher S4A's perspective was different,

> [The meeting] dealt with teaching certain topics in science and math and particularly maybe how we could integrate things together a little more. We spent some time going through how some of the math should be a little more relevant and practical oriented in the sense that students need to see that a lot of these things, it becomes a very useful tool in science. The problem I have as a science teacher is I have students who can do math but they can't take two variables. They can take two sets of numbers and graph it and get a straight line and find an equation for it, like a math class would typically teach you, but if you give them two variables with the data that goes with them and ask them to plot that and then

> determine the relationship between those two variables they've totally missed it on that, even with the honors kids a lot of time. They can tell you rise over run gives you slope, but they can't take mass as one of your variables and volume as another and say that, oh, the slope is the density of this substance, this piece of metal or whatever. They find a hard time doing that.

While no resolution seemed to be reached in this situation, Teacher S10C shared a story about an ongoing conflict with another teacher in which she would not let the issue rest until resolution had occurred.

> It was a miscommunication. I had a student that was in regular ed but identified sped that was going on every field trip that the students who are not in inclusion. I was like this kid is slower than smoke, and he's getting so far behind. And she and I kept saying several days he cannot do this. He had this much work in Biology for one class, and she said it's on his IEP. No it isn't. Yes it is. Well, she's talking about a kid and seeing one face. I'm talking about a kid and seeing the real kid. So when I went in there she did one of these [smacks hand against table], and that's when everybody scattered. You are not hearing me. I knew she was thinking about the wrong kid. So, and then when she said, "Oh. Oh, no, he can't go!" Lord, have mercy. I've been at this for two weeks.

Teacher S3B, Teacher S6B, and Teacher S8B described other circumstances in which conflict had arisen within their PLC groups and, in each case, how discussion continued until resolution was achieved. Teacher S6B and Teacher S8B went on to explain that there has to be room for these philosophical debates within a discussion for true collaboration and growth to occur.

When asked how often collaborative work groups come to a consensus, teachers answered with phrases like, "most of the time" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S5A, Teacher S7C), "always" (Teacher S2B, Teacher S8B), and "usually" (Teacher S9C, Teacher S11A). Teacher S6B said, "We try to resolve any issues within the week that we meet. If we have some concerns, we hope to get it straightened out if not during the meeting then by the end of that school week." Teacher S8B discussed how important it was to not take it personally when someone is "not totally on board with everything that we talk about." In PLC C, Teacher S10C said ideas were thrown out at one meeting and teachers were given time in between meetings "to sort of ponder on those ideas and write down maybe something else to add to it or pull away from it." When teachers returned for the next meeting, they discussed the previous ideas and then voted on a final decision when it was time to do so. Teacher S3B, however, explained that some conflicts were best addressed individually after the group meeting. In the particular circumstance to which he referred, a parent was brought before the group for feedback but Teacher S3B felt that the group was not adequately prepared for the parent. Rather than address that mishap openly during the meeting, he asserted that the appropriate way to handle the issue was to mention to a group member later about ways that could be handled better next time.

Overall, nearly all of the teachers interviewed at South described a lack of conflict in their collaborative work groups. Teacher S11A explained, "We are really are lucky. That's just our faculty. We don't have a lot of people who are oppositional just for the sake of being oppositional." Teacher S5A seemed to think the lack of conflict was merely a result of not engaging in conflict. "They don't really say much. If they don't agree, they're just pretty quiet." Teacher S7C, Teacher S9C, and Teacher S11A felt that

conflict occurred as a result of a needed decision, something that the teachers felt did not often take place. "I think just that it's a relaxed environment. We're not in there making super high-pressure decisions" (Teacher S9C). Others expressed that they did make decisions, but not very often. Teacher S3B described one or two small decisions per meeting, usually pertaining to when the group would meet next and what they would do at that next meeting. Teacher S3B and Teacher S6B both agreed that the groups were designed to reach a final decision at the end of each semester and present that decision to the rest of the faculty. Teacher S1A and Teacher S2B, though, felt that decisions were ultimately an administrator's to make. So, they deferred to the administrator when conflict arose.

In successful collaborative work groups, the outcome of discussion and philosophical debate is some form of collective ingenuity (Hord, 1997). Teacher S2B explained her frustration when this does not occur.

> I feel like a lot of the PLCs turn into complaint sessions a lot. That's fine, but then what's your solution to it? It's very slow, I think. It's like a lot of time building up to what we can do and people just kind of sharing ideas and it's a lot of talking and I do think it could be more doing instead of just talking about it. But I know it takes time to get up to that level.

Nonetheless, teachers from PLC groups B and C both shared outcomes of their collaborative discussions that have either been achieved or are in the process of being implemented. Teacher S3B described a previous outcome of creating a hall of fame and hosting a banquet for former students and/or community members that have been important to the school. Teacher S8B described how PLC S-B was currently seeking

advice from stakeholders on how to better engage them and others like them. Group members in PLC S-C shared various aspects of the process they had covered this year in creating an advisory program to be implemented at South next school year. The group had previously discussed and agreed upon an organizational format in which teachers would be matched to students and was now in the process of developing a curriculum or guide to be used during the first few meetings. Teacher S7C mentioned specific topics like bullying and hygiene while Teacher S10C discussed options for icebreakers.

As teachers at South High School engaged in collaborative endeavors that included discussion, brainstorming, and problem solving, some of them were creating a new commonality amongst themselves. There was evidence of a shared language school wide as well as within PLC S-A. The principal was constantly ending announcements and greeting students and teachers with, "Go, lions!" I would occasionally hear teachers say this, too. Three teachers from PLC S-A mentioned not "reinventing the wheel" either in interviews or during the observed group meeting, almost as if this was the group mantra.

PLC S-C built a communal set of resources that would be used next year in the implementation of student advisory groups. Together, they jointly created two Google Docs. One was titled "Topics for Advisory Program" and listed topics to be covered during the first 10 advisory sessions with students. The second was titled "Advisory Program" and listed nine possible activities teachers could use during their first advisory session. Teacher S9C also mentioned the development of PowerPoint presentations to guide discussions during advisory sessions. As these resources were finalized, they would be shared with the faculty for full implementation the following school year.

Yet none of this would be possible if certain necessary resources were not in place. There are both social and structural resources needed to make collaborative work groups successful. Because this theme is about the nature of teachers' coworkers, only social resources will be discussed here. Structural resources will be addressed by Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups?

The first resource that is necessary for collaborative work groups to be successful is that members must attend. When teachers at South were asked what group members expected from one another, four teachers at South High School said, "show up" (Teacher S3B, Teacher S4A, Teacher S7C, Teacher S11A). According to Teacher S7C and Teacher S9C, attendance has been a problem, at least in the past. Teacher S6B indicated that teachers "hold each other accountable to be there," but how that accountability was enforced was unclear, unobserved, and unmentioned by any other teacher at South. However, teacher obedience did seem to be a social resource at South that contributed to group member attendance. Teacher S2B, Teacher S5A, and Teacher S10C each expressed how important it was to them to attend group meetings "because it's what we're supposed to do" (Teacher S2B).

Once there, teachers expected group members to "behave professionally" (Teacher S3B), humbly, and respectfully. Teacher S4A emphasized that these expectations extend beyond the group activities. If teachers failed to behave professionally and respectfully outside of the group, those outside conflicts could create tension within the group. Likewise, positivity was valued, while negativity was viewed as a hindrance.

Regardless of how negative some group members may have been toward a particular topic, nearly all of the teachers interviewed at South expected each other to "be receptive" (Teacher S9C), "be happy with whatever decisions is made" (Teacher S8B), exhibit a commitment to achieving the group's short-term and long-term goals, "do the best [they] can" (Teacher S2B), and follow through with any promises made. Though they did not always feel that every group member carried an equal share of the group's responsibility, Teacher S1A and Teacher S8B did feel that all group members were treated as equals. "Everybody's opinions are valued" (Teacher S8B) and "there's not a hierarchy" (Teacher S1A). Teacher S1A also appreciated group members' honesty.

As I have explained to this point, South High School teachers' attitudes toward their work were greatly influenced by the feelings they had about and the interactions they had with their administration and coworkers. Though teachers expressed both positive and negative feelings regarding the nature of their coworkers, those feelings were spread evenly across the three PLC groups. No one group provided a different analysis than another. As one might imagine, though, the satisfaction that these teachers felt in their job was also influenced by the mere nature of their work. This final theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Work**

Teachers at South High School had very positive feelings about their career. Teacher S1A and Teacher S2B came to be educators as a second career and were pleased with their decision. "I've done other things, but I really enjoy doing this the most" (Teacher S1A). "I walk down the hallway, and I'm like, 'Oh my God, I'm a teacher.' It's exciting" (Teacher S2B). Other teachers also mentioned how much they enjoyed

coming to work. "I have never dreaded getting up for work, ever. It's my passion" (Teacher S8B). "I go to bed at night thinking, 'Oh, good, tomorrow's school.'" (Teacher S10C). Teacher S7C described her job as a calling that was present even as a young child. "I knew I was going to teach. I just didn't know what until I got into chemistry." Teacher S4A was the only teacher interviewed who admitted that teaching was not "all [his] heart's desire," yet even he acknowledged that there were things about the career that he liked. Specifically, teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their internal feelings about their subject and their students as well as external forces over which they had little control. Each of these variables are explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

***Internal Feelings about Teaching***

Teachers at South High School were unwavering about their passion for their subject areas. At the high school level, teachers are considered specialists in their respective subjects. So, it is not surprising that every teacher at South mentioned the enjoyment they found in the courses they taught. Teachers used words like "love" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S8B), "like" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S3B, Teacher S5A, Teacher S6B, Teacher S7C), and "enjoy" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S5A, Teacher S6B) to describe the content that they taught. "I like my subject. I love English and, that's really nerdy, but I do. I just enjoy it" (Teacher S1A). "I definitely like the content. That's what I enjoy" (Teacher S6B).

When teachers were asked how they got into teaching, seven of the eleven interviewed teachers spoke about how teaching was not their first choice as a career. For Teacher S2B, Teacher S4A, and Teacher S6B, they were merely exploring other

professional opportunities when life led them for one reason or another into teaching. Teacher S3B, Teacher S9C, Teacher S10C, and Teacher S11A, however, specifically indicated their attempts to avoid education as a career for a various reasons. Teacher S3B did not "want to take those education classes" while Teacher S9C, Teacher S10C, and Teacher S11A felt that education was the family trade, and they preferred to forge their own path in life. In contrast, it was the family trade that led Teacher S1A into education.

Regardless of how the teachers came to be educators, they seemed to enjoy teaching. They enjoyed influencing how the students viewed the world and teaching them something new, especially in a field about which they felt passionate. Seven of the teachers interviewed at South stated how much they like "just doing the teaching" (Teacher S4A). Teacher S1A added that she liked "being the master of my own domain, my little classroom." Teacher S2B, Teacher S4a, and Teacher S10C related teaching to their own positive experiences with school when they were students. Teacher S2B and Teacher S9C also mentioned liking the schedule.

Teacher S9C expressed how "lucky" she was to have never taught more than one grade level at a time, and to have only taught two grade levels her entire teaching career. While this lightened her workload in terms of preparation, she also talked about the time she put in after school hours coaching cheerleading during football season, "That makes for a long Friday sometimes. You get up and leave the house at 7:30. You don't get home til midnight." Other teachers were less positive about their workloads. Teacher S2B, Teacher S8B, and Teacher S11A expressed frustration with the amount of paperwork that they have to do, while Teacher S5A was more concerned with extra non-instructional responsibilities (such as department head meetings) that restricted the time

she had to properly prepare for her classes, all of which were tested subjects. She also shared that she had originally wanted to be a school counselor but was driven away by the amount of non-counseling related responsibilities. Putting it in perspective, Teacher S4A said, "It's a lot of work, but everything is if you want to try to do it right."

Teachers' attitudes about their students were mostly positive. They definitely liked interacting with students, and many of them had a "passion for working with kids of that age" (Teacher S6B). Teacher S1A talked about how supportive and caring the students had been throughout her daughter's illness, "A lot of people give teenagers a bad rap. As much as they can be awful sometimes, they're really wonderful." Teacher S8B and Teacher S10C particularly enjoyed watching students progress and develop, while Teacher S3B and Teacher S11A enjoyed getting to know the students on a more personal and supporting them in athletic events and other performances. Their only frustrations concerned their students' attendance, behavior, and apathy. While teachers had a lot to say about how students, content, and other aspects of their career influenced their attitudes toward work, they were equally as passionate about their feelings regarding external forces on education. This variable is explored in more detail in the next section.

***External Forces***

Teachers at South differentiated between their feelings inside their classrooms with their students and content and the external forces that affected their career. When asked if pay was an issue for any of them, most responded that they thought it could be improved but others had no complaints. Teacher S1A and Teacher S2B both felt that their pay did not accurately reflect the "hours I work," primarily due to the amount of time outside of school that they spent preparing for class. Teacher S3B and Teacher S9C

expressed frustration with the politics surrounding teacher pay. All agreed, however, that "I don't like it, but I don't let it stop me from doing what I'm doing" (Teacher S7C). Teacher S4A and Teacher S11A both acknowledged that they knew the pay when they chose the profession, hence they made the appropriate lifestyle decisions to live within that pay range. Teacher S10C described the extra teaching jobs she worked on the side to afford the lifestyle she desired, while Teacher S5A chose to get a doctorate degree to improve her income.

In addition to pay, other external influences affected teachers' attitudes toward their work as well. Teacher S2B expressed frustration with unrealistic external expectations in regards to technology,

> I get frustrated when I see kids who aren't on the same level as far as income and resources go. I know [they can still be successful], but at the same time I don't like this push toward technology when it's not readily available.

Teacher S5A shared his concerns over funding and spending choices.

> To have such poor facilities and to see hundreds of thousands of dollars spent on athletic facilities, expanding gymnasiums, turf on a football field, additions to baseball and on and on and on and to try to get little things done for an academic course like chemistry is seven years before they put gas lines in the lab. But we can expand the gymnasium twice in that time. It's mandated by the state all of our students have to take biology, and at least our impression was that they all have to take a course in chemistry. So now everybody in the school is taking biology and chemistry, and we don't have a lab fit for anybody, much less for two different departments like that. As a classroom teacher, that makes no sense.

> And I'm not saying take the gyms away and take football away and all that. I'm just saying you tell the community where you're priorities are but your money leaves a different trail.

Teacher S5A also expressed his concern over the additional responsibilities that had been placed on teachers since he started teaching but the lack of time that is provided to teachers to meet those demands. Teacher S6B also mentioned this "extra stuff" and explained how it affected her,

> I wasn't here [with] the old evaluation system and testing. So, I just come in to what it is now, but it seems like a lot, you know, is more accountability, I guess, and just the stress that comes with that.

Speaking to these same changes, Teacher S7C said, "I mean, it kind of is [a drudgery] today just because they've made it that way. It's not as enjoyable as I used to think it was" (Teacher S7C). Additionally, Teacher S1A, Teacher S9C, and Teacher S10C lamented a lack of parental support.

**Summary of Research Question 1**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? While elements of effective collaborative work groups did influence teachers' attitudes toward their work, teachers' experiences with collaboration addressed only one aspect of their overall feelings about their job. Teachers' attitudes about collaboration were closely related to their attitudes about their coworkers, which was only one of three themes determined to influence teachers' attitudes toward their work. Teachers' attitudes were also influenced by the nature of the leadership in their building and the nature of the

work of they do. These results held true for all three observed PLC groups. Research Question 2 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 2: South High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of 1 principal interview and 11 teacher interviews (20% of the teaching staff) from three of the school's four collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as PLCs. For the purposes of this study, the principal of South High School is referred to as Principal S. At the time of this study, South High School had only existed for 15 years, the same length as Principal S's career. Principal S had been with South High School for 13 of those 15 years serving in various capacities including English teacher and assistant principal. He had been in his current position as principal of South High School for three years. More information regarding teacher interview participants is provided in Table 7.

For this stage of data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 2 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at four major themes. The code mapping process for Research Question 2 is shown in Table 5 in Chapter 3.

### Time

Principal S stated that PLCs were "a priority" to him and indicated it was important that all teachers be involved in PLC groups and "take this seriously." To make this more possible for his staff, he created four PLC groups to represent the four possible planning periods that teachers might have rather than asking teachers to stay after school.

Thus, every teacher in the PLC group was available at the same time of the day every day. Principal S believed that routine meeting times were a key component in collaborative success, so he required the groups to meet for 30-45 minutes a certain number of times over the course of a semester that averaged out to about once every three weeks. During the semester of this study, South had been closed for a number of weeks due to inclement weather, which forced the groups into a meeting routine of every two weeks. Teacher S8B preferred the three-week time span because "that extra week gives us a little more time to plan and collaborate and bring in what we need to bring in so we can have a good discussion and not feel so rushed."

Principal S set the meeting time to 30-45 minutes because he believed groups needed a minimum of 30 minutes to "have these conversations and work toward the achievement of our goals," but did not want to consume more than 45 minutes of the teachers' 90-minute plan times. He requested that each group have a timekeeper to ensure this limit and felt that "teachers appreciate that." Most teachers concurred, "We generally only meet during one-third to about one-half of the plan time. So, it still allows people for time to get things done. I think it's fair" (Teacher S9C). Teacher S5A was the only teacher who complained about the use of plan time for PLC meetings. "[Principal S] protects academic time, but a lot of time, planning time is not protected. But, again, it's just 30 minutes every two weeks. So, it's okay."

There were, however, two major problems with arranging groups by plan period. First, teachers were not given a choice as to which group they met with, which Principal S saw as a hindrance to teacher motivation and investment in the process of the PLCs. Second, groups change every semester for schools like South that use a block-schedule

format in which teachers conclude classes midway through the year and begin new ones with new plan times for second semester. Both Principal S and the teachers at South expressed frustration with the plan-period format of the PLC groups. Like the teachers, Principal S believed the groups could be more productive if they could stay together longer than one semester. He stated, "I wish I could keep them together the entire year because then we could do some stuff." Teachers from PLC S-B were most vocal about this frustration. "Right when we're getting a momentum going with this group and this goal then it changes the next semester" (Teacher S2B). "It's kind of like you have to start over or re-invent what you were originally planning because now you have new ideas coming in" (Teacher S6B). Teacher S3B saw both a positive and negative to the transition. "You don't have the consistency of people to complete the task. But, at the same time, that could be a benefit as well because you keep getting fresh voices in it."

The second required collaborative activity at South High School was meetings between departments of a similar genre (math with science, English with social studies, etc.). Principal S held those meetings once a month after school for approximately 30 minutes. Most teachers felt like this was a reasonable frequency and time length of meeting given the purpose of the meeting. "I think it's fine, especially with the new curriculum. Now once that takes place and has been in place for a while, I don't know if I'll feel like those meetings are redundant. But right now I feel like it's necessary because we don't know what's going on" (Teacher S9C). "I think it's a good amount of time for what we're doing there" (Teacher S8B). Both Teacher S3B and Teacher S5A said the requirement was "fine" but they wouldn't want these meetings to "be any more" (Teacher S5A). "That much of an informational meeting gets to be too much" (Teacher

S3B). Though Teacher S1A did complain that the meetings had occasionally lasted up to an hour, Teacher S7C was the only teacher with a major objection to the timing of these meetings, "I don't really like that because the end of the day that's about the only time I have to make copies and get things ready for the next day, try to work ahead. So, I really don't like my after school time being tied up."

Principal S also arranged time for three additional interactions between teachers and himself. Teacher S3B was involved in a group that served as advisory council to Principal S. According to Teacher S3B, Principal S regularly held those meetings during the school day but near the end changed to after school to allow anyone who was interested to attend, "He made an announcement and didn't turn anyone away. He said anybody that wants to come can. Those would be after school because he wanted to let it be that anybody could come." Teacher S3B explained that holding those meetings after school was acceptable because "[i]t's a group of people that are here doing stuff. It wasn't the ones that are the ones that scoot as soon as the bell rings, you know? It was the ones that are interested in the school and wouldn't mind putting the effort in." Also, he felt that the frequency of a couple meetings a year was acceptable but that twice a semester would have been more productive. He did qualify this statement by admitting that more frequency might have caused more disruption with the school day because sometimes teachers had to have colleagues cover their classes in order to attend.

Teacher S5A and Teacher S9C both participated in the department head meetings that Principal S held at the beginning of the semester and during parent-teacher conference night every six weeks. These teachers had drastically different opinions about the use of that time. Teacher S9C felt that this was a "practical" use of time when they

were required to be at school, "It cuts out on time that we would be sitting around. I mean, I could be grading papers probably or something, but it's not like I'm going home during that time. So he goes ahead and uses that time to at least do something productive with us." Teacher S5A, on the other hand, was not fond of this arrangement, "A long time ago, that would be time where I could get things done because we don't have a lot of parents at the high school level. But now, like, we had one last week, an hour over. Mine was spent in a department head meeting, you know, so it's just the time, the extra time I don't feel like I have. So, I have to take a lot home."

Parent-teacher conference night was also used as a time for Principal S to meet with new teachers. Like Teacher S9C, Teacher S2B found this to be a productive use of an otherwise slow time. Also, because Principal S "makes himself available to us whenever we need him," Teacher S2B felt that the frequency of these meetings was sufficient.

Unlike these previously mentioned collaborative endeavors, Principal S did not provide formal time for departments to meet or teachers to collaborate one-on-one. He did, however, provide other structural resources such as classroom proximity and departmental lunch times that helped make this collaboration possible. Teacher S5A and Teacher S2B were the only teachers who mentioned the lunch time together with colleagues, but Teacher S5A did seem to find it valuable.

> We have lunch together, and we talk about things in there. And kind of the same thing with the English Department—they have the same lunch that we do, too, so really I guess that's collaboration. It happens all the time, really, but it's just informal. And so we, you know, tend to share things that way.

South High School was comprised of two wings. Business, science, related arts, and CTE classes were located in the north wing while English, social studies, foreign language, and mathematics classes were located in the south wing. The disadvantage to this model is that teachers often become departmentalized and fail to communicate with teachers located in other areas of the building. When I asked Principal S about the relationship that teachers had with one another, he worried that teachers were more departmentally close and that classroom proximity hindered relationships school-wide. However, Principal S described relationships that minimized this theory.

> I do feel like we struggle at times to get the whole faculty together. Departments are very close and then even across some of those departments. For instance, the other day, I had one of my teachers, veteran teachers, say, "I finally walked down and saw this new teacher for the first time on their side of the building since they've been hired you know at the beginning of the year." So, it's easy for people to get tunnel vision.

Teacher S8B concurred by stating,

> I have to say, since I came here, I feel like I have seen the departments become more integrated with each other than in the beginning where they were more of a 'it's this department, this department, this department'. Now we're a school. We're all a department together.

The advantage of this arrangement was that teachers spent their day closest to those with whom they collaborated most often. Teacher S1A, Teacher S3B, Teacher S5A, Teacher S8B, and Teacher S11A all spoke about the collaboration in which they partook during class changes. "We're all right there. It's easy" (Teacher S3B). Other

teachers mentioned meeting informally with teachers after school while they waited on dismissal traffic to clear or in the morning before students arrived. Teacher S2B and Teacher S11A found this time together to be sufficient. "We talk to each other and help each other every day, and we collaborate independently. So, it's not like we need those to be forced on us more often" (Teacher S2B). Other teachers commented that it would be nice to have more formal time set aside. "There's never enough time. I think that that's too little time" (Teacher S8B). "I kind of wish that the department could meet at least semi-monthly maybe because, for me as a first-year teacher, I really need that time with them to bounce ideas off of them and help" (Teacher S6B).

Time as a structural resource created mixed emotions at South. Teachers were relatively satisfied with the times set aside for their required collaborative meetings but wished for more longevity in their PLC groups and more availability of time to meet with their departments. Aside from time, the structure of collaborative meetings was another prominent theme and is discussed next.

**Structure**

By establishing only one PLC group per plan time, Principal S created groups that were "between 10 and 15" people per group. Teacher S10C liked this size because "it's easier to break it down in those smaller groups than for him to be leading up a big group all the time." Though no teacher at South described a specific number of people attending the genre meetings, Teacher S1A did comment that the reason she liked the genre meeting was because if they just met as an English department "that would only be six people." By adding another department, one can then estimate that each genre meeting included approximately 12 teachers. Like Teacher S10C, Teacher S4A also

preferred this size to the "big formal faculty meetings we used to have." However, Teacher S1A perceived the PLC group to be larger than the genre group and consequently found this to be a disadvantage when it came to welcoming new members. She later clarified that perhaps the issue was more about familiarity and less about size.

> That would probably not be as welcoming, and I don't think it would be hateful. I think it would just be more of like, "Oh, there's a new person. They're back there," not necessarily like, "Hey! How are you doing? Who are you? What do you do," how we are in our smaller [genre] group, or our more comfortable group I should say.

In addition to size and regularly scheduled meetings, Principal S also believed that teachers' being able to expect "this is how we're going to conduct each meeting" was essential to collaborative success. Yet some of the greatest complaints about collaborative activities at South pertained to how those PLC meetings themselves were individually organized and executed. The only structure required for PLC groups was that they meet a specific number of times for at least 30 but no more than 45 minutes. The last five minutes of that time was to be reserved for teachers to share concerns that were not PLC related. Additionally, all PLC members were to take turns as leader, timekeeper, and notes taker. Beyond that, the actual structure of the PLC meeting was left to the group to establish. PLC S-B seemed to struggle with this. Teacher S2B complained that group members needed "to be a little more focused" and seemed to think the problem was that the group needed "more of set plan" for meetings. Teacher S3B explained that the group he had been a part of the previous semester "divided the stuff up into subgroups and each subgroup chased their own thing and then brought stuff back."

He felt that worked pretty well, but in regards to the present group said, “Here, the structure doesn’t seem to fit quite right.” Teacher S6B added that “there’s not as much time spent on anything that was not cleared up in the previous meeting.”

Much of these issues fell to the leadership of each group. While group members took turns leading each individual meeting, each PLC was also organized with a specific faculty member—usually a department head—and administrator whose job it was to oversee the group process. The strengths and weaknesses of that leadership are discussed next.

**Leadership**

Leadership within the formal collaborative work groups at South High School was orchestrated by Principal S. He believed that one of the best ways he could show his support to the collaborative work groups at South was to “make sure people are there, make sure that there’s an administrator, [and] if there are any needs or anything like that, I will do it.” For the genre meetings, department head meetings, and principal’s advisory team meetings, Principal S set the agenda. If in these meetings team members were given assignments to complete prior to the next meeting, Principal S chose those assignments.

Principal S spoke about how important it was that he “pick the right people to lead” the collaborative work groups and “to personally model or communicate the value I see in these activities.” Teachers agreed that they needed someone who ““knows what they’re doing” (Teacher S3B) to lead their groups. However, teachers did not always agree that such leadership was in place. For the PLC meetings, Principal S tasked one department chair with leading each group and assigned one administrator to be a member

of each group. The only department chair with plan time to meet with PLC S-B "doesn't usually even come to the meetings and doesn't do any kind of leadership anything" (Teacher S2B). So, Teacher S8B was asked by Principal S to attend those meetings, "take charge, and make sure that everything was going the way it needed to go" (Teacher S8B).

While department chairs did appear to take a leadership role in the PLC meetings, group members placed more value on the role that their assigned administrator played. According to Teacher S2B, not all four administrators were equally involved in their PLC groups, "A lot of it is who the administrator is. [Two of the administrators] are older. They're part-time. I like them a lot, but they're not as involved [in] prompting people to be more involved in [the PLC group]." These two less-involved administrators were assigned to PLC S-B and PLC S-C. However, because of the ongoing training on advisory programs that Principal S was attending, he chose to also be involved in PLC S-C. Consequently, most of the complaints about leadership arose from PLC S-B.

Teacher S2B attributed the lack of productivity and "focus" in PLC S-B to a lack of leadership. As a newer teacher, she looked to the administrator or more veteran teachers in the group to recognize the inefficiency of the group and make appropriate corrections. Specifically, she felt that there were group members that were always involved and others that were never involved. She recommended, "Maybe if we asked the people who aren't as involved, give them a choice, 'Do you want to do this or this,' not like, 'Who wants to do what.' You know, you have to give them a little more direction." Teacher S8B had begun to take on some of that leadership herself. She

explained that she had started assigning individual group members to particular roles for the next meeting and assuring them they would have her help in accomplishing that task.

Teacher S3B also complained about the lack of organization in PLC meetings. For the observed meeting I attended, a non-interviewed group member was in charge of setting the agenda and running the meeting. Teacher S8B brought a guest to the meeting to provide a parental perspective on stakeholder engagement. Teacher S3B implied that group members were not prepared for this guest, "I felt like that could have been better used. We could've said, 'We're going to have a parent here. Bring three questions,' or something like that instead of just everyone saying, 'What do you have? I don't know. What do you have?'"

In contrast, PLC S-A was assigned to Principal S. In this case, Teacher S4A credited Principal S with "establishing overall goals and pushing it along in the direction he's wanting it to go for us." Teacher S1A echoed those sentiments as well as those expressed by Teacher S2B when she said, "Principal S specifically supports the collaboration and models the respectful comment and everything. Last semester I did have a PLC with a different administrator. He wasn't at every meeting. He just listened. He really didn't say much, and Principal S will interact and contribute and even participate." Teacher S4A noted the importance of administrative leadership when he explained, "Individual teachers take care of their classroom, but to do something that's going to affect the whole school that has to come kind of administratively and say, 'This is kind of where we want to go.'"

The final structural resource that teachers at South High School discussed was that of decision-making authority. Because Principal S's leadership style was self-

admittedly "controlling" and "top-down," teachers at South had a limited number of decisions for which they had the authority to make. This final theme is presented next.

**Decisions**

Principal S admitted that his leadership style was very "top down" and that he had "trouble delegating." He explained that there were "people on staff that I depend on a great deal" and described his department chairs and lead teachers as being "perfectly capable of leading" but went on to explain that he was also told when he took the principalship at South that he "needed to be pretty tough because a lot of things had gotten delegated that maybe shouldn't have been delegated" under the previous administration. Consequently, teachers at South did not have the authority to make decisions that affected the entire school. While the PLCs were aimed at finding solutions to school-wide problems, "we just give our opinions or our ideas and share them, but we don't really come up with the final decision" (Teacher S7C). Nonetheless, there was a variety of autonomy that each PLC group seemed to have.

In PLC S-A—where Principal S was the assigned administrator—very few decisions were made by group members. Even assignments that were to be completed before the next meeting were chosen by Principal S. "Like yesterday, we had a meeting, and at the end he said, 'Okay, for next time, let's do this'" (Teacher S5A). It's worth noting, however, that this PLC was exploring Common Core more so than solving a school-wide problem. Teacher S1A noted that she would like to plan a cross-curricular Common Core unit. When I asked if she felt Principal S would give PLC S-A the freedom to make that the group's prerogative, she indicated that as long as the agenda was appropriate and professional, "Principal S would be like, 'Sure, go at it.'"

According to Principal S, a fourth [non-observed] PLC was tasked with devising a plan to improve ACT scores. This group seemed to have slightly more autonomy than PLC S-A. The day that I interviewed Principal S, the group had been exploring the concept of an ACT boot camp. When I asked Principal S if they have the liberty to make that decision, he responded,

> The decision to do it or not is ultimately mine. I've told them that no ideas were off the table. They need to run a spectrum. Here is if money was no object, time was no object, resources were no object; this is what we'd love to do. On the other end, this what we feel like we really need to do. So, specifically with ACT boot camp, they were talking like targeting 20 or 25 kids and just hitting them with it. I would be all for that as long as we could logistically make it work.

PLC S-C seemed to have the most autonomy. According to Principal S, "they're making the schedule [for an advisory program]. I told them to look at how many kids we've got in the school, how many certified personnel, how big the groups would be, and then start working on a schedule." While Principal S offered his input and made the final decision, Teacher S7C felt that he tried "to meet [us] in the middle" whenever possible. She gave an example of the team trying to decide how often the advisory groups should meet. Some of the teachers were thinking once a month, but Principal S was thinking twice a month. The teachers felt that was too often, so Principal S decided on a frequency that would land somewhere in the middle.

At the time of this study, PLC S-B had not yet progressed to the point of making any school-wide decisions, so the extent of their autonomy was not apparent. However, all groups did demonstrate the autonomy to make small decisions that affected only their

group. The administration set the requirements for how many times the PLC groups were required to meet and for the length of those meetings, but groups members chose what days and times they met. It was also left up to group members to decide how they would rotate through the roles of time keeper, note taker, and meeting leader. Finally, individual groups were tasked with setting their own meeting agendas and deciding on the best process for the group to use to solve their assigned problem.

The fact that teachers did not have the final say for any school-wide decision at South also seemed to minimize conflict within the PLC groups. Teachers from each of the three observed groups stated that they deferred to their group's administrator whenever conflict began to arise. Teacher S1A and Teacher S2B had similar opinions. "My thought is ultimately it's up to Principal S, so whatever he says flies. If I don't agree with it, then tough luck. I'm not the boss" (Teacher S1A). "If [our administrator] says no, then I'm like okay. She's the boss and I'm not" (Teacher S2B). Teacher S9C further explained how Principal S eased conflict in PLC S-C and how teachers' respect for him contributed to their willingness to defer to him, "If he senses that there's some sort of conflict, he'll jump in and kind of, 'Well, this is kind of what I had in mind here,' and I think we're all pretty eager to defer to whatever it is that he has in mind because, generally, he has thought through it. He's not just rambling stuff off the cuff."

**Summary of Research Question 2**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? For collaborative work groups to be successful, certain structural resources must be provided by administration. The teachers and principal at South High School spoke about four

structural resources—time for teachers to meet, structure of collaborative meetings, leadership within collaborative work groups, and the decisions that teachers are allowed to make within collaborative work groups. Unlike Research Question 1, the observed groups held varying perspectives in regards to the structural resources that were available to them. All three PLC groups seemed to agree that they were given adequate time to meet and appreciated the proximity of their classrooms to the classrooms of colleagues with whom they collaborated most often. They believed that the required amount of time for PLC meetings was reasonable but that tying that time to plan periods created other problems in group productivity. All three groups also agreed that adequate leadership in their PLC groups was reflective of the administrator that was assigned to their group. Consequently, teachers from PLC N-B offered more complaints than the other groups in reference to the leadership in and structure of their PLC meetings. Finally, the authority to make decisions in each group seemed to vary, as well, with PLC N-B not yet making any decisions to PLC N-C having already made several decisions. Research Question 3 will be addressed next.

### Research Question 3: South High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 3: What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of three collaborative work group observations and artifact collection. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at South High School are referred to as Group S-A, Group S-B, and Group S-C. Principal S referred to these groups as PLCs.

The observation protocol for this study included seven elements of effective collaborative work groups—initial commonality, discussion, unified norms, collective ingenuity, deprivatization of practice, new commonality, and resources supplied (see Appendix E). In each observation, frequency counts were calculated to identify the number of items on the observation protocol for which evidence was observed during the group meeting. These numbers are referred to as the Group Frequency. As a reference, the Maximum Possible frequency for each component was also noted.

Additionally, frequency counts were calculated to identify the extent to which individual group members contributed to the collaborative process. The frequency counts for interview participants are labeled by teacher and indicate the number of incidences in which the teacher showed any indication of a particular component on the observation protocol. To quantify which teachers were more active, teachers were marked as many times as necessary in any given category. The results for Group S-A are provided in Table 8 and are discussed first.

**Group S-A**

Group S-A had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Each teacher's contributions were highest in this category, as well.

Table 8

*Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-A*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S1A | S4A | S5A | S11A | | |
| Initial Commonality | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 17 | 6 | 9 | 3 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 3 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 6 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 26 | 11 | 17 | 9 | 21 | 43 |

Group S-A demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence that this group had grown together in such a way that they had developed a shared vocabulary, shared memories, a shared style, or a shared communal set of resources. While each teacher's contributions in this category were nonexistent, Teacher S4A and Teacher S11A also showed no evidence of contribution in the category of Initial Commonality. These two teachers did not explicitly reference the purpose of the group or demonstrate a shared commitment to the purpose like Teacher S1A and Teacher S5A did.

During the observation of Group S-A, two artifacts were collected. Artifact S1 was a graphic organizer passed out to all group members by a non-interviewed group member. The purpose of the graphic organizer was to aide students in providing text-based answers. This document showed evidence of a shared commitment to the group's purpose of preparing students for the transition to Common Core by teaching them to give written responses to teacher-selected questions that include evidence from a text. Artifact S1 also demonstrated a shared responsibility among group members to achieve the group's purpose by jointly participating in researching new and creative teaching solutions and discussing the use of those strategies in this teacher's practice. Though this was the only time during the observation that a teacher in Group S-A made a reference to not "reinventing the wheel," this shared vocabulary did later arise in interviews with Teacher S1A and Teacher S11A.

Artifact S2 was a presentation in which Teacher S5A used a projector to show Group S-A the Eisenhower assignment that she used with her class since the group's last meeting. This assignment showed evidence of a shared commitment to the group's purpose of preparing students for the transition to Common Core through the use of primary source documents. Like Artifact S1, this assignment also demonstrated a shared responsibility among group members to research creative teaching solutions and discuss the use of those strategies in this teacher's practice. The results for Group S-B are provided in Table 9 and discussed next.

**Group S-B**

Group S-B had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Each teacher's contributions were highest in this category, as well.

Group S-B demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence that this group had grown together in such a way that they had developed a shared vocabulary, shared memories, a shared style, or a shared communal set of resources. While each teacher's contributions in this category were nonexistent, Teacher S6B also showed no evidence of contribution in the category of Unified Norms. This teacher did not express a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose or demonstrate any form of accountability like Teacher S2B, Teacher S6B, and Teacher S8B did.

During the observation of Group S-B, five artifacts were collected. Artifact S3 was the first artifact distributed to group members by Teacher S8B. The artifact, titled *Summary of Techniques to Reach Out to Stakeholders,* was a document listing various ideas for engaging stakeholders. The document was distributed at the onset of the meeting but was never referenced during the meeting. Nonetheless, it showed evidence of joint participation in research.

Table 9

*Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-B*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S2B | S3B | S6B | S8B | | |
| Initial Commonality | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 18 | 3 | 7 | 13 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 4 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 10 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 36 | 8 | 14 | 23 | 20 | 43 |

Artifact S4 was another document passed out to all group members by Teacher S8B titled *PLC Nov 5 Block 3 Minutes*. The purpose of this document was to reference solutions envisioned by a PLC group from the previous semester to improve stakeholder engagement. This document showed evidence of a shared commitment to Group S-B's identical purpose of improving stakeholder engagement and also demonstrated the professional nature of the meeting.

Artifact S5 was a copy of the meeting agenda passed out to all group members by a non-interviewed group member who took on the role of meeting leader that day. Included in this document was explicit evidence of the group's purpose, "Stakeholder

Engagement Action Steps and Implementation Plan." This document also demonstrated the group's aim to improve practice through "shar[ing] articles brought by PLC members exploring topic of improved stakeholder engagement."

Artifact S6 was an Information Briefing from the Iowa School Boards Foundation. The document was passed out to all group members by the same non-interviewed group member that presented Artifact S5 and was subtitled *Family, School and Community Connections: Improving Student Learning.* The purpose of this document was to illustrate and assess how other schools had engaged their stakeholders and improved student learning. This artifact showed evidence of joint participation in research, shared commitment to the group's purpose, and professional topics.

The final artifact distributed to group members was Artifact S7 and was also distributed by the same non-interviewed group member. This document showed the part of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) that pertained to the group's purpose. In the SIP, Goal 4 addressed stakeholder engagement. Included in the document were action steps the school had identified to improve stakeholder engagement, a timeline for addressing those steps, a person responsible for each step, the projected cost of each step, and a strategy for how each step would be monitogred. Like the other documents shared at this meeting, Artifact S7 could be used by group members as a reference to solutions that other colleagues had already identified and showed explicit evidence of the group's purpose and aim to improve practice through joint participation in research. The final results presented next are for Group S-C and are illustrated in Table 10.

**Group S-C**

Group S-C had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Each teacher's contributions were highest in this category, as well, though Teacher S7C had an equal contribution in the category of collective ingenuity where she participated in the joint creation of an artifact.

Group S-C demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Deprivatization of Practice. While discussions in the group did remain focused on practice and not persons, there was no evidence of members discussing observations of one another in action. The contributions of Teacher S7C and Teacher S9C in this category were nonexistent. However, Teacher S10C was one of the group members who openly discussed practice with the group.

Table 10

*Observation Frequency Counts for South High School Group S-C*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | S7C | S9C | S10C | | |
| Initial Commonality | 0 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 1 | 14 | 6 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 0 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 1 | 7 | 4 | 4 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 1 | 0 | 3 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 0 | 6 | 3 | 8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 2 | 33 | 16 | 28 | 43 |

Four artifacts were referenced during the observation of Group S-C, but none were collected. All four were distributed electronically to group members and, upon request, were shared with me after the meeting concluded. Artifact S8 was titled *[PLC S-C] Meeting Agenda March 26* and was distributed by a non-interviewed group member. The agenda showed evidence of the structural resource of leadership that Principal S provided to the group in that it listed three department heads as the official group leadership (English, Math, and PE) as well as an administrator. It also showed evidence of the other structural requirements of PLC meetings set forth by Principal S such as a mandatory meeting length of 30 minutes with a five-minute allowance at the end for non-

group related complaints and the required rotation of group members through three key roles: note taker, time keeper, and meeting leader.

Artifact S9 was an email between the same non-interviewed group member who distributed Artifact S8 and Teacher S9C. The artifact showed evidence of professional communication among group remembers between group meetings as well as a shared vocabulary when it concluded with, "Go, [Lions]!" Though this phrase was never used during the observation, it was used multiple times in interviews and during my time at South High School.

Artifact S10 was one of two Google Docs used by Group S-C. The purpose of the observed group meeting was for teachers to discuss activity ideas for the first advisory meeting. During the meeting, it was suggested that Principal S start this document as a place for members to post those ideas. At the time the document was shared with me (approximately two weeks after the meeting), there was evidence that eight group members had jointly participated in its creation including Teacher S7C and Teacher S9C.

Artifact S11 was the second Google Doc used by Group S-C. The purpose of this document was for Principal S to share with the group his curricular ideas for advisory meetings. The document begins with an explanation, "During some of my trainings last week, I was thinking about our conversations in PLC. I began brainstorming potential topics and wanted to share some of them with you." Ten "possible topics" are then listed. This document shows evidence of communication among group members between group meetings as well as administrator participation.

## Cross-Group Analysis at South High School

Each of the three observed groups had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that members of all three groups adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Group S-A and S-B both demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence that members of these groups had grown together in such a way that they had developed a shared vocabulary, shared memories, a shared style, or a shared communal set of resources. As shown by Artifact S10 and Artifact S11, Group S-C did develop a shared communal set of resources. Additionally, discussion within Group S-C included shared memories of prior meetings and a shared vocabulary with which I, as a guest, was not immediately familiar.

Group S-C demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Deprivatization of Practice. While discussions in the group did remain focused on practice and not persons, there was no evidence of members discussing observations of one another in action. Incidentally, Group S-A and Group S-B had equivalent frequency counts to Group S-C in this category. Research Question 4 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 4: South High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 4: How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? Data

collected for this question came in the form of three collaborative work group observations and eleven teacher interviews.

Excerpts from teacher interviews regarding teachers' attitudes toward their work were grouped into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. General responses were analyzed first and a percentage was given indicating the percent of responses that were positive, neutral, and negative. Second, only those responses about collaboration were analyzed and a percentage was given indicating the percent of positive, negative, and neutral responses that pertained to collaboration.

Responses are given for each observed group. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at South High School are referred to as Group S-A, Group S-B, and Group S-C. Each group's total frequency count from the observation protocol is used as a quantitative indication of the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met. Results are illustrated in Table 11.

The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was highest in Group S-C and lowest in Group S-B. Yet teachers' attitudes toward their work were highest in Group S-B and lowest in Group S-A. It is worth noting, however, that approximately 75% of the excerpts from each group at South were positive indicating that most teachers at South have a generally positive attitude toward their work. Overall, less than 20% of the excerpts about teachers' attitudes toward their work were in reference to collaboration.

Table 11

*Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at South High School*

| | Positive Attitude | Neutral Attitude | Negative Attitude | Total Excerpts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group S-A (Frequency Count = 21) | | | | |
| General Responses | 38 (75%) | 4 (8%) | 9 (18%) | 51 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 6 (16%) | 2 (50%) | 0 (0%) | 8 (16%) |
| Group S-B (Frequency Count = 18) | | | | |
| General Responses | 45 (79%) | 1 (2%) | 11 (19%) | 57 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 3 (7%) | 1 (100%) | 1 (9%) | 5 (9%) |
| Group S-C (Frequency Count = 28) | | | | |
| General Responses | 31 (78%) | 1 (3%) | 8 (20%) | 40 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 4 (13%) | 1 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 5 (13%) |

**Summary of Analysis for South High School**

Teachers' attitudes toward their work at South High School were influenced by eight variables: their positive relationship with Principal S, the support they received from Principal S, their perception of Principal S's values and competence, the behaviors of their coworkers, their experiences with teacher collaboration, the internal feelings they had about teaching, and the external forces that affected their career. Principal S supported the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups by providing a time for teachers to collaborate and requiring a certain structure for required collaborative work group meetings. He assigned leadership to the required collaborative work groups,

but the effectiveness of those leaders was met with mixed reviews. He also allowed the groups certain decision-making authority, but it appeared that the extent of that authority or the extent to which that authority had been exercised varied from group to group. Finally, there was a wide range of groups' adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups, but the extent of that adherence did not seem to have a convincing effect on teachers' attitudes toward their work. Data analysis for North High School and West High School are provided in Chapters 5 and 6, respectively.

# CHAPTER 5

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : NORTH HIGH SCHOOL

Chapter 5 is the second of four chapters detailing the qualitative and quantitative data and analysis both within and across three cases. This multi-site case study was designed to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)
2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Findings at each site were based on interviews, observations, and artifacts. Each collaborative work group was observed once, and from that group teachers were selected for interviews until saturation was achieved. Principals were also interviewed. Artifacts included handouts from observed group meetings and documents created as a result of observed group meetings. For a complete review of data collection methodologies, please see Chapter 3.

The three schools that served as cases for this study were located in a southeastern state. All three were public high schools providing instruction in grades 9-12. A rich thick description of each school's specific context and demographics is provided in the respective chapter so that the reader can more easily transfer the study's findings to his or her own context and experience from a similar sample (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

## North High School

North High School is the second of two schools included in this study that were located in the same school district in a southeastern state. Though the school district boundary begins almost immediately after exiting the interstate, it is an 11-mile drive from the interstate to North High School. The primary route from the interstate to both South and North High Schools is a four-lane divided highway. Unlike the drive to South High School, though, visitors to North High School depart from this highway—and all of the signs of tourism it displays—after 8.5 miles and enter a five-lane highway through a city with a population of approximately 15,000 people. The streets are lined with commercial businesses, fast-food restaurants, professional offices, and other signs of a thriving community. If one were to continue driving a few miles past North High School, it would become evident that the school sits on the verge of a larger rural mountainous community with expanses of farmland and smaller locally-owned businesses. Though there are road signs pointing visitors toward particular venues, this community gives few clues that there is a major tourism destination nearby.

To enter the campus of North High School, visitors must first pass through a gate and stop at a security building to declare their intentions. From there, the security guard

directs visitors to either of two buildings referred to as the vocational building and the academic building. Though both were built in 1967, the vocational building has a very traditional design while the academic building does not. The architect in charge of the project laid out the academic building in such a way that the three letters of his last name would be evident in an aerial picture of the structure. Using both linear and curved letters to accomplish this feat created a maze-like path of hallways through the building. Visitors enter the building in the middle letter and find themselves in a commons area obviously used as a school cafeteria and lobby for the nearby gymnasium. A concession stand is used as an attendance checkpoint for students and parents entering the building, but the main office is located down one of three hallways that extend from this section of the building and is simply denoted by a small awning hanging above the doorway.

Though exterior entrances were always locked at both buildings, activity constantly occurred in the academic building and order was not always evident. Students entered and exited campus to attend off-site classes at a nearby community college as well as entered and exited the main building to travel to the vocational building. Students congregated in small groups in the office where they discussed social events with one another and sometimes ran errands for office personnel. Parents brought fast-food or other items for students, and the students were immediately called out of class to retrieve these items. Though the vocational building was steps away, its atmosphere was much different. The structure itself was a u-shaped design consisting of one long hallway with perpendicular branches extending at both ends. Upon entering the building, the office was obviously located immediately to the left of the front doors and the hallways were empty. Inside the office, there was one secretary and one student helper who directed

visitors to sign a visitor log and take a visitor identification badge. Such requirements did not exist in the academic building.

**Student Demographics and Academic Progress**

North High School is the largest of five high schools in the school district. Zoning restrictions are not exercised, so the student population consists of city and rural students from across the district. At the time of this study, North served a total of 1,599 students, 90% who were Caucasian, 6% who were Hispanic or Latino, and 3% who were Black or African American. Sixty percent of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, and 9% were students with disabilities. The school had a graduation rate of 87.1%, average daily attendance rate of 92.9%, and average ACT composite score of 19.4. During the 2013-2014 school year, North exceeded average district and state achievement scores on all but one end-of-course (EOC) assessment—Algebra 1. North also met three of its five goals set forth by the state for academic achievement—Algebra 1, Algebra 2, and English 3—but failed to meet those goals for English 2 and graduation rate. North further failed to meet four of its five gap closure goals, including all students' versus economically disadvantaged students' literacy and numeracy achievement, all students' versus African American and Hispanic students' numeracy achievement, and all students' versus students with disabilities' literacy achievement. The school had an overall value added composite score of 5 out of 5 for exceeding expected amount of student growth.

**The Principal**

The principal of North High School has been in education for thirty-one years. He began his career as a general science teacher at North before working as a fifth and

sixth grade science teacher, a physical education teacher, and a teacher at an alternative school. During this time, he began coaching football at North and continued to do so for 25 years. He first became an assistant principal during his ninth year of educational service and transferred back to North High School the following year. He continued to serve as assistant principal at North for an additional fourteen years before taking over as head principal seven years ago. He explained that his transition to head principal was a group decision made between him and the other assistant principals at the time the former principal retired. Because he had worked under the former principal for such a long time, it was believed that he would be the best "figurehead" moving forward. For the purposes of this study, the principal of North High School will henceforth be referred to as Principal N. Similarly, teachers at North will be coded by school (N), number (1-9), and collaborative work group (A-C).

## Research Question 1: North High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? Data for this question were collected from 9 teacher interviews (8% of the teaching staff) from three of the school's nine collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). Only one of the nine teachers interviewed was male, which was indicative of the three observed collaborative work groups whose combined membership was 75% female. Three of the teachers interviewed were alumni of North High School (Teacher N1A, Teacher N2B, and Teacher N5A) while a fourth (Teacher N3C) graduated from another high school in the district. Of the remaining five interviewed teachers, three (Teacher N4C, Teacher N8B, and Teacher

N9C) had worked at North for nearly 20 years or more. Together, the nine teachers interviewed had an average of 18 years of experience and a tenure of 14 years at North. More information regarding interview participants is provided in Table 12.

For this stage of data analysis, all teacher interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 1 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at three major themes, Nature of the Leadership, Nature of the Coworkers, Nature of the Work. The code mapping process for Research Question 1 is shown in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

Table 12

*North High School Interview Participant Demographics*

| CWG* | Participant Code | Gender | Subject | Leadership Position | Teaching Experience+ | Tenure at North+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | N1A | Female | Marketing | None | 10 | 10 |
| | N5A | Female | Business | None | 18 | 18 |
| | N6A | Female | Math | None | 19 | 7 |
| B | N2B | Female | English | Department Head | 20 | 11 |
| | N7B | Female | Special Education | None | 6 | 1 |
| | N8B | Female | Social Studies | None | 19 | 19 |
| C | N3C | Female | Math | None | 4 | 4 |
| | N4C | Female | Science | None | 27 | 22 |
| | N9C | Male | Carpentry | None | 35 | 35 |

** Collaborative Work Group*
*+ Measured in Years*

## Nature of the Leadership

The unique nature of the behaviors and beliefs of Principal N diffused the practice of leadership at North High School. Thus, the term 'leadership' in this section may refer to the administrative team as a whole, Principal N, or an assistant principal. At each juncture, 'leadership' will be specified to the person or group to whom the leadership refers. As a result of this unique nature, teachers at North had mixed opinions about their school's administrative team. Overall, they described the school as a "good place" (Teacher N1A) to work and credited Principal N with creating a "positive working environment" (Teacher N8B). Teacher N4C said that she "love[d] the people in administration" and believed that they were "trying to do the best job that they can do with what we have." Teacher N5A described the positive relationship that Principal N had with the students and explained that even though Principal N brought his own lunch he ate with the students in the cafeteria. She also praised the efforts of the administration to create an expansive curriculum that was beneficial to the students at North. However, under the overarching theme of administration, teachers' attitudes toward their work at North were influenced by their perceptions of the support, competence, and values of individual administrators rather than Principal N's relationship with students or the expansive curriculum he oversaw. A more detailed analysis of each of these variables are explored further in the sections that follow.

### *Administrative Support*

Teacher N3C liked that there was one head principal and four assistant principals at North. She said, "Since there are so many, there's usually someone that you could talk to if you had an issue." Teacher N7B also felt supported by the administration.

However, the divisions of job responsibilities within the administrative team created differing opinions of the leadership each administrator provided. While the faculty recognized Principal N as the ultimate leader of the school, the career and technical teachers (Teacher N1A, Teacher N5A, and Teacher N9C) and freshman academy teachers (Teacher N6A, Teacher N8B, and Teacher N3C) sometimes referred to the assistant principals in charge of their programs when responding about the leadership at North.

Teacher N9C explained that the career and technical building on the campus of North was at one time its own stand-alone high school. Though that designation changed approximately 20 years before this study, teachers in both buildings still referred to their leadership as the principal "in this building" (Teacher N2B). Teacher N9C explained,

> Principal N is our principal, and he is over in the main building. So, even though we are the same high school, I seldom see him unless I am over there. He comes over here occasionally.

Teacher N9C went on to describe the assistant principal in the career and technical building as "a great guy." Though Teacher N9C acknowledged the "laid back" nature of this assistant principal, he felt supported in discipline issues.

> If you have any discipline issues, he takes care of them. I have very few, but I did have one today. He handled it immediately, and it was taken care of. They do a very good job. He is always out in the hallway when I am doing my tardy duties and very supportive.

Teacher N6A and Teacher N8B spoke about experiencing the same support from the assistant principal over the freshman academy.

> If you send a kid to the office you know that that kid is going to be taken care of. They are going to – whether it is discipline or something is wrong—she always follows up. She has yet to just leave me hanging, or anybody that I know of. (Teacher N6A)

Teacher N8B made a distinction between the support she experienced with the assistant principal versus the lack of support she experienced from Principal N. The year prior to this study, she believed Principal N attempted to dismantle the freshman academy. She explained her frustration with the program being "picked apart little by little" and felt that "if it's picked apart, it's not going to stay true and it's not going to work." In contrast, Teacher N8B described how the assistant principal of the freshman academy "fought for us tooth and nail" in an attempt to keep the program pure and intact. As this battle waged, teachers were brought into a meeting to say why they thought the freshman academy should be kept or dismantled. Prior to this meeting, Teacher N8B had been slated to teach non-freshman classes the year of this study. Upon expressing her support of the program, she was denied that opportunity and remained a teacher in the freshman academy during the year of this study. She described feeling punished by Principal N for voicing her support and frustrated with his lack of "buy-in" to the program.

Other teachers also spoke about the administrative support that they did or did not experience at North. Teacher N1A and Teacher N3C both praised the efforts of the administrative team to assign mentors to new teachers, and Teacher N2B praised the administrative team for "knowing who does what and giving those resource to the other faculty members." Teacher N3C also described situations with parents who were convinced that Teacher N3C did not want their child to succeed. Rather than feeling

supported, Teacher N3C felt that the principal sided with the parent. She believed, "You have some who-do-you know type situations," and expressed her disappointment in how those situations were handled.

Teacher N6A shared concerns about teachers not "being heard" or "feeling valued" and how those perceptions had negatively impacted teacher morale at North. Teacher N5A agreed, "I just think that teachers in the classroom they should listen to them more" (Teacher N5A). She felt that the administrative team failed to "act upon issues that are brought forward" and needed to "try to push for better ways to do things maybe."

Administrative consistency was also an issue for teachers at North. Teacher N1A felt frustrated with the lack of follow-through exhibited by the administrative team in regard to rules the administration had established. She indicated that "dress code is a big deal." She described a particular push to eliminate short skirts and mandate that backpacks be clear or mesh. When teachers sent students to the principal for such violations, though, students were told, "It's okay." Teacher N1A described a specific situation during spirit week when a girl was dressed in such a way that "you could see everything." Teacher N1A addressed the problem, but the student was told, "It's fine for today." She said, "It just made me look like an idiot. So, I will not do that anymore. If we're not backed up, we look like the bad guys when we are just doing what we are supposed to do."

Teacher N6A had a similar complaint, "There are just different rules for different people and I hate that." She expressed her frustration with freshmen being "babied" and indicated that the reason the upperclassmen get mad at the freshmen is "because they

have a different set of rules." Likewise, she described seniors who had attended North for all four years of their high school experience who had never adhered to the clear or mesh backpack rule. She concluded, "You can't do that and all be in one school. If you are in one school, there should be one set of rules." Along with this lack of consistency was an overall air of disorganization that affected teachers' perceptions of Principal N's competence. This variable is explored next.

***Perceived Administrative Competence***

Nearly every teacher interviewed at North spoke of the disorganization that they perceived from Principal N. Teacher N2B described him as "wandering around talking to everybody about everything all day long and then deciding things whenever." She felt that the assistant principals did not "have any real input." Instead, she and Teacher N8B discussed the decisions that the counseling office made. "Principal N says he determines our schedule, but actually it's one of the guidance counselors because she makes the final schedule" (Teacher N2B). Both teachers expressed frustration over their lack of knowledge of next year's teaching schedule. "I have no idea what I'm teaching next year, and we're in the last six weeks" (Teacher N2B). Teacher N8B said, "It's almost like it's some big secret." She went on to explain that social studies courses were changing state wide next year and she needed to know what she would be teaching so that she could spend the summer studying and preparing lessons for next school year. When asked if the situation were unique to the school year in which the study was conducted, she said it had always been that way and explained a situation that had occurred with another teacher in which the teacher did not learn that she was teaching a new course

until she returned to school in the fall. When she questioned Principal N, he replied, "Oh, yeah. I was supposed to call you about that over the summer."

Teacher N8B described the overall morale of the staff as "low." She attributed this to teachers not being given "clear directives as to what needs to be done." She also felt that teaching time was not valued and complained about "interruptions all day long on the intercom for just piddly things." Teacher N2B voiced the same complaint.

> There's people on the intercom every time you turn around. Why can't we just find that kid? Why are we calling them to come down here? If they're missing, send a cop to look for them. You know, there's all these students here. Why are you interrupting in my class?

She went on to explain her belief that students thrive in classrooms and schools that are structured even if they don't agree with the structure itself. She believed that such structure contributed to a student's feeling of safety and security whereas at North "you don't ever know what's going to happen next."

Teacher N5A shared other concerns about lack of organization and communication. She complained about what she believed were simple fixes that should and needed to be made such as including a student's GPA on their grade card each time it was printed throughout the school year. Since it already prints on the first and last grade card, she believed such an adaptation would be easy to make and was necessary for students as they filled out admission and scholarship applications. She also felt that students and their parents were not adequately made aware of the classes available at North and the criteria that must be met for students to succeed in those courses. As the parent of a student who graduated the previous year from North, she felt there was no

clear communication about what classes her son would need for college and how to help him prepare for, take, and succeed in those classes. She also added to the concerns expressed by Teacher N2B and Teacher N8B in regards to the master teaching schedule. Based on enrollment data she had pulled from the Colleges of Business at a local university and community college, she believed that business classes were in high demand and did not understand why she was being told that more business classes could not be offered since "that's not where the students' interest is." She explained that the registration paper that students completed did not offer any such option and, consequently, was incapable of gauging student interest.

Teacher N3C described her frustrating experience getting hired at North. She explained that her first choice out of college was to teach at North due to its proximity to her home. She interviewed but received no word from the administration at North, so she took a job at another school. She was later contacted by the administration at North, but described them as being "very late in telling me." She resigned the other position and was pleased with her decision to work at North but wished "they would be a little more on top of things." Adding to this frustrating hiring process, Teacher N2B also indicated that new teachers such as Teacher N3C were supplied with a handbook. The handbook provided the new teachers with guidelines and procedures, "but then those things never happen." As a result, other faculty members take the lead in showing new teachers the ropes. They try to warn them, "Hey, this is coming up. I know this is what they said is going to happen, but last time this happened" (Teacher N2B).

The final comments about perceived administrative competence came in regard to teacher collaboration. Teacher N4C expressed her frustration that the administration

"didn't even know" about her collaboration with two other teachers in the building nor did they seem aware that grouping math and science teachers together for PLT meetings intended to prepare teachers for Common Core was an inappropriate pairing since science teachers will be assessed under Common Core in a manner more consistent with English/Language Arts than mathematics. Teacher N1A added that even the PLT meeting schedule was inconsistent, "It started out, with most things, we are going to hit this with a vengeance. It was every week, and it's slowly tapering off a little bit to about once a month." At times, however, the meetings were "every other month or so" (Teacher N1A). Along with a lack of consistency and air of disorganization, teachers at North were unclear of what exactly Principal N valued. This variable is discussed next.

***Administrative Values***

When I asked the teachers what they believed was important to Principal N, four teachers responded with phrases like, "no comment" (Teacher N4C), "I can't answer that question" (Teacher N2B), "it's hard to say" (Teacher N8B), and "I'd like to know" (Teacher N1A). Ultimately, teachers named teamwork (Teacher N8B), state directives such as graduation rate (Teacher N5A) and test scores (Teacher N8B), community involvement (Teacher N6A), safety (Teacher N1A), and keeping parents happy (Teacher N3C). Teacher N7B answered, "that we do what we are supposed to do, because we hear about it if we don't." However, multiple teachers complained about a lack of accountability. During her interview, Teacher N2B asked me if I could hear the teacher next door playing the song "What Does the Fox Say" and then said,

> I would like to ultimately say that people who are bad eggs should not be working here, but that's not going to happen. Nobody's getting written up here. Nobody's

> getting threatened to go somewhere else. We've got people that have consistently got negative EOC stuff, and it's like, 'whatever.'

In reference to teacher collaboration, she went on to say, "the other honors teacher is really not that interested. So, you can't make people be interested because our principal doesn't make people be interested. So, you just do what you can." Teacher N6A also complained about "lazy people not doing their job" and expressed a desire "to see that addressed." She explained,

> You've got teachers who never do their duties, and there is no repercussions. There's no consequences. And so those of us that do show up on time and that do our job and that try our very best to follow the rules, we're getting tired of carrying everybody else.

On a positive note, Teacher S2B described using class change as a time to briefly collaborate with other teachers and explained how the administration's leniency aided in that process.

> I've never been discouraged. Even if say like my kids are sitting in here and they're working and I'm standing in the hallway talking to somebody that's on their planning and a principal walked by, they wouldn't be like, "Why are you not in there?" They'd hear what we're talking about and be like, "Oh, way to grab that minute. If that's the only minute that you've got, then grab it," Sometimes even Principal N will come down here and interrupt to ask me some kind of question about what's going on.

Overall, though, teachers seemed conflicted about Principal N's "laidback" (Teacher N4C) approach. Teacher N4C spoke positively about Principal N as a person but felt that "sometimes we ought to have a little bit less laidback."

Attitudes toward the leadership at North were fairly consistent across all three observed groups. Teachers from each group offered some positive comments but were overall disappointed with Principal N's leadership. Their frustration over a lack of consistency, organization, and accountability were strong contributors to their attitudes toward their work. Other contributing factors had to do with the nature of the teachers' coworkers at North. This theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Coworkers**

At North High School, teachers' interactions with their peers were an important contributor to teachers' attitudes toward their work. Specifically, teacher's attitudes toward their work were influenced by coworker behaviors and collaboration. Each of these variables are explored more in the sections that follow.

***Coworker Behaviors***

Every teacher interviewed at North had positive comments about their coworkers. Teacher N1A, Teacher N5A, Teacher N6A described North with progressively positive phrases such as "a good place," "a great place to work," and an "awesome school". Teacher N6A went on to say that North had "great people to work with," and Teacher N4C agreed. The two newest teachers to North felt that "everybody is nice" (Teacher N7B) and "not too cliquey" (Teacher N3C). Teacher N2B explained, "It's kind of like how people describe a church. It's not the building. It's the people, and I've always felt that about this school that as the building gets older, the people are still incredible."

Teacher N8B and Teacher N1A described the faculty as a family. Teacher N1A elaborated, "If something happens to someone, we come together. It's more of a family environment here where everybody has got each other's back. We're all working as a team instead of as individuals." As Teacher N1A continued, it became apparent that she was referring to the teachers in the vocational building. Though she admitted to not having any first-hand experience teaching in the main building, her husband served as a substitute in both buildings and expressed to her that the main building was a "much colder environment" than the "friendly" environment of the vocational building. Teacher N5A did not directly disagree but did describe a positive relationship between the two buildings. She explained that even though the teachers in the vocational building were exceptionally close because of the smaller volume of teachers located in one building, the new state evaluation criteria had created a "great relationship" between faculty members in which,

> We're all in the same boat together whether it be math, biology, or cosmetology. Now the math EOC numbers, the science EOC numbers, English EOC numbers, even though we're CTE, we are getting a portion of all those numbers. So, if you don't do well, I don't do well. So, I am going to try and bring into my curriculum anything to do with math that can tie to it, anything to do with science/biology that can tie to it, to give you guys a better foundation and hopefully support you.

She went on to explain how she had worked with an Algebra 1 teacher the previous year to help students who had previously failed the course to pass the course through a computer software program that Teacher N5A had access to in her in classroom.

Other teachers also talked about the importance of helping one another. Teacher N9C said, "I would always help anybody in any way that I could." Teacher N7B believed that it was the "same basic goal" that all teachers at North had for student success that created an atmosphere in which teachers "cooperate with each other and work with each other to get done what needs to be done." For Teacher N2B, it was a deep-rooted philosophical issue,

> I don't know any other way to do it. It just takes what it takes. I would hate to think that I was a teacher and I went and I didn't help another teacher. It just seems wrong. It just seems off in some way.

She felt that the personality of her coworkers compelled her to want to share, "The people here are really awesome people, and so I want to help them."

Teacher N2B went on to describe how important it is to provide help to teachers who are teaching a new course for the first time, "I try to just reach out to them because nothing is worse than starting from scratch." She described sharing tests, rubrics, and other instructional materials. She discussed how the same had been done for her when she first started teaching at North and how she still sought that help from her peers all these years later. Teacher N4C described a similar experience sharing materials with another colleague in the science department.

Teacher N3C also described being the beneficiary of others' willingness to help, "I can talk to anybody pretty much anytime." She discussed asking other teachers to observe them teaching to see if there was something they were doing that she could implement in her classroom to improve student success. She expressed how much that

contributed to her attitude about working at North, "Not a single person has said no. Everyone seems very open to doing that. That's another reason why I like this school."

Teacher N5A described working closely with the marketing department on club competitions for FBLA and DECA. Competitions for each club are similar, and both clubs benefited from the teachers remaining consistent in how they taught the courses offered in each program. She explained, "The more that we're on board and make sure that we're covering it and speaking the same language, saying the same thing, I think that just is better and easier for that student because they're getting the same information." She believed that teachers at North, especially in the vocational building, held a strong allegiance to their particular programs, but "if they thought that somebody was going down, they don't want you to go down." Furthermore, she liked the "listening ear" that her colleagues provided saying that their objectivity helped her to "be more practical or reasonable or logical because they can help you take the emotion out of it and look at it more in black and white or concrete."

Though teachers had many positive comments to make about their colleagues, they were also quick to point out their frustrations. Several teachers expressed frustrations with the lack of socialization among teachers. Teacher N5A explained that she felt more comfortable around the teachers in the vocational building versus the main building because "we all know each other." Though she mentioned one teacher who "hardly comes out of her door," she did not exclude that teacher when referencing the positive rapport among the teachers in the vocational building. Teacher N1A added that the comfort she felt among the vocational teachers was a result of feeling "looked down upon" by some of the teachers in the main building. Teacher N8B admitted to not

knowing the newer teachers or the teachers in the vocational building. Teacher N4C agreed, complaining that even though she had "maybe five really close friends" at North, "the rest I don't know." She longed for a science department "that functioned together." She explained that science teachers "tend to be very hermit-like" and that was frustrating for her and her other "outgoing" colleagues.

Additionally, Teacher N4C desired more leadership in the science department—someone who would "[make] people clean up after the lab." She indicated that the math department had a reputation for being a great, collaborative department with a strong leader who assigned each teacher a high-, middle-, and low-level class to teach. Teacher N4C said, "If the science department could be like the math department, I'd be thrilled." In reference to the science department chair, she explained, "She's set it up where she can teach AP, honors, and AP. She's a fine person, but you've got to set an example." Such poor leadership and team spirit created a system among the department that Teacher N4C referred to as "the elite and the non-elite, the haves and the have-nots."

Teacher N2B felt that she worked with "a lot of people that are just like me. Whatever you've got, go ahead and bring it because we're going to figure it out and we're going to do it because we want the kids to be successful." She spoke about how much that attitude influenced her feelings about work saying, "As long as that's the case, I can't imagine working anywhere else." However, she also pointed out that working with and helping her colleagues was easy "if you get along well." She spoke about the personalities of teachers not like herself, "There are a few people that are not interested because everything you do is wrong, or they don't want to hear it because they're not changing anything. They don't care." She complained about how some teachers

responded when they disagreed with the procedures set forth by Principal N, "If they don't like them, they just don't say anything. We know that they aren't going to do them, but they just don't say anything." In addition to describing an argumentative relationship with a former colleague who would ask for advice and then be angry if he did not like the advice given, she also expressed her frustration over teachers who do not seem to like teaching, complain about aspects of teaching, or make admittedly lazy decisions like showing movies. She believed in the interconnectedness of teaching and found it frustrating to deal with teachers whose attitude was, "You stay in your room, and what I do in my room is none of your business."

Teacher N6A also complained about teachers who were passive and uninterested in improvement. She believed that collaboration could be so powerful at North if teachers were able and willing to share their ideas for school improvement, but

> if you bring something like that up during a faculty meeting, everybody will just rip your head off because they want Principal N to stand up there and say what he has to say and then they want to go home. They are in such a hurry to go home.

She went on to explain that this attitude created an environment in which the only people talking were the administration saying, "There is just no time given to addressing problems that we feel is important. It's always the things that they feel is important, and that just doesn't make for a good environment."

The mixed opinions that the faculty at North expressed about their colleagues in general also extended to their collaborative experiences. When working with staff members that they believed were equally as dedicated as themselves, they greatly valued their collaborative experiences. They did not enjoy forced collaboration with negative

and uninterested or unengaged faculty members. This variable is explored more in-depth in the following section.

***Collaboration***

Teachers at North High School participated in multiple types of professional interactions. The only formal gatherings arranged by Principal N were referred to as PLT meetings. Each teacher was assigned to one of nine PLT groups based on their plan time and subject area. These groups met every two weeks. A faculty subset of approximately twelve freshman teachers were divided into three Freshman Academy teams each consisting of a math teacher, science teacher, social studies teacher, and English teacher that met once each week. Teachers also met with one another or their departments on an informal basis, as needed.

When interviewed, all teachers were asked to describe the types of collaborative activities in which they engaged. Though all teachers were assigned to a PLT group, not all teachers mentioned these groups. When I questioned their omission, teachers explained how those meetings were "a waste of time" (Teacher N6A). Teacher N1A said, "It just adds to the stress of that's one more thing you have to participate in." As an English teacher, Teacher N2B felt that she already implemented in her class the Common Core strategies that were being taught in the PLT meeting, therefore "that collaboration is not worthwhile" to her. The only positive comment she had to offer was that she liked getting the updates about new assessments that would be implemented. Teacher N8B expressed the same sentiment, "Anytime that I get more information I feel like, okay I'm just getting more prepared. It's okay. I'll deal with this."

Teacher N2B also described how teachers' interest level affects departmental meetings. When asked what makes departmental collaborations work, she said,

> It's their department. They want to have a say. They want to be focused. They want our students to do better, write better, read better. Some of the most passionate discussions we get about books is because these teachers feel this book is going to change this kid's life and they really feel strongly about it.

She went on to say that when teachers were not interested and "just want to go back to their room," the ability to collaborate disappeared.

Meaningful collaboration influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work in a positive way. All three freshman academy teachers that were interviewed like being part of a freshman academy team. Teacher N6A talked about how valuable it was to work with other teachers to address student needs and create cross-curricular lessons. Teacher N8B talked about how much she appreciated the support of the freshman academy team.

> I absolutely love working with the freshman academy team. It's been very good for me, because it does give me a sense of family. I don't feel so isolated. It does give me a sense of being in the same boat. It does give me a sense of knowing that there is support. It's definitely a plus to my job, and I'm glad that I have it.

Teacher N3C also liked the support she felt as a member of a freshman academy team. She described the freshman academy meetings as "good, really good," and "very beneficial."

Unlike some of the teachers previously mentioned, Teacher N3C liked the PLT meetings. She found them "very beneficial" and would "definitely suggest keeping them." Teacher N9C agreed, "It's good, positive. I don't know if a lot of teachers feel

they are beneficial because there is just a lot of things that—especially with PARCC—really doesn't apply to a lot of us. But it lets us see things we can do on our end to help the math teachers, to help the students in math."

Teachers also offered positive comments about their own grassroots experiences collaborating with other teachers. Teacher N2B said that collaborating with other English teachers "contribute[d] a lot" to her job satisfaction because they were "just like" her—experiencing the same professional struggles and trying to improve their practice. She went on to say,

> I will talk to a teacher and within five minutes I will be like, "You are exactly right. I'm doing that," because that's going to solve that for me. My day will just be so much better. Without other viewpoints and other perspectives, you're just going to keep spinning.

As a special education teacher in her first year at North, Teacher N7B especially appreciated collaborating with other teachers. She felt that their shared goal of student success motivated them to "cooperate with each other and work with each other to get done what needs to be done." These other teachers possessed an expertise that she found invaluable, "They know the kids better than I do. They know the staff better than I do. So, they know the goings on better and that helps me do what I need to do better."

This idea of a shared goal or other form of initial commonality was a common component in teachers' discussions of whether or not their collaborative experiences were meaningful. In line with teachers' attitudes about the PLT meetings, teachers also had mixed explanations about the purpose of those meetings. When asked, multiple teachers' first reactions were to say that they could not articulate the purpose of PLT

meetings. Teacher N5A responded, "Good question." Teacher N6A answered, "I don't know. Now would I say that to TSIP committee? Absolutely not. But I don't understand what we are supposed to be doing." Teacher N8B could articulate what the purpose of her meeting was—getting the kids to write across the curriculum—but was unsure if other PLT groups shared that purpose. Teacher N4C laughed and then said, "Uh, the correct answer is a learning partnership so it looks good on paper, but it's right now basically information, getting and giving in. That's about all. It's like going to a faculty meeting." Supplementing the ideas from Teacher N4C, Teacher N1A, Teacher N3C, and Teacher N5A each explained that the purpose changes depending on "whatever they're needing to talk about" (Teacher N5A). Specific topics mentioned included teacher evaluations, school accreditation, test scores, and upcoming assessments for Common Core.

Teacher N2B Teacher N7B, and Teacher N9C each believed that the purpose of the PLT meeting was "to get teachers together from different areas" (Teacher N9C) to "collaborate and share ideas and stuff like that" (Teacher N7B). Teacher N5A explained, "I believe it's a good time for other teachers to collaborate together so we're kind of more in tune with each other. It's like I'm not just in here teaching this subject. You're not just in your room teaching your subject." Teacher N1A believed that the PLT meetings did begin that way, but no longer fulfilled that purpose.

The purpose of department meetings seemed to vary. Teacher N7B said that the purpose of special education department meetings was centered on student success. In contrast, Teacher N2B's description of English department meetings seemed to be centered on teacher expectations. Teachers were expected to keep writing folders on each student to be passed on for each upcoming grade level. A great deal of time in

English department meetings was spent making sure that teachers understood where the writing folders were kept, explaining how to format student writing samples correctly, and reminding teachers of their expected participation in this process. Other procedural discussions included the requirements and paperwork necessary for students to enroll in honors level courses. There were also discussions about student test scores and suggested methods for improving those scores.

While Freshman Academy team members used their time together to develop cross-curricular lessons and plan student field trips, Teacher N6A indicated that the primary purpose of their meetings was to discuss student behavior and attendance issues and ponder how best to motivate students. Teacher N3C mentioned that one teacher may have a better idea than the others about what is going on with a student and can share that information with the team. Teacher N8B believed that this teaming concept gave teachers a greater opportunity to "rescue" struggling students because "we keep a closer eye on the kids, and we can catch the kids pretty quickly when we see that they're going downhill." Once the whole team was aware of a student's situation, "all four of us can get on with them very quickly" (Teacher N8B).

Though grassroots collaborations among teachers took on a variety of forms, the general purpose of these endeavors was to improve instruction. Teacher N4C described working with a math teacher to improve her delivery of science content containing a form of mathematics instruction with which she was unfamiliar. Teacher N9C collaborated primarily with math teachers to deliver cross-curricular content involving the use of mathematics in carpentry and construction. Teacher N2B co-taught an ACT course with a math teacher, so together they collaborated with one another as well as a science

teacher on instruction and student discipline. Teacher N2B also described collaborations with other English teachers. She worked extensively with her co-department chair to plan departmental meetings and coordinate instruction for the senior Advanced Placement classes they each taught and the prerequisite courses students would take in preparation for those Advanced Placement classes. In reference to her collaboration with another English 4 Honors teacher, she explained, "She's newer into our building, and so I'm all about scavengering [sic]. She's got great ideas. Whatever you're doing, if it's awesome I'm doing it."

In each of these cases, teachers felt that the "common goal" (Teacher N1A) they shared with their collaborative partners was what made their collaborative experiences successful. Likewise, failure to share a common goal inhibited collaborative productiveness. Teacher N2B explained that her PLT group included the boys' basketball coach who taught Physical Education. She understood that his instruction goal of physical activity was different from that of the rest of the group to incorporate reading and written responses from students in various content areas. This disconnect made it difficult for her PLT group to reach its true potential. In contrast, Teacher N5A felt that her PLT group was successful because "even though everybody's subject area is different—we're talking about issues that affect all of us. So, I think everybody could have input if they want to." As suggested by Teacher N5A, the common goal shared by collaborative partners served as the basis for collaborative discussion.

Teachers at North expected their collaborative partners to "cooperate" (Teacher N7B, Teacher N5A), "contribute ideas" (Teacher N7B), "offer some sort of input" (Teacher N8B), "speak up" (Teacher N6A), "be honest" (Teacher N2B, Teacher N6A,

Teacher N8B), and have "an open line of communication" (Teacher N9C). Teacher N1A expressed how important it was for everyone to "come with an open mind, participate, and work together to hear everybody out." Teacher N8B felt that because "most of us know each other at least by name," no one in her group was "uncomfortable saying anything in front of anybody." Teacher N3C disagreed, "I think it takes a while to get comfortable, to be willing to say something or to ask." As a newer, younger teacher, she felt "presumptuous" when asserting her thoughts, opinions, or suggestions in a group of more experienced teachers. She also attributed her reticence to not knowing everyone in the group. She said, "The first four [meetings] I probably wouldn't say anything, but after I get to know everyone I feel like once you know them you feel comfortable."

The meaningfulness of the collaborative endeavor also contributed to teachers' participation. Teacher N4C explained that most of her training in Common Core was literacy based. Her PLT group, though, was numeracy based. She felt overwhelmed by the conflicting instructional expectations and in turn put less effort into participating in group assignments and discussions. She complained, "I know the ELA. I could share some great things in ELA that nobody knows, but they don't want to know that from me. Nobody cares to find out. We've got to do math because you're science." Teacher N1A and Teacher N2B also described members of their PLT teams that were "not totally committed" (Teacher N1A) or "had no desire to talk at all" (Teacher N2B) because they viewed the meetings as an "inconvenience" (Teacher N1A) or "a waster of time" (Teacher N2B). In contrast, Teacher N2B described very participative discussions in English department meetings "because we feel passionate about literature and writing."

Depending on the collaborative group, discussion took different forms at North. Teachers on Freshman Academy teams provided the best description of how their collaborative groups work. Both Teacher N3C and Teacher N8B explained that their groups chose students for awards every six weeks. It was important to the teachers that these students "be good in all classes, not just some" (Teacher N3C). So, honest, open discussion was imperative. At Christmas time, they worked together to create a list of needy students for counselors to try to help. Likewise, students who need to be disciplined are discussed among group members who then brainstorm various ways of addressing those issues. Additionally, group members used this time to plan lessons, upcoming events, or field trips. Finally, Teacher N8B noted that sometimes these meetings also provided a time for teachers to gain personal support from one another. They shared both positive and negative stories about how their day had gone or what major events were going on in their lives outside of school. She concluded by saying, "PLT time doesn't really allow for those kinds of things."

Teachers gave conflicting descriptions of the discussions that occurred in PLT meetings. Teacher N6A described PLT meetings as a time to "sit and be quiet" and "let them (the assistant principal leading the group) do the talking." Teacher N1A acknowledged these meetings as a time to receive information from an administrator, but she and Teacher N5A disagreed with Teacher N6A. Teacher N5A stated, "We are allowed to do what it says. You're allowed to collaborate. It's not, 'We're going to direct you and not give you any time to voice your concerns.'" Teacher N9C also described his PLT meetings as a time to "try things and share ideas," while Teacher N3C added that "some people get off task and just start complaining, just using it as a whining

time." Teacher N7B and Teacher N2B gave the most detailed descriptions of the discussions that have occurred in their PLT group. Teacher N7B mentioned discussing upcoming PARCC assessments "and how things are going to change and our policies. We're going to look for ways to help kids on these new changes that we are implementing." Though Teacher N2B remembered having "some good discussions in there" regarding Common Core, she also spoke about teachers "being ugly and just talking about how they don't like the politics." She mentioned always having "homework" regarding ways to implement Common Core standards and strategies in classrooms of various content, and expressed frustration with teachers asking questions like, "How do I know if it's a sentence?"

However, Common Core was not always the focus of the PLT meetings. Teacher N4C described a time when teachers were assigned videos to watch between meetings regarding new teacher evaluation practices. Teachers would then use PLT meetings to discuss their thoughts on the videos. Teacher N8B added that PLT time had also been used to "do some school improvement planning." She explained that the larger group of 12 team members would divide into smaller groups to discuss topics such as improving English test scores and would then report back to the larger group.

What teachers at North seemed to like best about collaborative discussion was the opportunity to "vent" (Teacher N3C) and get help from other teachers—"help me make decisions, work with me on an issue, help me with the kids' issues or problems" (Teacher N8B). Though lots of teachers mentioned sharing ideas, only Teacher N1A described any reflective assessment of practice. She recalled a time when her PLT group had been

asked to pick an Algebra standard, come up with a lesson for their [non-Algebra] class that would incorporate that standard, and then share that experience with the group.

Teacher N2B and Teacher N3C also described sharing resources with other teachers. Knowing that teachers were trying to make the transition to Common Core, Teacher N2B shared her knowledge, self-made materials, and texts regarding Socratic circles and rubrics with teachers all over the school. She also talked about how difficult it can be for English teachers to teach a new class and how valuable shared resources like tests can be in that situation.

> Nothing is worse than starting from scratch. Just reading the material can kill you. So, I always offer whatever I have. You're welcome to it. You don't have to use any of it. I don't care, but here's a flash drive. I just don't see any point in making somebody work harder than they have to.

Teacher N3C expounded upon the importance of sharing resources with her belief that collaboration is a two-way street. She was aware that as a newer teacher she spent a lot of time asking others for resources, but felt obligated to return the favor in any way she could.

> You usually don't always want to be taking. You want to try and give some, too. I'm probably always asking, "Do one of you have a worksheet," or something like that. I should try to bring more things to the table, which they don't always necessarily need but at least I can give them an opportunity. So, if I find something really neat, I try to print off copies and put it in their boxes or something, just to see if they would like to do it.

Though philosophical debate is often associated with meaningful collaborative conversation, there was no evidence of this at North. In fact, nearly every teacher interviewed claimed a lack of conflict of any sort in their collaborative experiences. Nonetheless, Teacher N2B, Teacher N8B, and Teacher N5A complained about "dominant personalities" (Teacher N8B) in PLT meetings that "hog the floor" (Teacher N5A), intentionally take the conversation "off track" (Teacher N8B), or "repeatedly say things that makes it very clear they're not going to do whatever" (Teacher N2B). Teacher N9C expressed concern that some teachers may be opposed to "try anything new." Other teachers described individual conflicts between them and other teachers unrelated to collaborative endeavors.

Each Freshman Academy teacher did, however, describe some form of conflict within her Freshman Academy team. In each case, the conflict involved newer or younger group members. Teacher N8B spoke about a newer member's failure to "follow the rules that we follow." She explained that the power in having a team approach to parent conferences lay in the consistency with which each teacher on the team followed "team policies." Failure to do so resulted in team members feeling "thrown under the bus" and created "animosity" within the group. Teacher N8B also described a situation in which team members would speak positively about students and a first-year teacher on the team would then complain about how those students behaved in her class. Because the other teachers were not seeing this same behavior, they tried to offer her advice but she seemed unwilling to take it. From Teacher N3C's perspective as a newer teacher, she felt the veteran teachers would sometimes "jump on you a little bit" saying, "Why didn't you do this?" She said that this "would only happen more so from an older teacher to a

younger teacher and never really happened the other way around." Teacher N6A also attributed her difficulty assimilating into the Freshman Academy to her advanced age. She complained, "All the other math teachers in the Freshman Academy (who were much younger) work together, stay on pace together, share lessons, share projects, and they've yet to share the first thing with me." She explained that her age kept her from fixating on this problem but that she had expressed to leadership how detrimental this behavior might be if a younger teacher were to be treated in this manner.

Conflict resolution at North occurred in a variety of ways. Teacher N2B, Teacher N3C, Teacher N8B each deferred to an administrator to "take over" (Teacher N3C), "keep that from getting out of hand" (Teacher N8B), or simply make a final decision when teachers could not agree. Teacher N1A, Teacher N5A, and Teacher N7B used discussion to resolve conflict with other teachers or within their departments. Teacher N5A believed that the positive relationship she held with her colleagues mandated such an approach. For Teacher N4C, the negative relationship she had with other members of the science department was perpetuated by conflict being "swept under the rug."

When asked how often collaborative work groups come to a consensus, teachers answered with phrases like, "most of the time" (Teacher N1A), "always" (Teacher N2B, Teacher N9C, Teacher N3C), and "every time" (Teacher N8B). Teacher N6A felt that her PLT group never reached a consensus but that was because they did not make decisions in that group. Teacher N9C noted about his PLT group, "I don't know that they always agree with what is being presented, but then they all disagree together." Teacher N2B felt that when consensus needed to be reached, it was—e.g. choosing books for

students to read in specific courses—but her and Teacher N4C both agreed that there were times when the final consensus was to let teachers have the freedom to differ.

In successful collaborative work groups, the outcome of discussion and philosophical debate is some form of collective ingenuity (Hord, 1997). Just as there was no evidence of philosophical debate among the PLT groups at North, there was also no evidence collective ingenuity in those groups. Teachers in these groups did not work together to form creative solutions to problems faced by the group. Instead, collective ingenuity at North was manifested among Freshman Academy teams, departmental teams, or grassroots collaboration between teachers. Freshman Academy teams created "collaborated projects" (Teacher N3C) and brainstormed ways to help troubled students. Teacher N6A recalled how her team correctly identified a homeless student based on team efforts to study the student's patterns of behavior. Teacher N7B also discussed devising solutions in special education department meetings for students to "overcome situations and pass." English department meetings were more teacher-centered, so the collective ingenuity experienced there came in the form of new book lists for required and recommended summer reading. Likewise, Teacher N2B discussed working with another English teacher to create a unit teaching students how to synthesize information.

Overall, certain social and structural resources must be in place for collaborative work groups to be successful. The structural resources supplied administratively will be addressed by Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? The most common social resources discussed by teachers at North pertained to respect and professionalism. Respect was the most pervasive of the two and will be addressed first.

Teacher N1A, Teacher N4C, Teacher N6A, Teacher N7B, and Teacher N8B all believed that professional respect was a vital component of what they considered to be their successful collaborative endeavors. Teacher N4C also added, "We don't think we're the best. We don't have pretension. We don't have lots of, like, 'She could not possibly have anything to say to me.'" However, both Teacher N4C and Teacher N6A spoke at length about collaborative settings in which they did not feel respected. Teacher N4C felt that the separation between the "elite and the non-elite, the haves and the have-nots" was evident at the last science department meeting. She described conversations in which the "elite" teachers of honors and Advanced Placement courses complained about student discipline issues such as having a cell phone out in class or not bringing a book to class. These teachers' responses were to "kick them out of your class." Teacher N4C felt that these teachers did not understand nor respect the work of the "non-elite" teachers in that such an action as removing a student from an "elite" class affected a "non-elite" teacher because that was the class in which the student would eventually be placed. The teachers of the lower level classes did not feel that they were afforded the same luxury of simply removing a student from class for such minor violations, especially since not all of their students were even supplied textbooks. Furthermore, Teacher N4C believed that such actions resulted in a disparity in student test scores as the "elite" teachers' scores improved with the removal of discipline issues and the "non-elite" teachers' scores declined with the increase in added discipline issues. She also added feeling disrespected by her science colleagues when they "leave the science lab for me to clean." She concluded, "I don't need that, you know? It's broken us apart."

Teacher N6A described being excluded from planning meetings with her fellow Freshman Academy math teachers. She felt they were "rude" and disrespectful to her because of her age, "I'm the oldest person on the Freshman Academy, and I can't help but feel like that has an impact because they see me as doing things the old way." She also felt that they looked down on her because of her education, "not having a math degree though, some of them tend to think, 'Well, she's not got what it takes.'" She felt that no respect was granted for the many years of experience she had teaching Algebra 1. Teacher N3C also mentioned issues of respect in her Freshman Academy team. She described some team members as being "judgmental" toward other members who were experiencing discipline problems with a student.

Professionalism was the second social resource that teachers at North felt was important for collaboration to be successful. More than half of the teachers interviewed mentioned how important it was that team members "be on time and always show up" (Teacher N3C). Once there, teachers needed to be "willing to collaborate" (Teacher N2B), "listen" (Teacher N5A, Teacher N7B), "hear everybody out" (Teacher N1A), and stay "on task" (Teacher N3C). Teacher N2B described an experience in her PLT group in which she went to the white board to demonstrate something to the group and when she looked around, "They weren't paying attention. They're not even making eye contact. They don't want to know what I'm doing." Teacher N1A added that the use of cell phones had been a problem in her PLT team. She concluded, "I just think that everyone wants everyone else to be as accountable as they are."

Overall, teachers' attitudes at North regarding collaboration were relatively consistent. Few teachers found value in PLT meetings regardless of the group.

However, they did speak highly of their collaborative endeavors in the Freshman Academy teams, in their departments, and with other teachers. Likewise, teachers' attitudes about their coworkers as a whole did not seem to vary among PLT groups. In addition to the nature of the administration and coworkers, teachers' attitudes toward their work at North were also impacted by the nature of their work. This final theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Work**

At North High School, teachers' feelings about their career also contributed to their attitudes toward their work. Teacher N6A explained that she "always wanted to teach," and Teacher N9C described his career as "great for me." Teacher N8B added, "I love the job." Specifically, teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their internal feelings about their subject and their students as well as external forces over which they had little control. Each of these variables are explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

***Internal Feelings about Teaching***

When teachers were asked how they got into teaching, six of the nine interviewed teachers spoke about how teaching was not their first choice as a career. Teacher N3C, Teacher N4C, Teacher N7B, and Teacher N8B were each studying non-educational topics in college when they decided they really did not like their original choice of a major and switched to education. For Teacher N1A and Teacher N9C, teaching was not even on their radar when employees at North asked if they would be interested in bringing their career skills to the classroom.

Regardless of how the teachers came to be educators, they seemed to enjoy the act of teaching. Teacher N1A described it as "a good fit," and Teacher N5A said, "I don't have any regrets. It's worked out well for me." Teacher N2B especially liked "the light bulb moment" and making "a difference." Teacher N5A tearfully agreed. Teacher N4C believed, "You can do a lot in teaching, and really help people," and Teacher N9C appreciated that "you actually get to see results from what you do." Teacher N9C also enjoyed being "left to my own devices." Teacher N8B and Teacher N2B both mentioned enjoying school when they were students, and Teacher N1A, Teacher N3C, and Teacher N7B added how much they liked the schedule.

Adding to the general aspects of their career, teachers' attitudes toward their work were also influenced by their passion for their subject areas. When teachers at North spoke about their subject areas, they used phrases like "passionate" (Teacher N2B), "love" (Teacher N2B, Teacher N4C, Teacher N6A), and "enjoy" (Teacher N8B, Teacher N9C). Teacher N2B and Teacher N8B both indicated that their feelings about their subject area were a motivating factor in choosing education as a career. Teacher N2B expounded, "I like to talk about books. There aren't many jobs where you can talk about books and get paid." Because Teacher N6A began her career as an elementary school teacher, she did not formally study math in college until she later transferred to the high school. She said if she had it to do over again, she would still become a teacher, "but I would go into math." For Teacher N1A, it was her personal experience with the subject matter in high school that served as her motivation, "I came through this program—with marketing and DECA—and it meant a lot to me. It really changed my life."

Students were another influential component of teachers' attitudes toward their work. Over the course of their interviews, six teachers mentioned how fond they were of their students. Teacher N4C and Teacher N8B both said, "I love the kids." Teacher N2B described them as being "incredible." She explained that because there was not a strong private school system in the area, the student population was extremely diverse in regards to economic status. She appreciated the "core values with families" in the area and enjoyed working with kids "trying to live the American dream, get that scholarship, get into the school of their dreams." Teacher N7B also expressed how much she enjoyed the students and working with them, and Teacher N5A talked about her desire to help them be successful both in school and beyond. For Teacher N9C, it was watching the students experience self-pride in their tangible accomplishments in his class that was most rewarding.

Just as teachers counted students as one of the most satisfying aspects of their job, they also considered them one of the most frustrating aspects. Teacher N1A complained about behavior issues while Teacher N5A and Teacher N9C expressed frustration over student apathy. For Teacher N2B and Teacher N6A, though, the greatest complaint about students was more directed at their parents and the larger community as a whole. Each expressed their frustration with a culture in which students "can do no wrong" (Teacher N6A). While teachers had a lot to say about how students, content, and other aspects of their career influenced their attitudes toward work, they were equally as passionate about their feelings regarding external forces on education. This variable is explored in more detail in the next section.

### *External Forces*

Most of the complaints that teachers at North had about their jobs pertained to external forces over which they had no control such as facilities, workload, politics, and the current climate regarding education in their state. Teacher N8B said, "I hate the paperwork." Teacher N1A agreed and added, "It's, you know, the tardy traps, and the twenty days a year of bus duty—morning and afternoon—and it's just all those things. You know, you have to work a football game, and you have to do this. It's just all of those things piled up." Teacher N5A concurred saying, "It just seems like I think a lot of times we're so covered up." Teacher N4C began her educational career as a school counselor and said if she had to make that decision again she would not become a counselor because "it changed so much that it wasn't counseling anymore."

Teacher N8B expressed how much she hated "all the new legislation" and state initiatives. Teacher N4C elaborated,

> They've been so bad with the new evaluations and then trying to figure out what's coming on Common Core and flipped classrooms. They have added at least—I would say six but I couldn't list what they are—six significant changes, and I don't know which one is which anymore. It's just too much, and I'm so overwhelmed. I can't take it anymore.

Teacher N2B expressed her anger over the state's value-added assessment system for measuring student growth and "the secrecy of what the formula is." Teacher N5A and Teacher N4C each added their frustration over the fact that the state officials making these decisions "have not really been in education" (Teacher N5A) or attended public schools. Teacher N4C mentioned not feeling respected by those "at the top," while

Teacher N2B and Teacher N8B each felt they as educators had been "demonized so much in the media."

When asked what it was like to work at North, Teacher N2B, Teacher N4C, and Teacher N8B each mentioned the state of the building itself. Teacher N2B described it as "a dump" and said, "They just keep putting patches on it." Teacher N4C explained, "They can't add onto it unless we go back and update the electric codes, therefore it is cheaper to build a new one. They won't build a new one." Teacher N4C also complained about the building design consisting of non-rectangular classrooms as well as desks that were "falling apart" and lacking technology.

To ease overcrowding at North, a new high school was built in the district and opened the same year as this study. Though teachers were pleased with the lower number of students at North, adverse reactions were also perceived as a result of this change. Both Teacher N2B and Teacher N6A spoke about the loss of teachers who had been transferred from North to the new school. Teacher N2B believed that the student population at North still warranted some of those teachers remaining at North and she feared that failure to acknowledge that need would impact student test scores. Teacher N6A noted that "our good teachers" were leaving North to work at the new school or other schools in the district

> because class sizes are smaller in the other schools and there's less paperwork at other schools than there is here. We are the only school that does these portfolios and PLTs and all that stuff, and a lot of people want to focus more on classroom stuff than paperwork. And I agree with that, I wish there was a lot less paperwork than there is here.

When asked if pay was an issue for any of them, teachers responded with phrases like "somewhat" (Teacher N1A) and "of course I would like to be paid more" (Teacher N3C). With a spouse on disability, Teacher N6A was especially sensitive to the topic of pay. For her, "it's always an issue." She chose to work in North's district because the pay was "nearly ten thousand dollars" more than the district in which she lived. Her biggest complaint was only being paid ten months out of the year. According to her, teachers were surveyed "a couple of years ago" and 96% of the teachers wanted twelve-month pay, but "they didn't do anything with it."

Teacher N4C noted that she used to believe her pay was "very good" but that several years without a raise had changed that opinion. She explained that a three percent raise for which teachers were "overdue" had been planned right before the housing market crashed but was in turn cut out and had never been reinstated. She was grateful for the bonuses that had been provided in the meantime but frustrated with how teacher salary had failed to keep up with a rise in gas and food prices. While Teacher N2B was okay with not getting a raise, she was frustrated with the rise in insurance premiums which resulted in "where I kind of lost money." She wished the district would at least raise pay enough to cover any increase in insurance. Other than Teacher N3C who wished there were better opportunities for overtime and advancement, most of the other teachers acknowledged that the pay was not great but was manageable.

**Summary of Research Question 1**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? While elements of effective collaborative work groups did influence teachers'

attitudes toward their work, teachers' experiences with collaboration addressed only one aspect of their overall feelings about their job. Teachers' attitudes about collaboration were closely related to their attitudes about their coworkers, which was only one of three themes determined to influence teachers' attitudes toward their work. Teachers' attitudes were also influenced by the nature of the leadership in their building and the nature of the work of they do. These results held true for all three observed PLT groups. Research Question 2 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 2: North High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of 1 principal interview and 9 teacher interviews (8% of the teaching staff) from three of the nine collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as Professional Learning Teams (PLTs). For the purposes of this study, the principal of North High School is referred to as Principal N. At the time of this study, Principal N had served in an administrative role at North for 21 of his 31-year career, the last seven of which had been in the role of head principal. Though his career began as a science teacher at North, he spent several years in multiple capacities at other schools before beginning his administrative tenure at North. More information regarding teacher interview participants is provided in Table 12.

For this stage of data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 2 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at four major themes. The code mapping process for Research Question 2 is shown in Table 5 in Chapter 3.

**Time**

Every teacher at North High School was assigned to one of nine PLT groups. According to Principal N, teachers were placed in one of two groups meeting during their plan time—Math PLT or ELA/Literacy PLT—with the exception of one non-content designated PLT (led by Principal N) that met after school. Principal N explained that the intention was for all teachers to be able to meet during school hours, but that some of the teachers at North received extended contracts to teach during their plan time. Having one group meet after school allowed these teachers to partake in the process of PLTs and also allowed an alternative for teachers to attend should they miss their regularly scheduled plan-time meeting.

Though the meeting day, starting time, and location were set for each group, there seemed to be some confusion among teachers about how often the groups met. Teacher N4C said that meetings were "less than once a month;" Teacher N7B said they met "once a month;" Teacher N3C said, "At least once a month, I would say mostly twice a month;" and everyone else said meetings occurred every other week. Teacher N2B explained,

> We have a schedule all year long to meet biweekly, but that doesn't always happen. But usually it's a good reason. We really can't have PLT meetings if we're giving standardized test that day because we're giving the test. So we don't get our planning.

Teacher N6A added that meetings were also adjusted on weeks that included in-service days, "If we have in-service in there then we don't meet that week, we meet during the in-service, or sometimes it is two weeks in a row, it just depends upon scheduling." According to Teacher N8B, three weeks may pass between meetings if snow days occur.

There was also some confusion among teachers about the length of time the groups were required to meet. The schedule provided to me by one of the assistant principals confirmed Teacher N6A's assertion that groups met for forty-five minutes. Teacher N5A believed that meetings were originally intended to be one hour in length but "if they can get through the material and it's 30 minutes or 40 minutes, I don't know that she has a set time."

Overall, teachers felt that this time requirement was "okay" (Teacher N7B). Teacher N4C and Teacher N8B both preferred the current time requirement to the weekly requirement that had been established previously. Teacher N8B liked that every other week gave her "a little bit of time to kind of process all the information being thrown at us." Nonetheless, Teacher N4C felt that was "too little" because "we don't do what we need to with it." Teacher N1A added, "Some other schools meet after school, and so I think it's nice that our school allows us to do that during planning time."

Freshman Academy teams were also organized so that each group had a common plan time. Principal N acknowledged this common plan time but seemed unaware that Freshman Academy teachers used this time to meet telling me instead that they met after school. Nonetheless, Freshman Academy teachers used the common plan time to meet weekly and felt this schedule was "just right" (Teacher N8B) though weeks that included PLT meetings could be "tough" (Teacher N8B). Teacher N3C mentioned that some weeks also included parent conferences that were held during plan time "which would be quite difficult" especially when teachers were responsible for duties such as tardy traps in between classes. She noted, "unless you're actually spending time grading papers in class, you have to spend some time doing that at some point." Teacher N6A summarized

the importance of this time together, though, "If we are having problems with a student or we see something that bothers us about a student then it is really easy to get together where we have common planning for a team, and talk about it. And we really nipped a lot of things in the bud by doing that."

There was no regularly designated time provided at North for departments to meet or teachers to collaborate one-on-one. In fact, when I asked Principal N if there were any other collaborative work groups in the building aside from the PLTs and Freshman Academy, he replied, "Not that I know of." Teacher N4C wished the administration would recognize the need for more departmental collaboration, "I would love for somebody to say the science department needs more meetings." Teacher N2B and Teacher N8B both indicated that "sometimes on administrative day or in-service day they make a time for all of us to meet with our [departments]" (Teacher N2B). Apparently, this was not the case for CTE teachers. According to Teacher N5A, "Well, that used to be when we would have in-service we would meet with our departments. But now that we're having PLTs I don't meet with them as much because we usually have other meetings or groups to meet with." Instead, "If somebody has something that's going on we will call a meeting and everybody will sit down at lunch and kind of talk together" (Teacher N1A). Teacher N9C explained that because all CTE teachers had the same lunch the culinary arts teacher would often cook for a small fee and most of them would eat together. Teacher N7B indicated that the special education department also met during lunch, and according to Teacher N2B English did, too. However, Freshman Academy teachers had a separate lunch from the rest of the department. Since Teacher

N2B had her planning period while the Freshman Academy teachers were eating, she would try to meet with them from time to time "to try to connect all that together."

Classroom proximity was the structural resource provided by Principal N that most impacted teachers' abilities to collaborate informally with their peers one-on-one. Nearly every teacher at North mentioned collaborating with someone else whose classroom was nearby. Teacher N3C said about collaborating with other Freshman Academy Algebra 1 teachers, "We just stop by and talk whenever we need." Teacher N5A and Teacher N7B mentioned collaborating with teachers "in passing" (Teacher N5A) or "in the hallway" (Teacher N7B). Because she met with other teachers during class change "about once a week," Teacher N2B said that she always had a bell ringer on which her students could begin working should a collaborative encounter with another teacher run over into the start of class time. Teacher N4C mentioned collaborating often with a nearby math teacher, but regretted not being able to collaborate with other science teachers because she was "isolated" in her wing of the building. Teacher N6A also liked being able to "talk every day" to her Freshman Academy team members located nearby but felt that one reason she was left out of conversations with the other Freshman Academy Algebra 1 teachers was because their classrooms were located close to each other and far away from hers.

Though teachers at North were grateful for what time they had to collaborate, time was a structural resource on which the administration at North had room to improve, especially for departments and teacher-to-teacher collaborations. In regards to PLT meetings, teachers were relatively pleased with the time set aside for those meetings but had strong opinions about the structure of those meetings. This theme is explored next.

**Structure**

When I asked Principal N what he, as an administrator, did that helped the collaborative work groups be successful, he explained that the data coach had designed the PLT meetings. He credited her with structuring the meetings in such a way as to "try to make the teachers feel comfortable." He explained that she created the teams to be small and "knowing who can get along, who don't, and what would make the meetings run the best." Teachers at North liked that PLT meetings were smaller than faculty meetings. The average size of a PLT group was approximately 10 members, but the groups observed for this study consisted of 11 members in PLT N-A, 13 members in PLT N-B, and 12 members in PLT N-C. Principal N believed that "anytime you can get teachers in small groups it gives them a voice" and explained that to be part of the reason for creating PLTs. This was precisely what Teacher N3C and Teacher N5A liked about the smaller sized groups. Teacher N5A added that the smaller group enabled more reserved teachers to "say something." However, Teacher N6A felt that this opportunity was not fully maximized. Wanting to discuss controversial topics such as see-through backpacks, she wondered, "It's a captive audience, and if you've got a captive audience and you've got all these teachers together, why can't we discuss things that are important?"

For Teacher N8B, it was not so much that she liked having a voice as much as she felt that smaller groups were a more practical way of communicating pertinent information to staff members. She explained,

> I would hate to think about just getting handout after handout after handout in faculty meetings, and go here, read this. Because I think that as a faculty, so many

people would not read it, and then would get themselves into a mess and not pay attention to it.

She likened it to how some students need "more one-on-one than others do." She did contended, though, that the smaller groups were more amenable "to get us talking in groups" and "asking questions."

Though teachers liked the small size of PLT groups, they were not particularly fond of how the groups were created. According to Principal N, eight of the nine groups were divided evenly as math groups and English/ELA groups "so you can talk more about how can we help support math if you are not a core math teacher" and likewise for literacy. However, the teachers did not always understand which group they were in or agree with that placement. Teacher N5A believed she was in a literacy-based group. It was not until our interview that she realized there were math and science teachers in her group which was, in fact, designated as a math-based group. Teacher N2B believed that "anybody that's not math is ELA" but then described the math-based groups as "STEM" and said, "We just don't have science or math. It's everybody except science or math grouped together." Teacher N6A gave the same description saying, "English, language arts, and things like cosmetology goes together," yet there was a cosmetology teacher in her group. Teacher N4C disagreed with science teachers studying math-based common core initiatives, "I'm in ELA. That's where my grade is going to come from."

When I asked Principal N how he decided in which group CTE teachers would fall, he explained that teachers were placed in groups that were more applicable to the subjects they taught. He expounded, "If I'm in marketing, we would probably put them in with the ELAs. But if it's a carpentry that's more…auto-mechanics could probably go

into the math." Teacher N9C liked his placement in the math-based PLT, but Teacher N1A agreed with Principal N's logic that she should be in a literacy-based PLT group "because with the DECA program we do so many written projects, and so even the projects we do in class for the kids who aren't doing competition are written, they write out, they come up with ad campaigns and they write paragraphs about why they did that." Yet, she was assigned to a math-based PLT. Such discrepancies created PLT groups with wide-ranging diversity, a characteristic that Teacher N2B felt contributed to the frustration within her team.

The ninth PLT group at North was described by Principal N as "a mixed group." This group met after school for those teachers that taught a fourth block instead of having a plan time. Principal N also described this group as the makeup session for anyone who missed their regularly scheduled meeting. However, neither of these descriptions applied to coaches. When asked if coaches were required to attend PLT meetings, Principal N said, "yes," but later said, "If you are a coach you don't have much time to meet." These variables of accountability and coaching came up often at North. Teacher N4C mentioned not being able to collaborate with the only science teacher located near her "because he's a coach" and "on his planning time he's gone." Teacher N3C also mentioned that one of her Freshman Academy team members was the athletic director, so "he doesn't have to [come to meetings]." Though Teacher N8B described the frustrations that her team members expressed over others' lack of attendance, the culture at North seemed to be that coaches' absences were excused. Furthermore, Teacher N2B described an overall culture lacking in accountability. In one statement she said, "They do make it clear that if we have a department meeting you will be there, which that is helpful. If you

don't come, that is bad." Yet in other statements she said, "Everybody knows the people that aren't doing what they're supposed to do, and they also know that they don't have to."

Teachers at North believed that productive collaboration was "about meeting right" (Teacher N3C). Ultimately, they found this to be dictated by their group's leadership. This theme is discussed next.

**Leadership**

Each PLT group at North was led by an administrator. When I asked Principal N how he chose which administrators to assign to which PLT teams, he replied, "My assistant principal does that. She just says, 'I'll take this group.' I say, 'Well, I'll take whatever's left.'" Thus, the only PLT led by Principal N was the mixed group that met after school and was not observed for this study. The assistant principal tasked with overseeing the Freshman Academy led PLT N-A. The school's data coach, who formerly served as an assistant principal and currently oversaw English department meetings, led PLT N-B. The assistant principal in charge of the vocational building led PLT N-C. Because PLT groups were assigned based on plan times and changed each semester, teachers at North had experienced working with a variety of these administrators and felt strongly about how much these administrators' leadership affected teachers' attitudes toward collaboration.

Teacher N1A attributed the value she found in her current PLT group to her administrator. She described her previous PLT group as follows:

> Before it was just a hassle, and that was because of the approach he took to the meeting. I led that group mostly because he had other things to do—athletic

director. He would email me the topics, and I would read through it and say this is what I got from that. He hindered the group because it was like the least of his concern. It was a burden for him to have to deal with us at all.

In contrast, she liked that her current administrator "is much better about providing information and getting us to discuss things." According to Teacher N1A, the current administrator always had "a focus," would "listen to us if we have concerns," and was "pretty good at refocusing and drawing attention back to the current topic" when group members went off on a tangent. Teacher N5A added,

> I really like [her] not just as a person but as an administrator because she's very [makes a chopping motion with her hands]. I think she's very good, organized. She's going to tell you what she needs to tell you, and then she's going to let you go on your way because she knows you've got plenty of other things to do. She's not going to burn the time just to burn the time, and I think people appreciate that. She's a very good listening person.

Teacher N6A also worked with this administrator in the Freshman Academy and referred to her as "the best principal I have ever worked for" because "she is very hands on involved." Though the administrator did not attend every Freshman Academy meeting, Teacher N6A liked how thorough and diligent she was, "[She] has always gotten back with us and answered every question that we have sent to her." In regards to Freshman Academy teams, Teacher N3C echoed this sentiment.

The teachers in PLT N-B were equally fond of their leader. Teacher N8B credited her with easing fear and frustration over new initiatives.

> I feel like I have a competent person leading the discussions. I would not want to be in an administrator's group that is not well-spoken and cannot put the information across. And we do have some that cannot. [She] is very good at what she does, and she's very thorough. And she also is very to the point, and so I feel like I'm getting what I need from the PLTs.

Teacher N2B praised her for "trying to make everything as positive as possible," "encouraging everybody," "trying to get everybody involved," and "allowing everybody to speak, and because no one's getting talked over, nobody gets really ratcheted up."

Teachers in PLT N-C were not so positive. Teacher N3C compared her group's administrator to past leaders.

> Each person does it a little differently. I've been with two different administrators now. One is very thorough, goes over everything, is very knowledgeable about what is going on, and the other one may not always be as involved in that aspect because they are not as involved in the planning of the PLTs. They are more involved in other aspects of the school, so they are kind of just reading off the piece of paper sometimes.

She liked that her leader had an agenda, but felt that meetings needed "a little more structure." Teacher N4C agreed,

> It depends which administrator you get, because I've had two and I've heard about all of them. Some are very, very good and stick to the plan. Others don't. Others are like, let's just get in here, get out, you know. And others are like let's talk about this.

She described the meetings as "a class. You go and you take it and you come home." She believed "a PLT should be more than that." Specifically, she disliked the lack of togetherness she experienced in the group, "We're scattered every time, and we don't even talk to each other. We've never been introduced. It's not a collaboration, and we need a collaboration. We are so disconnected." She concluded, "I love him, but I'm just going to say it. I wish he would not be such a coach. I wish he would facilitate the meeting or allow somebody who can facilitate the meeting facilitate it."

Though Principal N did not lead any of the observed PLT groups, his interview provided glimpses of the leadership that he provided to his PLT group as well as the PLT process as a whole. He indicated that the administrative team met every Monday to "set up what we are going to discuss in PLTs." This ensured relative consistency which was observed across teams in regard to content covered. However, when I asked Principal N how he showed his support to the collaborative work groups, he seemed unclear of other aspects of leadership from which the teams might benefit when he responded, "A lot of times like, it will be, if they are doing something in class, they tell me. I'll try to be there." He then proceeded to give two examples of teachers having guest speakers or completing special projects with their classes to which he was invited to witness.

The final structural resource that teachers at North High School discussed was that of decision-making authority. The number of decisions made by teachers at North was very limited. This final theme is presented next.

**Decisions**

At least twice during his interview, Principal N spoke about how important it was to have small PLT meetings "so [teachers] could have a voice." In fact, he stated that to

be “one reason we went to the PLT.” Yet when I asked Principal N what kind of decisions collaborative work groups were allowed to make, it was apparent that the faculty of North as a whole was not granted much decision-making authority. He mentioned surveying the faculty at times to “ask them how they feel about some situation or if they can come up with a better idea for discipline, and if we get a good idea we go with it.” As for PLT groups, the administrative leader of the group chose the date and time, and the only decisions teachers were allowed to make pertained to how they chose to complete required assignments. Teacher N6A concurred, “We don’t make any decisions.” Teacher N4C added, “We’ve never been asked to. We are just told what to do.” Teacher N5A did concede that teachers were able to give input, but also agreed, “I don’t think we really have any decisions to make.”

However, teachers did discuss making decisions within other collaborative settings. Though Principal N was unaware of whether or not Freshman Academy teams made decisions, Teacher N3C, Teacher N6A, and Teacher N8B all gave examples of the types of decisions they made in their groups. They mentioned “easy” decisions such as “the pace and the curriculum that we’re covering” (Teacher N6A), “who gets which week for projects” (Teacher N6A), and selecting students for six-weeks awards. They also mentioned making more difficult decisions involving grading philosophies, discipline philosophies, and other “sensitive matters” (Teacher N8B).

Teacher N2B and Teacher N7B discussed decisions they made with their departments. Teacher N7B described the difference between easily handling “repetitive” discipline issues and struggling to find solutions for more unique discipline issues involving problems students face at home. Teacher N2B said that her group struggled

with any decision involving a deadline or increased workload. When her group could not come to a consensus, she deferred to an administrator to be "the last say."

Teacher N1A and Teacher N4C described similar situations collaborating with their peers. Teacher N4C indicated it was easy to decide which materials were appropriate to share but more difficult to decide where teachers' expectation levels should be for their students. Teacher N1A also mentioned how difficult it was to agree upon issues in which people "will get much more invested," such as those that affect students, jobs, or teachers' programs of study.

**Summary of Research Question 2**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? For collaborative work groups to be successful, certain structural resources must be provided by administration. The teachers and principal at North High School spoke about four structural resources—time for teachers to meet, structure of collaborative meetings, leadership within collaborative work groups, and the decisions that teachers are allowed to make within collaborative work groups. Unlike Research Question 1, the observed groups held varying perspectives in regards to the structural resources that were available to them. Most members of all three PLT groups seemed to agree that they were given adequate time to meet, but the arrangement of classrooms to accommodate Freshman Academy team proximity split departments making it difficult for some teachers to collaborate with their same-subject peers. All three groups liked the small size of PLT groups but were not particularly fond of how teachers were assigned to teams or how little accountability seemed to exist. All three groups also agreed that their decision-

making authority was virtually nonexistent and that the value they found in their PLT meeting was a direct result of the administrator that was assigned to their group. Consequently, members of PLT N-A and PLT N-B found greater value in their meetings than did members of PLT N-C. Research Question 3 will be addressed next.

### Research Question 3: North High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 3: What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of three collaborative work group observations and artifact collection. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at North High School are referred to as Group N-A, Group N-B, and Group N-C. Principal N referred to these groups as PLTs.

The observation protocol for this study included seven elements of effective collaborative work groups—initial commonality, discussion, unified norms, collective ingenuity, deprivatization of practice, new commonality, and resources supplied (see Appendix E). In each observation, frequency counts were collected to identify the number of items on the observation protocol for which evidence was observed during the group meeting. These numbers are referred to as the Group Frequency. As a reference, the maximum possible frequency for each component was also noted.

Additionally, frequency counts were collected to identify the extent to which individual group members contributed to the collaborative process. The frequency counts for interview participants are labeled by teacher and indicate the number of incidences in which the teacher showed any indication of a particular component on the observation protocol. To quantify which teachers were more active, teachers were marked as many

times as necessary in any given category. The results for Group N-A are provided in Table 13 and are discussed first.

**Group N-A**

Group N-A had the highest relative frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. Evidence showed that this group had an explicit purpose and that all group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. However, none of the teachers interviewed exhibited their highest contributions in this category. Teacher N5A and Teacher N6A both contributed the most in the category of Discussion where they demonstrated suspension of feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioning without predetermined answers, listening to one another, and maintaining professional topics. Teacher N1A's greatest contributions were in the category of Resources Supplied where she demonstrated competence, a caring attitude, and respect for her fellow group members.

Group N-A demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms. There was no explicit definition of norms, monitoring of norms, or reviewing of norms during the observation of this meeting. Members did not express a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose, nor was there any evidence that members of this group were held accountable to one another. While each teacher's contributions in this category were nonexistent, they were also nonexistent in the categories of Collective Ingenuity and New Commonality. None of the teachers interviewed in this group provided creative solutions to problems posed within their group or use a shared vocabulary that was evident in the group.

Table 13

*Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-A*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N1A | N5A | N6A | | |
| Initial Commonality | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 1 | 20 | 15 | 4 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 6 | 25 | 19 | 17 | 43 |

During the observation of Group N-A, one artifact was collected. Artifact N1 was a description of an upcoming assessment change to a new test created by The Partnership for Assessment of Readiness for College and Careers [PARCC]. This nine-page artifact was titled "No Walk in the PARCC*!!!" and passed out to group members one single-sided page at a time, each time followed by an opportunity for questions and discussion. This document demonstrated the purpose of the meeting to explore the PARCC assessment. Though this group was designated as a Math PLT group, it is worth noting that the document included both math and literacy topics because, according to the leader

of the group, both topics applied to group members. The results for Group N-B are provided in Table 14 and discussed next.

**Group N-B**

Group N-B had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. Evidence showed that this group had an explicit purpose and that group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose as well as a similar belief system. Teacher N7B exhibited her highest contributions in this category and that of discussion with by exhibiting that shared commitment to the purpose and listening to one another. Teacher N2B's greatest contributions were in the category of Discussion where she demonstrated suspension of feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioning without predetermined answers, listening to one another, and maintaining professional topics. Teacher N8B's contributed most to the category of Resources Supplied where she demonstrated competence, confidence, and respect for her fellow group members, was supportive of them, and treated them as equals.

Table 14

*Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-B*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N2B | N7B | N8B | | |
| Initial Commonality | 2 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Discussion | 63 | 1 | 4 | 6 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 12 | 0 | 8 | 8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 78 | 2 | 14 | 20 | 43 |

Group N-B demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms. There was no explicit definition of norms, monitoring of norms, or reviewing of norms during the observation of this meeting. Members did not express a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose, nor was there any evidence that members of this group were held accountable to one another. While each teacher's contributions in this category were nonexistent, they were also nonexistent in the categories of Collective Ingenuity and New Commonality. None of the teachers interviewed in this group provided creative solutions to problems posed within their

group or made reference to shared memories, stories, or experiences in contrast to other group members.

During the observation of Group N-B, one artifact was collected. Artifact N2 was a description of an upcoming assessment change to a new test created by PARCC. This five-page artifact was titled "No Walk in the PARCC*!!!" and passed out to group members as a double-sided, stapled packet. This document demonstrated the purpose of the meeting to explore the PARCC assessment. This group was designated as an ELA/Literacy PLT group and contained no math or science teachers. Thus, Artifact N2 contained only information regarding the literacy aspect of the PARCC assessment. The results for Group N-C are provided in Table 15 and discussed next.

**Group N-C**

Group N-C had the highest relative frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. Evidence showed that this group had an explicit purpose and that group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. Teacher N9C exhibited his highest contributions in this category and that of discussion with by exhibiting that shared commitment to the purpose and listening to one another. Teacher N3C and Teacher N4C's greatest contributions were in the category of Discussion where they questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and maintained professional topics.

Table 15

*Observation Frequency Counts for North High School Group N-C*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | N3C | N4C | N9C | | |
| Initial Commonality | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 8 | 5 | 1 | 4 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 43 |

Group N-C demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms, Collective Ingenuity, Deprivatization of Practice, and New Commonality. There was no explicit definition of norms, monitoring of norms, or reviewing of norms during the observation of this meeting, nor was there any jointparticipation in research, creative solutions to problems, agreed upon actions, joint development of curriculum, joint creation of artifacts, joint evaluation of previous artifacts and/or actions, or joint evaluation of student learning. Likewise, members did not discuss observations of one another in action or exhibit a shared vocabulary, memory, style, or communal set of resources. While each teacher's contributions in these

categories were nonexistent, they were also nonexistent in the category of Resources Supplied. In contrast to other group members, none of the teachers interviewed in this group demonstrated competence, confidence, or support for their group members during this observation.

During the observation of Group N-C, one artifact was collected. Artifact N3 was a description of an upcoming assessment change to a new test created by PARCC. This nine-page artifact was titled "No Walk in the PARCC*!!!" and passed out to group members as one single-sided, stapled packet. This document demonstrated the purpose of the meeting to explore the PARCC assessment. Though this document contained both math and literacy topics, this group was designated as a Math PLT group and none of the literacy topics were discussed.

**Cross-Group Analysis at North High School**

Each of the three observed groups had the highest possible or relative frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. Evidence showed each group had an explicit purpose and that group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. Each group also demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms. There was no explicit definition of norms, monitoring of norms, or reviewing of norms during the observations of any of these groups. Additionally, Group N-C demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the categories of Collective Ingenuity, Deprivatization of Practice, and New Commonality. During the observation of this group, members did not discuss observations of one another in action, exhibit a shared vocabulary, memory, style, or communal set of resource, or demonstrate any joint participation in research, creative solutions to problems, agreed upon actions, joint

development of curriculum, joint creation of artifacts, joint evaluation of previous artifacts and/or actions, or joint evaluation of student learning. Though Group N-A and Group N-B did have contributions in these categories, they were limited to creative solutions to problems, shared vocabulary or memories, and keeping discussions focused on practice not persons.

In each of these of these groups, an artifact titled ""No Walk in the PARCC*!!!" was passed out to group members, but in varying formats. Members of Group N-A received their information one page at a time, which allowed group members to slowly process and discuss the information as it was received. This was also the only group that discussed both the math and literacy topics pertaining to the PARCC assessment. Members of Group N-B and Group N-C both received their information all at once and were able to flip through the packet at their convenience. The only topics discussed were those aligning with the designated topic of their PLT group, literacy for Group N-B and math for Group N-C. The math information included sample problems that could be present on the PARCC assessment, and upon receiving their packets members of Group N-C could be seen and heard working and discussing those problems throughout the meeting regardless of what whole-group discussion was occurring. Research Question 4 will be addressed next.

### Research Question 4: North High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 4: How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? Data

collected for this question came in the form of three collaborative work group observations and nine teacher interviews.

Excerpts from teacher interviews regarding teachers' attitudes toward their work were grouped into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. General responses were analyzed first and a percentage was given indicating the percent of responses that were positive, neutral, and negative. Second, only those responses about collaboration were analyzed and a percentage was given indicating the percent of positive, negative, and neutral responses that pertained to collaboration.

Responses are given for each observed group. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at North High School are referred to as Group N-A, Group N-B, and Group N-C. Each group's total frequency count from the observation protocol is used as a quantitative indication of the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met. Results are illustrated in Table 16.

The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was highest in Group N-B, but the group with the greatest attitude toward their work was Group N-A. The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was lowest in Group N-C, which was also the group with the most negative attitude toward their work. It is worth noting, however, that Group N-B and Group N-C demonstrated similar attitudes toward their work with Group N-C being only slightly more negative than Group N-B. Overall, less than 15% of the excerpts about teachers' attitudes toward their work were in reference to collaboration.

Table 16

*Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at North High School*

| | Positive Attitude | Neutral Attitude | Negative Attitude | Total Excerpts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group N-A (Frequency Count = 17) | | | | |
| General Responses | 16 (62%) | ---- | 10 (38%) | 26 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 2 (13%) | ---- | 0 (0%) | 2 (8%) |
| Group N-B (Frequency Count = 20) | | | | |
| General Responses | 17 (49%) | ---- | 18 (51%) | 35 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 5 (29%) | ---- | 0 (0%) | 5 (14%) |
| Group N-C (Frequency Count = 11) | | | | |
| General Responses | 16 (47%) | ---- | 18 (53%) | 34 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 3 (19%) | ---- | 0 (0%) | 3 (9%) |

**Summary of Analysis for North High School**

Teachers' attitudes toward their work at North High School were influenced by seven variables: the support they received from their administrative team, their perception of the administration's consistency and values, the behaviors of their coworkers, their experiences with teacher collaboration, the internal feelings they had about teaching, and the external forces that affected their career. Principal N supported the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups by providing a time for teachers to collaborate but failed to provide structure or consistent leadership for those groups. Furthermore, none of those groups were given any decision-making authority.

Finally, there was a wide range of groups' adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups, but the extent of that adherence did not seem to have a convincing effect on teachers' attitudes toward their work. Data analysis for West High School is provided in Chapter 6.

# CHAPTER 6

## ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS : WEST HIGH SCHOOL

Chapter 6 is the third of four chapters detailing the qualitative and quantitative data and analysis both within and across three cases. This multi-site case study was designed to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)
2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Findings at each site were based on interviews, observations, and artifacts. Each collaborative work group was observed once, and from that group teachers were selected for interviews until saturation was achieved. Principals were also interviewed. Artifacts included handouts from observed group meetings and documents created as a result of observed group meetings. For a complete review of data collection methodologies, please see Chapter 3.

The three schools that served as cases for this study were located in a southeastern state. All three were public high schools providing instruction in grades 9-12. A rich thick description of each school's specific context and demographics is provided in the respective chapter so that the reader can more easily transfer the study's findings to his or her own context and experience from a similar sample (Herriott & Firestone, 1983; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Patton, 2002).

## West High School

West High School is located in a rural district covering 400 square miles and consisting of five high schools, each of which serves less than 1000 students. The district is divided nearly in half by a major interstate. West is located approximately four miles north of the interstate in a small city with a population of approximately 6,000 people across 10.6 square miles. The drive from the interstate to the high school passes through the city's historic district along the Main Street (pseudonym). Incorporated in 1891, Main Street still shows evidence of the city's origins with some of its original brick buildings used today to house antique shops, flower shops, restaurants, and city hall. Other buildings still standing from the city's early years include a department store, theater, and drug store complete with soda fountain. Looking south of the buildings, one can glimpse peeks of the city's historic Victorian homes built around the turn of the twentieth century that have been well-maintained or restored to display their original grandeur. All in all, this neighborhood contains over 100 buildings that have been placed on the National Register of Historic Places for their architectural and historical significance.

West High School is located approximately three blocks past the historic district and a stretch of road consisting of late twentieth century architecture including car dealerships, service stations, and a fast food restaurant. In stark contrast to these surroundings, the current building housing West was built in 1993 and consists of three structures connected by a small covered walkway. The only unlocked door at the entrance to the school allowed visitors access to the main office. The secretary electronically controlled access to rest of the school building. Immediately outside of the office was a lobby and wide but short hallway with student bathrooms, an auditorium, and two long, parallel hallways containing mostly academic classrooms, computer labs, and the school counselor's office. At the end of the entrance hallway to the school was a door leading to the covered walkway. At the end of the walkway was a second building consisting of a cafeteria, gymnasium, band room, and a few classrooms used for career and technical education courses such as Family and Consumer Science. Adjacent to this building was the third structure that housed the library. Though the main office exuded a casual atmosphere where students, parents, teachers, secretaries, and principals seemed comfortable with one another, the overall atmosphere of the school was orderly. Students were rarely in the halls except during class changes at which point the principal and assistant principal maintained a visible presence and kept a watchful eye over student behavior.

**Student Demographics and Academic Progress**

West High School is the second smallest of five high schools in the school district. Though the school claims to have the capacity for 700 students, at the time of this study the student population at West was only 340, 84% who were Caucasian, 2%

who were Hispanic or Latino, 13% who were Black or African American, and 1% who were Asian. Sixty-five percent of the students were considered economically disadvantaged, and 16% were students with disabilities. The school had a graduation rate of 92.5%, average daily attendance rate of 94.3%, and average ACT composite score of 17.0. During the 2013-2014 school year, West trailed average district and state achievement scores on end-of-course (EOC) assessments for Algebra 1, English 1, and English 3. West exceeded average district and state achievement scores on EOC assessments for Algebra 2, US History, and Chemistry. On Biology 1 and English 2 EOC assessment, West exceeded average state achievement scores but not average district achievement scores. West met the goals set forth for the school by the state for academic achievement in Algebra 2 and graduation rate, but failed to meet those goals for Algebra 1, English 2, and English 3. West also failed to meet both of its gap closure goals for all students' versus economically disadvantaged students' literacy and numeracy achievement. The school had an overall value added composite score of 4 out of 5 for exceeding expected amount of student growth.

**The Principal**

The principal of West High School has been in education for twelve years. He began his career as a classroom teacher of physical education and lifetime wellness in another district. During that time, he served as department head for six years and an athletic coach for most of his career. He taught at two schools in that district and then one in another state before coming to West. However, he never served as an administrator before taking on the principalship at West, which he had held for the past three years at the time of this study. He did not originally apply for this position but rather for an

assistant principalship at another school in the district. During his interview, he was asked to apply for the principal position at West. He did so and was consequently offered the job. As secondary supervisor for the district, the former principal at West served as his immediate superior and was still very much involved in any decisions made by the current principal. For the purposes of this study, the principal of West High School will henceforth be referred to as Principal W. Similarly, teachers at West will be coded by school (W), number (1-7), and collaborative work group (A-D).

## Research Question 1: West High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? Data for this question were collected from 7 teacher interviews (30% of the teaching staff) and 1 counselor interview from the school's four collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as teams. Of these participants, the school counselor and one teacher (Teacher W5C) were alumni of West. Additionally, the school counselor and three teachers (Teacher W2D, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W6A) worked together previously at a nearby high school in an adjacent district. Together, the eight interview participants had an average of 17 years of experience and a tenure of 4 years at West. Because of the small faculty size at West, no departments had designated department heads. Thus, none of the teachers interviewed for this study held a formal leadership role at West. More information regarding interview participants is provided in Table 17.

Table 17

*West High School Interview Participant Demographics*

| CWG* | Participant Code | Gender | Subject | Teaching Experience+ | Tenure at South+ |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A | Teacher W4A | Female | Mathematics | 22 | 3 |
| | Teacher W6A | Male | Science | 8 | 3 |
| B | Teacher W3B | Female | Special Education | 8 | 1 |
| | Teacher W7B | Male | Fine Arts | 36 | 10 |
| C | Teacher W5C | Male | English | 9 | 1 |
| D | Counselor W1D | Male | Counselor | 12 | 9 |
| | Teacher W1D | Female | Special Education | 18 | 7 |
| | Teacher W2D | Female | English | 21 | 1 |

** Collaborative Work Group*

*+ Measured in Years*

For this stage of data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 1 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at three major themes, Nature of the Leadership, Nature of the Coworkers, Nature of the Work. The code mapping process for Research Question 1 is shown in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

**Nature of the Leadership**

Over the last three years, the teachers at West have undergone a major transition. Their former principal—who Counselor W1D described as "a tough act to follow"—was promoted to secondary supervisor for the district and replaced by Principal W who was unknown to the faculty and had no administrative experience. Simultaneously, the state adopted a new teacher evaluation model and began transitioning to Common Core standards at the high school level, both moves that were met with great apprehension among teachers both at West and across the state. Teacher W5C described conversations with his mother—who also taught at West—about her anxiety over a principal's presence in her classroom. Under the former evaluation system, veteran teachers were not subject to the same observation protocols and requirements as were novice teachers. When Principal W observed her using the new formal and more frequent evaluation system, Teacher W5C said that his mother "gets freaked out [because] she's just not used to anyone coming in there." He went on to allege, "There's not many teachers in this school that are real open to Common Core." According to Counselor W1D, this overall transition period motivated nine of the school's 23 teachers to retire over the course of two years.

This transition influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work in both positive and negative ways. Teacher W7B credited Principal W with creating an environment in which he was "more satisfied with this than anything I've had." Teacher W6A concurred, saying, "This is my favorite place I've been so far." Teacher W3B also credited Principal W with being the single most influential factor in her attitude toward her work but because of the frustration she experienced in her interactions with him. She described this first year at West as "hard" and explained, "I've felt too many negatives." Under the overarching theme of leadership, teachers' attitudes toward their work at West were specifically influenced by their perceptions of administrative competence, support, and values, as well as their relationship with Principal W. Each of these variables is explored in more detail in the sections that follow.

***Perceived Administrative Competence***

Counselor W1D described an "edginess feeling" among the teachers at West since Principal W had taken over and explained that they were "still trying to figure out the trust factor with him." He attributed most of this apprehension to the new evaluation model from the state saying, "They're trying to figure out his evaluation methods. A lot of them don't understand. They're trying to figure out how to get the scores they're supposed to get and what he's wanting from them." Though Teacher W4A did not directly say that she did not trust Principal W's evaluation methods, she did indicate her preference to be observed by the assistant principal because he was a former math teacher. She went on to say, "[The assistant principal] really has great input. If you're doing something that he thinks we need to tweak a little bit, he has been in the classroom before and teaching math before. He can give some really good insight."

Teacher W7B's greatest concern was about Principal W's implementation and understanding of Common Core. He explained,

> I think they're trying to do things that probably aren't intended to do because I've talked to other band directors, and they're not being pressured into having math and writing in their classes like we are here. I'm not sure that that's, I mean, I know you can look up on the web and you find a few things on music classes in Common Core but it's more of gearing you toward what you're already doing anyway.

This perceived misunderstanding was frustrating to Teacher W7B because he felt that students were "getting this in other classes" and "to make them read so many minutes a week and write so many minutes a week" detracted from the time he had to prepare students for band performances. He felt that Principal W did not have "an understanding" about either his class or Common Core, much less the influence that one might reasonably have upon the other.

Teacher W5C alluded to a lack of communication concerning school policies, saying, "I'm not necessarily 100% schooled in how everything is operated here. There's a whole lot of things that start out in the front office and for some reason or another never really get effectively articulated to everyone, especially a new teacher." He gave examples of information he would like to know such as ACT dates and final exam schedules and specifically described his frustration regarding school-wide plans for a statewide Common Core pilot exam. The exam date had been set but was never communicated to him. School had been cancelled for an entire week due to inclement weather, and upon his return he was informed that the test was scheduled for the

following day. Because he was unaware of the date, he felt he had not properly arranged his lessons to adequately prepare his students for the exam.

Teacher W1D and Teacher W3B each expressed concerns about Principal W's handling of special education issues. When Teacher W3B was hired, she was told West would be following a full inclusion model, but that was not the case. Furthermore, she felt that Principal W did not fully understand the legal importance of following an Individualized Education Program (IEP). She attended regularly scheduled district-wide special education meetings—of which she was uncertain if Principal W was aware—and felt confident about her knowledge of special education but felt she had not been "heard" by Principal W when she expressed changes that needed to be made at West. Teacher W1D went on to explain her frustration with being caught "in the middle" between Principal W and her special education supervisor. Because she answered directly to both, it was frustrating for her when she received conflicting directives from each of them. In addition to questioning Principal W's competence in these specific circumstances, teachers also questioned Principal W's perceived overemphasis of some of his values. This variable is explored next.

***Administrative Values***

When asked what was important to Principal W, Teacher W3B, Teacher W4A, and Counselor W1D each answered, "the kids." Counselor W1D elaborated,

> There is no doubt in my mind that he has a heart for the kids. He loves the kids. You can tell that. He wants them to succeed. He projects that on all of us. He demands a lot from us as educators to bring the best out in our kids.

Both Teacher W3B and Teacher W4A concurred that "the success of our school as far as the scores and all that" (Teacher W3B) were also important to Principal W, but Teacher W4A felt Principal W placed the school before the children in order of priority.

Every other interview participant also spoke to the emphasis that Principal W placed on learning. Teacher W1D used this knowledge to convince Principal W to permit a fundraiser selling chocolate. She explained to him that she had "learned in an in-service that if you present chocolate while you're teaching something, then the next time when they go to recall it if you give them a piece of chocolate it recalls faster" and believed this is why he agreed to allow the fundraiser.

Teacher W6A gave an example of Principal W's emphasis on improving literacy. Teacher W6A explained that last school year Principal W implemented a reading program during the school's fifteen-minute homeroom period. When state testing showed improvement, Principal W then extended the homeroom period to 26 minutes "to have even more extended reading time." Teacher W6A believed this demonstrated that "[Principal W] wants to see students grow. He wants to see gains in all students."

Teacher W5C appreciated the value that Principal W placed on learning saying, "It seems like he's trying to change things for the better, trying to introduce new practices," but Teacher W1D and Teacher W7B worried that Principal W overemphasized "rules, order, and rigor." Teacher W1D believed that celebrating student birthdays with monthly in-class parties—especially for those students who otherwise would not have their birthdays recognized or "would not have means of which to celebrate birthdays"—was an important way to "make it fun" and build relationships with students because "if they like me, they are going to perform better for me. If they

perform better for me, ultimately that is helping them." She described this as a practice she "would have been able to do in previous schools" for students who were caught up with all of their work. Though she appreciated Principal W's efforts to "protect instructional time" and "get rid of disruptions," she felt he sometimes went "too far the other direction." She concluded, "Every now and then, especially when you work so hard, you need a little bit of a breather or a relaxer, and I do not know that the kids get that much here."

Teacher W7B had a similar belief about unrealistic expectations, specifically in regard to Principal W's rule of "you've got to teach them from bell to bell." Teacher W7B explained that this was impractical in his particular setting because "you've got to give them time to put their instruments up and clean." He also believed that this transition time at the end of class provided an ideal opportunity to work with students one-on-one. He said about Principal W, "He likes things in one way and doesn't really like any variation from that."

Teacher W3B added that she felt there was "a control thing" with Principal W. At her previous schools, administrators "made a big deal" out of faculty members' pregnancies and weddings which she believed created a "family oriented" environment. She interpreted Principal W's failure to celebrate such occasions as his not wanting "that closeness." Though teachers worried about Principal W's rigidity, several of them were pleased with the support they felt from him. This variable is discussed next.

### *Administrative Support*

Teacher W1D, Teacher W5C, and Teacher W6A praised Principal W for the support they felt from him regarding student discipline. This support was a strong influence on Teacher W6A's attitude toward his work. He explained,

> I really like it here. Nobody does it like we do it. Structure and discipline is taken care of outside of the teacher. At the highest levels they make sure to take care of that for us, and when they do that it makes my job very easy.

Teacher W5C agreed that "this school's discipline is extraordinary," to which he gave Principal W the credit. He believed this was especially "awesome" because of the background and socioeconomic level of the students. "We've got, I'm not sure, 80% on free or reduced lunch? But kids tuck in their shirttails. It's crazy!" Teacher W2D concurred,

> I do not have a lot of discipline problems here. You are backed by administration. They do not tolerate it. They deal with it. I do not have to. That is nice. I have never been in a situation quite like that before.

However, she also noted a change in that policy over the last couple of months. She liked knowing that "for the most part, the kids have been required to be responsible for their actions" and teachers were not "fussed at more than [the students] were" when they took a student to the office. Though she believed "to some extent it seems to be that way more recently here," she also felt that she had "been able to do my job better since I've been here than anywhere I've been."

Additionally, Teacher W2D felt supported by Principal W instructionally. "They

make sure that we have opportunities to go to the in-services, the Common Core stuff." She explained that Principal W approached her and inquired which summer dates would work best for her to attend Common Core training. Upon responding, "[Principal W] took care of it for me." She liked that she had "already been signed up and I didn't have to do it."

Teacher W3B did not feel as supported by Principal W as these other teachers asserted. Though she taught Resource classes, she also served as an inclusion teacher and case manager. Because of this, her role in the discipline process was different from that of the other teachers interviewed. She never mentioned sending students to the office to be disciplined but instead spoke about her need to be included in the disciplining of students on her caseload. She explained,

> If they're in trouble, I feel like I need to be told, and I've always been told. Like if I had an issue with a student, the principal would say, 'Hey, this is your student. You need to get down here,' that kind of thing. Whereas here, it's not really looked at as that's very important.

She did, however, note that "it's gotten better" but lamented the frustrating experience she had asking Principal W to include her in that process. These and other variables had an impact on teachers' relationship with Principal W. This final variable is discussed next.

***Relationship with Administrator***

Counselor W1D believed that a new principal coupled with a new evaluation system had led to a "tense" mood at West and explained, "There just feels like a heaviness has kind of set in over our school right now as far as morale." Because of the

time he spent working with Principal W over the last three summers, he ascertained that he had a better opportunity to get to know Principal W than perhaps the teachers had. Consequently, he felt he had a good relationship with Principal W and placed his trust in Principal W's leadership. He went on to describe a "barrier" that seemed to exist between Principal W and some of the teachers at West, though,

> I think there's some teachers that they have their way of doing things, and they feel like it's working. I think when somebody comes in and says, "Hey we're going to do it my way," and that's it, I think there's that barrier there. I think there's a lot of them that feel that way, and a lot of them have not been able to cross [that barrier] where he's concerned. (Counselor W1D)

Teacher W3B described some of her experiences that corroborated Counselor W1D's thoughts.

> I've always—both schools I was at—sent a list of my kids and said these are my kids. Please let me know if there's concerns or issues if I can help. I sent an email saying, 'This is my caseload. Please, just make me aware if you can when you can.' (I was told by the school psychologist to do it, too.) He took the email as a directive, kind of like I was being directive at him to do this. He kind of jumped me, really jumped me pretty hard, in his office and still didn't understand the email. Came up here to my room, and he's gotten onto me in front of kids. And my kids sense it, and they see it. And at first they saw it, and it's gotten better. But for a long time, the kids would be like, "Why does he treat you like that?" And I'm like, "What are you talking about?" And I was just trying to say,

hey, I want to be made aware of anything my kids are going through, and I need to be their advocate. He said that that was not on the top of his priority list.

She went on to describe a separate incident in which she changed a student's schedule to align with the student's IEP. According to Teacher W3B, she discussed the move with Principal W, the school counselor, and "everybody" involved before making the change. Principal W "came back—realizing what I did—didn't remember talking to me, and was like, 'You don't move these kids schedules without my permission.'" She indicated that she put a lot of value in having a good relationship with her principal, felt that she had tried to show that to Principal W, and hoped he did not think she thought "bad about him." Nonetheless, these incidents and other "stuff like that" led her to feel "bullied and mistreated."

Teacher W4A felt that Principal W had been "very good" to her but explained that teachers were "afraid to say what we think" in front of Principal W. When I asked her why she thought that was, she answered, "Because you don't know what's going to happen if you make him mad." She then went on to describe an incident that had occurred at a faculty meeting in which a teacher had offered an opposing suggestion to a topic Principal W had raised, "You could hear it in his tone, and you see this red come up his neck. Time to back off." She indicated that since then teachers were leery to bring up "things that we know would cause that."

Attitudes toward the leadership at West were fairly consistent across all four observed groups. Though some teachers were pleased with the support they received from Principal W, many teachers described a lack of trust in Principal W's leadership. Both their positive and negative feelings toward Principal W were strong contributors to

the attitudes they felt toward their work. Other contributing factors included the nature of the teachers' coworkers at West. This theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Coworkers**

At West High School, teachers' interactions with their peers were an important contributor to their attitudes toward their work. Teacher W2D stated, "It's always nice when you get along with the people you work with. It makes coming to work a lot more fun." Specifically, teacher's attitudes toward their work were influenced by coworker behaviors and collaboration. Each of these variables are explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

***Coworker Behaviors***

Nearly every teacher interviewed at West used words like "good" or "great" to describe their coworkers and their relationships with those coworkers. Teacher W1D and Counselor W1D both felt that there was a "family" atmosphere at West. Counselor W1D went on to describe the personal friendships he had with some of his colleagues. Teacher W2D and Teacher W4A took turns preparing lunch and sharing it with one another from week to week. They both referenced "joking" and "cutting up" with their peers. Teacher W4A added, "The people I work with are very nice," and Teacher W3B concurred. Especially important to Teacher W4A was the help she received from her peers when she first came to West. She concluded, "Everybody just kind of took me in."

Teacher W5C believed the small size of West was a contributing factor in the strong relationships found among staff members. He observed,

> I think every teacher knows each other, me probably being the least just because I haven't been here. I've gotten the feeling that they're all real comfortable with

> each other. They're not walking around on eggshells or worried about what someone else is going to think. So, I think everyone's pretty friendly with one another.

Teacher W2D made a similar statement, "You are not sitting on eggshells or anything like that," as did Teacher W4A, "You [don't] have to worry about hurting anybody's feelings." However, Teacher W3B and Teacher W1D disagreed with Teacher W5C saying, "You don't even really know about everybody," (Teacher W3B) and, "I don't know as many of the staff members as I used to" (Teacher W1D).

More so than the size of the school, though, was the impact that teachers' time together had on their relationships. Teacher W6A spoke about the "preexisting" relationships and "rapport" he had with his peers before coming to West, and Teacher W2D noted, "Most of them I have known for years." Teacher W4A credited lunchtime with helping build relationships with other teachers, while Teacher W3B believed the three days she spent with the other two special education teachers over the summer helped the three of them become "pretty close." Because this was Teacher W5C's first year at West, he felt he had not had enough time yet to build those relationships. He explained that he was "working on it, building it, building that trust" and trying to "prove" himself. Teacher W1D believed that her professional responsibilities outside of the building during the school day were also the reason she did not know her peers as well now as she once did. Teacher W7B felt that he knew all of the teachers and had a good relationship with them, but complained about the isolation that he felt being located in a separate building—to which he referred as "the land of Oz"—from most of his peers, "I just don't have a lot of time to rub elbows and just talk about teacher things a lot."

Teacher W6A spoke at length about the professionalism of his colleagues. He felt the faculty at West expressed the highest level of professionalism of any of the schools at which he had previously worked. He described this professionalism as a cultural expectation at West,

> The people here hold themselves to higher standards all the time, because it's an expectation. It's here culturally. There's more people wearing shirt and tie, [even at] the end of the year. People take their job seriously. It's not always about just being here to get a check and handle the kids. It's about you're here for a purpose and trying to accomplish that in the classroom.

Teacher W3B and Teacher W5C were the only two teachers who spoke of negative interactions with their peers, both of which were due to philosophical differences. Teacher W5C described himself as a "supporter of education reform" and indicated this had "kind of been an issue" with some of his colleagues "who are satisfied with the status quo." As an alumni of West, he noticed that "there's still a lot of the same things that we do here that we did whenever I was in school." He felt West was "behind" and described the culture as "not progressive." He mostly believed this to be an issue with the "older teachers," one of which taught in the room next to him. "He constantly talks about how many years of experience he has teaching. That, I guess in his mind, makes him a great teacher, which I think experience does help you. You know, again, hopefully we're all still learning about better ways to do things."

Teacher W3B replaced one of the many retiring teachers at West. During the previous teacher's tenure, the faculty at West had become accustomed to her way of managing special education. As a result, Teacher W3B felt that she had been met with

resistance to change from some of her colleagues and had not yet earned their trust. She explained,

> I think it's been hard because the teacher that was before me was here for so long. She was a wonderful teacher, but special ed wise she did a lot for everybody and didn't really hold certain people accountable, I guess. So, it's been hard for me to kind of get my foot in and say I know a little bit about special ed. And not anything negative toward them. It's what they were used to.

She spoke in particular about a math teacher giving students 60 homework problems and failing to modify the assignment for students with special needs. She and another special education teacher had spoken to the math teacher repeatedly about the issue and also spoke to Principal W, all to no avail. Furthermore, she expressed concern that some of her colleagues had a negative attitude toward special education students in general,

> I feel like they want to see them do well, but then sometimes I feel like it's a hindrance in their class to have to do this. I've been told by some that I don't need to concentrate on a certain kid because they shouldn't be here because they're out of district or something. I've been told not to give up on a kid, but why are you bothering? Now, there's some teachers that do great. Whereas some are, "Oh, they're never going to make it," and that kind of attitude.

The generally positive feelings that the faculty at West felt toward their colleagues also extended to their collaborative experiences. Though most of the faculty mentioned friendships with other faculty members, their descriptions of the collaborative endeavors in which they partook were more professional in nature and rarely included personal friendships. This variable is explored more in-depth in the following section.

***Collaboration***

Teachers at West High School participated in multiple types of professional interactions. Principal W assigned each teacher to two groups. First, teachers were grouped by their subject area into one of four teams that gathered once a month before or after school. Second, teachers were assigned to be sponsors for a particular grade level, and they met with the other sponsors for their grade level as needed. Additionally, Principal W formed a teacher advisory team to meet with him periodically throughout the year. Teachers also met with one another or their departments on an informal basis as needed.

When interviewed, all teachers were asked to describe the types of collaborative activities in which they engaged. Every teacher except Teacher W2D mentioned his or her team. When I questioned Teacher W2D's omission, she indicated that she had simply forgotten about it and explained, "I was trying to visualize teachers down the hallways and think of ways that I have come in contact with them for collaboration purposes."

Teacher W1D, Teacher W3B, Teacher W4A, and Counselor W1D admitted that they and their peers were not fond of meeting in the teams when Principal W first introduced them at the beginning of the school year.

> In the beginning, I think we kind of saw that as something that we had to do, and it was very hard for teachers to buy into it. You could just see the expressions on faces. You could tell, "I don't want to do this." I felt it. It was very robotic.
>
> Let's get our time in. Let's get out of here and get home. (Counselor W1D)

Teacher W3B and Teacher W4A both attributed this "resentment" (Teacher W4A) to Principal W's requirement that the teams spend the first semester reading a book and

using their time together to discuss the book. Teacher W3B viewed that as "a waste of time," and Teacher W4A added that some of her team members seemed especially frustrated at their lack of input into that decision.

However, Counselor W1D indicated that he did not "dread it anymore." He went on to explain, "It kind of evolved. As the year went on, more smiles came on faces. More input started coming, and we started actually collaborating and it became more of a team." As a result, he now viewed the teams as "a positive for us—something that was needed that we could have used in the past, [because] teachers were not collaborating as they should." Personally, he found it "very helpful to get things off our chest. We could share our struggles with each other and not be ashamed of it."

As a new teacher at West, Teacher W2D also found this time to be helpful. She described a situation in which she was struggling to handle a few of her students. The team meeting had given her the opportunity to ask other teachers about those particular students. The other teachers provided some relevant background information about the students that helped Teacher W2D know how to approach those students in her classroom.

Teacher W6A also found team meetings to be an opportunity for teachers to help each other by sharing their professional expertise. He described helping the other teachers interpret their data and being helped by them in return when they shared instructional activities with him. Adding together each group member's years of teaching experience he concluded, "Inside the group you have got like a hundred years of experience. So, it's a wealth of knowledge."

Teacher W6A went on to say that he liked the opportunity provided by the team meetings to "build relationships with people" and "build team mentality," and other teachers agreed. Nonetheless, he was not yet ready to say that the process was working because it was "so early in the process" and they had not yet "produced anything." Teacher W7B concurred, "I don't know that it is working, and I don't know that it's not working. I just don't know."

Teacher W1D and Teacher W4A found meeting with teachers of other subject areas to be advantageous, but many of the other teachers felt their teams were lacking the initial commonality necessary to be "productive" (Teacher W5C). The two English both preferred the idea of departmental teams. As a special education inclusion teacher, Teacher W3B did not desire to meet with other inclusion teachers but instead with the teachers to whom she provided inclusion services. Teacher W1D believed that this was not necessary because teachers all had the same general concerns, but Teacher W7B disagreed saying, "As far as here in this school system, nobody else has the same set of problems that I do."

Just like teachers' attitudes toward the team meetings varied, so did their understanding of the team's purpose. Teacher W1D, Teacher W3B, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W7B each associated the team's purpose with an assignment such as reading a book or discussing a given topic while Teacher W2D, Teacher W5C, and Counselor W1D simply stated that they did not know the team's purpose. Teacher W6A was the only interview participant who also served on Principal W's teacher advisory team and was consequently the only interview participant who stated with certainty that the

purpose of the teams was "just to have them this year, just to get people comfortable with the idea of having a collaborative process of some sort."

In contrast, initial commonality and purpose were evident and easily defined in the grassroots collaborative endeavors in which teachers at West participated. Teacher W3B and Teacher W5C each found time to meet with those teachers they most desired. Teacher W3B met with other regular and special education teachers with whom she shared students to monitor the students' progress and accommodations, and Teacher W5C met with the two other English teachers to discuss curriculum and instructional practices as did Teacher W4A and Teacher W6A with peers in their respective departments. Teacher W2D also made time to meet with a history teacher to plan cross-curricular units. She noted, "We have a lot of common interest." In addition to both being new teachers at West, they were also both familiar with each other's end of course assessments. So, they were able to "help each other with that."

The same clarity existed in other organized collaborative groups at West. Teacher W1D, Teacher W2D, and Counselor W2D spoke at length about meeting with other sponsors for their assigned grade level. With these groups, the purpose varied. Teacher W1D was assigned to be a sophomore sponsor, so the purpose of her group was to organize fundraisers to save money for their students' prom the following year. Teacher W2D and Counselor W1D were each senior sponsors, so the purpose of their group was to "make sure [the students] are all on track for graduation, make sure they have the information they need" (Teacher W2D), and plan and orchestrate graduation activities. Additionally, as sponsors for the Beta Club Teacher W1D and Teacher W6A met to plan competition details and organize fundraisers and other club activities.

Teachers also sought initial commonality outside of West. As the only counselor, there was no one else at West with whom Counselor W1D shared the same struggles. Instead, he met with the other high school counselors in the district on a regular basis. He attributed the "tightness" of the group to having "the same likes, interests, and belief systems." Teacher W3B and Teacher W7B also met with other teachers in their subject area across the district. Teacher W7B acknowledged that even though the other band directors each had a different set of problems, it was nice to brainstorm solutions to their problems with one another.

Regardless of the group, discussion was at the heart of each collaborative endeavor at West. When the teams first began, teachers discussed a book that Principal W assigned them to read. Teacher W1D explained that through their reading and discussion her team learned "how we could work together as a team." Teacher W6A agreed and credited the honesty of his team members with the success of those discussions saying, "I think people were a little bit honest with themselves when they were doing it, and I mean I was too—about who you really are, what type of leader you are, what type of role you play and things like that."

Though discussions eventually progressed from the book to work on accreditation materials and brainstorm instructional strategies, honesty remained a key component of team discussions. Teacher W4A and Counselor W1D both noted its importance while other teachers added that they also expected their peers to "cooperate" (Teacher W1D), "do their part" (Teacher W1D) of the accreditation review, "give input" (Teacher W1D), and "be prepared" (Teacher W5C, Teacher W7B) by reading the book, participating in

dialogue, and offering "fresh ideas" (Teacher W6A, Counselor W1D) or "maybe some application of what they read to the classroom" (Teacher W5C).

Discussions in the collaborative gathering of special education teachers across the district centered on maintaining unity—"how we're all going to do a certain test because everybody's supposed to be doing the same thing pretty much testing-wise, IEPs" (Teacher W3B). According to Counselor W1D, when the counselors in the district gathered they discussed what they had learned at recent conferences and what they were struggling with at their respective schools. Counselor W1D also worked with the counselor at the feeder middle school to create a seamless vertical transition for 8th grade students as they prepare to enter high school. Teacher W3B credited her group's success to everyone being "respectful to each other's feelings," while Counselor W1D believed his group was successful because "we all work as a team."

The same expectations continued to hold true for other collaborative endeavors, as well. Teacher W5C expected to give and receive "new ideas and different ways of doing things" to and from his collaborative partners in the English department while Teacher W2D expected the group of senior sponsors to "take an equal share of the responsibility and not dump it all off on one person." Counselor W1D concurred expecting each senior sponsor to "do their task that they need to do and offer good ideas." According to Teacher W1D, the expectation was also held among sophomore sponsors and Beta Club sponsors that "everybody do their part and work together as a team."

Teacher W2D, Teacher W3B, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W6A found listening to be just as important to collaboration as talking. Teacher W6A explained that the collaboration he shared with a fellow science teacher was successful because "we both

have the philosophy of try not to be the smartest person in the room. When we have that philosophy a lot of time you're more open to listening to people." Such openness was equally as important to Teacher W2D and Teacher W5C as was respect and "common courtesy" (Teacher W2D). Teacher W3B believed that respect was key to collaborating with other teachers especially when "we get along, but we're totally different."

Among the collaborative discussions described by the faculty members at West, only Counselor W1D referenced any reflective assessment of practice when he admitted, "I am not ashamed to say, 'Hey, this is not working for me. I'd like to know how this is working with you.'" Similarly, Teacher W5C was the only teacher to reference sharing resources as an expectation of collaborative partners. He spoke about sharing Common Core reading and writing strategies with his fellow English teachers and them sharing their materials for teaching *The Crucible* with him. He understood that teachers might be reluctant to share resources "in a world of so much accountability where [student performance] affects pay" but felt "that's totally the wrong way to think as educators."

When asked how often collaborative work groups come to a consensus, faculty members at West answered with phrases like, "every time" (Counselor W1D), "always" (Teacher W3B), "most of the time" (Teacher W5C), and "usually" (Teacher W4A). Counselor W1D described the staff as "a very good faculty that works together." He continued,

> We don't have a lot of firing back and forth. Most of the time when ideas are presented to the group as a whole, it's generally consensus. Let's move on that. Is somebody going to have a different opinion, yes. But I think as a whole, as a consensus, a majority of a time I would think.

In reference to his team, Teacher W6A stated, "For the most part, we agree on most things we've talked about in here. I can't think of one thing we've kind of just been on complete odds on." Teacher W1D described her team as "flexible" and gave an example of her team achieving consensus on materials for West's SACS accreditation,

> We had to make a decision about what we thought would be the stuff they would want us to have. So, I think we worked together good, too, because everybody was kind of like, "Okay, that makes sense. We should do this."

Teacher W4A added, "We're usually pretty quick to agree. We know we have to be quick and concise because we just have a twenty to twenty-five minute meeting."

Overall, most of the faculty members interviewed at West described a lack of conflict in their collaborative groups. Teacher W2D explained, "There's going to be a differing of opinion, but so far I have not experienced disagreement enough to cause discourse [sic]." Teacher W1D attributed this to the general helpfulness and happiness of the staff, while Teacher W5C suggested that age played a role saying, "A lot of our older teachers have retired. So, you've got a new breed coming in that might be a little bit more susceptible to change." Additionally, Teacher W1D and Teacher W5C believed there was a lack of "topics to be conflicting about." In reference to the math department, Teacher W4A concurred explaining that none of the teachers teach the same course, " so there is really nothing that we could come to a disagreement on." Teacher W7B similarly felt it was due to a lack of any "formal decisions" and described the members of his team as "happy" and lacking "friction." Though neither Teacher W3B nor Counselor W1D were specific about conflicts with their subject-area peers, Teacher W3B said that her department did not handle conflict—they "just kind of let it go"—while Counselor W1D

said the group of counselors always resolved their conflicts by calling each other out if they do not "appreciate" something a group member says or does and apologizing or agreeing to disagree when necessary.

Teachers did, however, mention professional conflict in some of their one-on-one collaborations with other individual teachers. Teacher W2D spoke about her collaboration with a history teacher,

> Our teaching styles are a little different, and the way that she does things is different than what I would, but when we talk about stuff, I won't say that we shoot each other ideas down, because we don't. We just have to adapt them for our own teaching style. What works for me may not work for her the way that she presents. I take [what she says] into consideration. If I want to use it, I use it; if I don't, I don't.

Teacher W3B described a similar situation with a fellow special education teacher.

> She may think that I agree with her just because I try to work with everybody. I don't always agree with her, but I don't let that be a factor because we do have to work side by side. We just do things differently. Her personality is more outgoing than mine as far as more blunt than mine. We work well together. I just try to do what I have to do and know what's right as far as my kids and job.

Teacher W6A worked closely with a fellow science teacher and indicated that the only disagreement they had was a philosophical one regarding the order in which the curriculum should be delivered. He explained that he had "tried to do it [the other teacher's] way this year" but next year would be "going back and teaching it my way."

Teacher W3B and Teacher W4A were the only teachers who mentioned any conflict with their team. While Teacher W4A was not specific, she did say that her team handled conflict well and sometimes "laughed it off." Teacher W3B mentioned conflict with two of her team members and believed both of those issues were related to Principal W. The first example was a professional conflict she had outside of team meetings with one of the team members "that's not really welcoming of special ed." She believed that Principal W's failure to "fix those kind of problems and just letting it go on all year long" created conflict both inside and outside of the team. The second example of conflict regarded an attitude that she perceived from a team member toward Principal W.

> There's not been any conflict unless he's been in there, and everybody just kind of looks at each other. We might have one person. She may speak her mind a little bit more, but she's been here a long time and she's a very good teacher.

Teacher W4A also believed that Principal W's presence at times also created conflict in her team. As a result, some of her team members "find an around-the-corner way" to express their thoughts and feelings rather than being completely open and honest.

In successful collaborative work groups, the outcome of discussion and philosophical debate is some form of collective ingenuity (Hord, 1997). At West, the outcome of collaboration is less about ingenuous creativity and more about delegating a preset list of tasks or making decisions from a limited list of options. In regards to the group of senior sponsors, Teacher W2D explained,

> It is kind of hard to keep up with all of those students, make sure they are all on track for graduation, make sure that they have the information that they need. It is

> a whole lot easier to tell a handful of teachers we need this done than it is to try to get all those kids together.

The same was true for the teams. After spending the first semester conducting a book study, the teams "divided responsibilities up for the SACS accreditation" (Teacher W5C). Teacher W7B described being "given a certain unit in the state accreditation to go through and check and get all of the documentation for that." Even when teachers met in grass-roots efforts to collaborate on instruction, discussions were more about "sharing ideas" (Teacher W5C) with each other about what they had done in their classrooms than teachers working together to create new activities. Teacher W6A described his collaboration with a fellow science teacher as follows:

> Just as we find things, do things that work, we'll talk to each other about it, kind of go back and forth. I give it to him. He may tweak it a little bit. Send it back to me. He'll give me stuff and say what do you think about this, and I'll give it back to him and how this will work for me.

According to Teacher W1D, the extent of ingenuity present among the sophomore sponsors was limited to discussing "which kind of fundraiser we wanted to do and how we wanted to do it." She said the same of the Beta Club sponsors.

The only mention of new ideas came from Counselor W1D in reference to the group of senior sponsors. As the group discussed graduation ceremonies for that year, two new ideas emerged. Rather than arranging students by height (as they had "always done"), students would be arranged alphabetically. Additionally, teachers would march in for the first time dawning graduation regalia such as caps, gowns, and hoods.

There were, however, certain social and structural resources present that contributed to the success of collaborative endeavors at West. Because this theme is about the nature of teachers' coworkers, only social resources will be discussed here. Structural resources will be addressed by Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups?

The first resource that was necessary for the collaborative work groups to be successful was that members must attend. Teacher W1D expressed her expectation that group members "just be there and do whatever we are doing." As previously mentioned, once group members were present they were expected to be respectful (Teacher W2D, Teacher W3B), courteous (Teacher W2D), cooperative (Teacher W1D, Teacher W2D), and honest (Counselor W1D, Teacher W4A, Teacher W6A). They were also expected to "pull their fair weight" (Teacher W7B), be prepared (Teacher W5C, Teacher W7B), and share (Teacher W5C).

A second resource that the faculty at West felt was important to the success of their collaborative endeavors was the ability to "deal with personality types" (Teacher W2D). Though Teacher W6A described his collaborative partners as "very easy to work with" and "very easy to communicate with," Counselor W1D and Teacher W2D indicated this was not always the case. Counselor W1D discussed the need to recognize when group members "like to take the lead" and when "it's not their thing" and to respect each accordingly. He described a situation with the district-wide group of counselors in which one counselor's personality was vastly different than the others.

> He's very quiet, and he's very reserved. All of us have very outgoing personalities. I think it took us a little while to try to figure him out, but now it's

> fine. Everybody understands him. He's been a good addition to our group. Now that we know him, it works good.

Teacher W2D mentioned "Gloomy Gus" personalities in her team but went on to defend their uneasiness.

> We all see things from our own perspective. When you talk about informational texts and Common Core, then some people get a little more sensitive than others because they don't know themselves how they are going to incorporate it. When there's that unsure, insecure part then I think people may feel a little bit like they are put on the defensive.

A third resource that was important to the faculty at West was that of professional competence. Six of the eight interviewed faculty members mentioned this resource. Teacher W4A listed being "good at their job" as an expectation of her collaborative partners in the math department. As an alumni of West, Teacher W5C noted, "I do feel like just kind of observing there are a lot better teachers here than when I was in school." Teacher W1D specifically praised Teacher W6A for his work with the Beta Club saying, "He has done a great job." Referring to an induction ceremony that he started that year she added, "He did a good job with that." Teacher W3B described the other members of her team as "very good teachers" and Teacher W6A stated, "I have confidence that the people I work with are very capable of doing their jobs."

Counselor W1D ultimately believed that collaboration "is about relationships." Consequently, both he and Teacher W6A found trust to be an important factor in how effective their collaborative endeavors were. Teacher W6A trusted his colleagues

completely, while Counselor W1D believed the teachers at West were still "working to build that trust with each other."

The attitudes of faculty members at West regarding collaboration were relatively consistent. Over the course of their first year working in principal-designated teams, faculty members had grown to value spending time with one another in professional discourse. More so than the teams, though, many faculty members preferred to collaborate with others in their same subject area. Because of the relatively small size of West and the manner in which the school schedule was arranged, some faculty members found such collaboration difficult or unnecessary. Likewise, teachers' attitudes about their coworkers as a whole were consistently positive. In addition to the nature of the administration and coworkers, teachers' attitudes toward their work at West were also impacted by the nature of their work. This final theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Work**

At West High School, teachers' feelings about their career also contributed to their attitudes about their work. Teacher W6A explained,

> I like to come to work every day. I really want to get up in the morning, and I genuinely want to come. On my way to work, I'm not thinking, "Ugh. Drudgery." I really enjoy what I'm doing.

Counselor W1D expressed the same sentiment, "I don't mind to come to school every day. I like being here." Specifically, teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their internal feelings about their subject and their students as well as external forces over which they had little control. Each of these variables are explored more thoroughly in the sections that follow.

### *Internal Feelings about Teaching*

Over half of the faculty members interviewed at West (Teacher W1D, Teacher W2D, Teacher W4A, Teacher W5C, Teacher W7B, and Counselor W1D) did not plan on entering the field of education. Nonetheless, they all expressed very positive feelings about their career. Teacher W1D stated, "I can't think of anything that I would rather do." Teacher W2D concurred saying, "I cannot see myself doing anything else." Teacher W2D went on to describe how she missed the classroom when she took a year off from teaching to serve as a graduation coach.

Though they all did not take a direct path to education, Teacher W1D, Counselor W1D, Teacher W5C, and Teacher W6A each believed they were "meant to do this" (Teacher W5C). Counselor W1D said, "There's no doubt in my mind that God has me here for a purpose, for a reason, and this is my purpose." Teacher W6A expounded, "You just realize at some point in your life what your gifts are, what you've been given, and my gift is teaching. It's just what I'm good at. I just am."

Teacher W1D, Counselor W1D, and Teacher W3B each said that they "love" what they do, and Teacher W2D, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W6A each stated that they "enjoy" teaching. Teacher W1D felt like she was "making a difference" and described her job as "rewarding." Teacher W3B agreed and explained that she chose education as a profession because she "wanted to help somebody." Teacher W5C shared how he "always liked school" growing up, and Teacher W4A mentioned how much she "really enjoyed my high school math." Teacher W6A spoke specifically about his subject area, also, but admitted that Biology was not his first preference. He entered the profession

with the intention of teaching physical education but felt the need to add a science endorsement to his license in order to find employment.

When asked what they liked most about their jobs, though, nearly every faculty member talked about their students. Teacher W5C stated, "I think any other answer from anyone else would be a dumb answer." Teacher W1D spoke fondly of the special needs children with whom she worked. Because of their disabilities, she had the pleasure of working with some of them for seven or eight years and had come to "love them like they're my own." In addition to her own students, she was especially impressed with how the other children at West treated her students.

> I personally think that this is one of the best schools. From the beginning they've been very good about accepting my kids and their different disabilities. These people they take up for my kids here, and I love it. The adults of course, but I'm talking the students. Not a single one of them have ever been mean or any way wrong to one of my kids. If anything, they've kind of embraced them, and they make their days.

Teacher W7B was also complimentary of the students at West.

> Kids are kids are kids, but I like the way that their behavior, their attitudes are better than pretty much anywhere I've been before. [There are] problems in a lot of ways. Socio-economic level is really low. A lot of the kids just aren't motivated, but when I got here the thing I noticed within the first year is I have not taken as many kids to the office in the whole year that I'd take in a week at my other schools. Now they may look at you and smile at you and say I'm not going to do that, but at least they aren't belligerent about it for the most part.

Counselor W1D shared how much he had "a passion for working with high school students" in general, as did Teacher W4A. Counselor W1D especially enjoyed helping students "get to the next level, search for the career, and search for the school" saying, "I love being a part of that transition, being a part of the process of finding the right fit for them. That's probably my favorite thing that I get to do." Teacher W3B described the school year as "the hardest year that I've had, but the relationships I build with kids and when I see successes happen it keeps me going." Teacher W2D added that the most frustrating part of her job was late spring when "the seniors have senioritis. It's harder to keep them on task even though we're still trying to accomplish things."

The only negative comments that faculty members at West made in reference to the nature of their jobs both dealt with workload. Teacher W5C named paper grading as the most frustrating part of his job calling the task "the plight of any English teacher." Counselor W1D had a similar complaint, but his struggle was influenced by the small size of West. Because he was the only school counselor at West, he served as the registrar, 504 coordinator, and testing coordinator. Additionally, he served as the third administrator at West. Such responsibilities reduced the amount of time he was able to spend with students. He explained,

> So much of my job is paperwork and records keeping. I wish that I could have a kid in here every hour just having a conversation. In this small school setting, I can't do it here. It's tough. It's one of the most frustrating things not getting more time with my kids.

While faculty members at West tended to consider their students the best part of their jobs, their attitudes toward their work were also influenced by their feelings regarding external forces on education. This variable is explored in more detail in the next section.

***External Forces***

Teachers at West differentiated between their positive internal feelings regarding their careers and the external forces that affected those careers.

> Everything I have a problem with is not something any of us at this school can do anything about. It's at the highest levels. Until people are voted out, that's not going to change. (Teacher W6A)

Primarily, teachers were frustrated with the move toward Common Core and the new evaluation process. Teacher W7B felt that with "so many state requirements, music is the least of anybody's worries. I get whatever time is left over that they can't fit in the other classes." He also felt like those state requirements were imposing upon his time with the students once they were in his classroom. According to him, the implementation of Common Core at West had resulted in a requirement that students read and write for an allotted amount of time in all classes. He felt that the students were receiving adequate instruction of these skills in other classes and thus they should not be required for his class in such a rote way. He explained,

> I don't have a real problem with Common Core except for that fact that I have a set number of things I have to do if we perform for the community and everything else. We are performing. We are reading music. We're not reading a book, but we're reading music. They're doing a lot of the skill sets that they're going to be

> doing in the other, but it's like, "Well, you have to do it, too." And so that hurts the performance because we're having to do things outside of it.

Counselor W1D was frustrated with the roll over to Common Core, as well.

> This year we've been inundated with testing. With PARCC testing, we're tested until we're blue in the face this year. I know it's not going to be like that all the time. I know the state is field testing a lot of things, but it's been a tough year.

Teacher W4A expressed her frustration over the paperwork associated with the new teacher evaluation process. One component of the evaluation was referred to as the Professionalism Rubric. According to Teacher W4A, teachers were required to document professional activities in which they participated outside of the classroom. She elucidated,

> That's the part I hate about it. If I could just teach all day long I'd do fine. This is what I hate, with a passion. So between now and next Friday at some point, I'm sure I'll have to stay late one evening to do that. I hate that.

Teacher W2D expressed similar frustrations and concluded, "It seems like it is making it harder and harder for me to be able to do what I enjoy doing, which is teaching."

When asked if pay was an issue for them, the faculty members at West unanimously agreed that it was not. However, many of them had worked elsewhere and expressed that the pay and/or benefits in the district were better than those they had previously received. In fact, Teacher W2D, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W6A all came to work at West for the pay. Prior to their transfer, they had each worked at a school "only six miles up the road" (Teacher W2D) in a different district in which they were being paid between $3000 and $6000 less than they were making at West. Teacher W2D

noted, “It does bother me that there is such a discrepancy in pay between [districts].” Teacher W4A, Teacher W5C, Teacher W7B, and Counselor W1D each expressed that they would like it to be better, but the general sentiment was that they were “paid for what I do” (Counselor W1D) even if “not what we’re worth” (Teacher W5C). Counselor W1D mentioned being “thankful for the degree level that I have so I can get paid at that level.” He ultimately concluded, “I wouldn’t complain because I love what I do.” Teacher W1D concurred stating, “It is more of a reward in my heart than it is cash in my pocket kind of thing.”

**Summary of Research Question 1**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers’ attitudes toward their work? While elements of effective collaborative work groups did influence teachers’ attitudes toward their work, teachers’ experiences with collaboration addressed only one aspect of their overall feelings about their job. Teachers’ attitudes about collaboration were closely related to their attitudes about their coworkers, which was only one of three themes determined to influence teachers’ attitudes toward their work. Teachers’ attitudes were also influenced by the nature of the leadership in their building and the nature of the work of they do. These results held true for all four observed teams. Research Question 2 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 2: West High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of 1 principal interview, 7 teacher interviews

(30% of the teaching staff), and 1 counselor interview from the school's four collaborative work groups referred to by the principal as teams. For the purposes of this study, the principal of West High School is referred to as Principal W. At the time of this study, Principal W was in the third year of his three-year tenure at West. Prior to this position, Principal W had been a physical education and lifetime wellness teacher for eight years in two other districts. He had never served as an assistant administrator or in any other administrative capacity. More information regarding teacher and counselor interview participants is provided in Table 17.

For this stage of data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 2 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at four major themes. The code mapping process for Research Question 2 is shown in Table 5 in Chapter 3.

**Time**

Principal W established the teams at West High School to serve as professional learning communities (PLCs) for his faculty. Being the first year that these teams had been in place, he described them as "a new concept for West High School" and explained that this year had consisted of "small steps, but very much needed steps" toward building a "professional relationship" between faculty members. He realized that the implementation of the teams added an extra responsibility for the faculty and believed that one of the best ways he could show his support for this endeavor was to be present at the meetings and sacrifice his own time as well.

> They know that I'm busy. I know they're busy, but I'm taking and planning and setting aside time. By attending those meetings it just gives them an understanding of the importance that I place on these teacher meetings.

Consequently, even though he stated that the teams were given the freedom to decide when they met, he admitted, "there's logistically some things that are impossible for me to take care of." He then gave the example of two teams choosing to meet at the same time. In that circumstance, he said, "I try to have teams meet at different times. That gives me the opportunity to meet, and most of the time that's the way it works out."

The teams met once a month either before or after school. Teacher W6A found "the fact that we have to meet outside of school hours" to be a hindrance to the success of the teams. Teacher W7B explained that his team had to meet before school because he was responsible for after school band rehearsals and activities. Teacher W3B and Teacher W4A also discussed how this schedule conflicted with the bus duty schedule and resulted in no team meeting ever consisting of 100% attendance. According to Teacher W4A, teachers were assigned bus duty "every three weeks for a whole week" with some of her team members assigned morning duty and others assigned afternoon duty. Teacher W3B said of her team, "There's always two people who are not there because of bus duty." When asked if it was always the same two people that were absent she responded, "Normally. It just seems to fall around that time." Though Principal W acknowledged that a teacher missing due to a doctor's appointment meant a team missing "a significant percentage of the team," there was no mention of a solution to the attendance problem caused by the bus duty schedule.

Teachers gave varying reports regarding the length of the meetings. Teacher W4A indicated that her team met for 20-25 minutes, while Teacher W5C said that his team met for 30-35 minutes. Likewise, faculty members gave conflicting responses regarding their feelings about the frequency and length of time their team met. Teacher W1D and Teacher W4A both said, "It's fine." Teacher W2D and Teacher W7B concurred with Teacher W7B adding, "We do it so little, it's really not an issue one way or the other." In contrast, Teacher W5C felt that monthly meetings were "too much," and Teacher W3B referred to them as "a time constraint."

However, Teacher W1D did not feel that Principal W was always respectful of teachers' time. According to Principal W, when two teams met at the same time, he would try to split his time between the two teams. Teacher W1D complained that this sometimes resulted in the second team having to stay longer after school because Principal W had arrived late. She explained, "We're not trying to hurry to get done, but when we're done talking it's like, 'Oh, no.'" Teacher W4A described having "seen groups" that stayed after school for an hour. To avoid that, her group chose to meet in the morning "because it's a shorter time. You have to be done at 8:05 in order to get to homeroom."

Teacher W1D also described meeting on an in-service day immediately prior to an extended break from school. According to Teacher W1D, Principal W thought "that would make it easy because you won't have to meet after school because we're already here." However, because of Principal W's schedule that day, the team did not meet until 3:00 and did not conclude until 5:30. She concluded, "You don't do that the day before a break because everybody got kind of ugly."

Teacher W6A believed that the greatest amount of "negativity and pushback" from the faculty regarding the newly implemented team meetings was a result of "having to meet outside of school hours." He went on to say, "if it was during the daytime and you said just meet with your group that's on planning at the same time, that would be a little easier to say we could do that." He also believed that if the team meetings were held "inside school hours," teachers would be more willing to meet more frequently—perhaps every other week. (Teacher W6A)

Principal W indicated that he intended to create common plan times for collaboration the following school year, but not for the teams. His intent was to allow core-content departments to have common plan times to meet "vertically" during the school day and for the mixed-content teams to continue to meet "horizontally" after school. Until such a move could be arranged, teachers' close proximity to others in their department was the only resource that supported their ability to collaborate during the school day. Teacher W3B, Teacher W4A, Teacher W5C, and Teacher W6A each mentioned being able to collaborate with others in their departments because they were "right beside each other" (Teacher W3B) or close enough to "walk down there" (Teacher W4A) between classes or "discuss in passing" (Teacher W5C). Teacher W1D, Teacher W2D and Teacher W6A also mentioned collaborating during their lunch time, while Teacher W5C added that being "linked to the same printer" instigated opportunities for collaboration. When these opportunities did not provide adequate time for collaboration, Teacher W4A and Teacher W5C indicated that their departments met before or after school. Teacher W3B, however, felt that meeting outside school hours was "hard because most special ed teachers are doing something extra curricular."

Teacher W7B lamented not having that opportunity saying, "It could be nice if I was closer to the other building and could interact more with the teachers." Furthermore, there were no other teachers at West in his subject area. The same was true for Counselor W1D. Consequently, they both mentioned the district setting aside time on in-service days for them to meet with their peers throughout the district. Counselor W1D added that his cohort spoke daily on the phone.

Even though teachers were assigned to sponsor a particular grade level, "no set time" (Teacher W3B) was provided for those teachers to meet. Teacher W1D, Teacher W2D, and Counselor W1D all stated that such collaboration occurred primarily "through email" or before or after school. Teacher W1D also mentioned two occasions in which the sophomores had to gather in the auditorium, and she and the other sophomore sponsors used that as an opportunity to go "to the back and have our little meeting."

Though some of the collaborative endeavors mentioned by the faculty at West occurred more often than the team meetings, none of the faculty complained about such frequency. Teacher W1D and Teacher W3B described some of theirs meetings as "just right," while Teacher W1D, Teacher W3B, and Counselor W1D described other groups as meeting "too little" (Teacher W1D) or "not enough" (Teacher W3B). Teacher W1D and Counselor W1D indicated that their attitudes toward meeting frequencies were associated with the "need" to meet. Teacher W1D explained that the Beta Club sponsors met once a week prior to their conference in November but had since slowed down. She stated, "I think we had to in order to make sure the kids were getting all the information. If it was once a week still, I think it would be too much just because we probably would have burnt out."

Though faculty members at West were willing to gather before or after school for team meetings, the rest of their day was not scheduled in such a way to enhance collaboration. Not all teachers were able to attend team meetings, and many departments struggled to find time to meet with one another. Hence, time was a structural resource on which the administration at West had room to improve and was making plans to do so the following year. Aside from time, the structure of team meetings was another prominent theme and is discussed next.

**Structure**

According to Principal W, the teams at West were "aligned in grade levels." Referring specifically to Team W-A, he expounded,

> Our Algebra 1 teacher is in the same group with our English 1 teacher. So, you have two predominantly freshman-oriented classes working together. Our Biology is a freshman level class, so they should all be in the same group together where you have that commonality of students."

However, Teacher W6A was the only faculty member interviewed that was aware of how the teams were organized because he "was actually part of producing the teams" both one-on-one with Principal W and as a member of Principal W's teacher advisory team. When asked if he knew how his group was formed, Counselor W1D responded, "Probably a good question for [Principal W]. There was criteria, but I don't know what it was." None of the other faculty members knew either. Teacher W1D responded, "I think he just put us together. I'm really not sure if there was a way he did it. He just said this is group 1, 2, 3, and 4." Teachers did offer descriptions of their teams' compositions, though. In describing Team W-B, Teacher W7B said, "We've got special ed; we've got

the CTE classes; and then we've got music." Teacher W5C, who taught "three sophomore classes and two junior classes," mentioned working with the Algebra 2 and Chemistry teachers on Team W-C. Teacher W1D said Team W-D had "one lady in there that is the English teacher, but the rest of us are special ed, yearbook, Spanish." Adding that the school counselor was also part of her group, Teacher W1D concluded,

> He may have tried to get groups together that had one person as the academic and the others all other areas. And that makes sense because we never see each other. I think he did it so that we would all get to know each other.

In further discussion about the makeup of the teams, Teacher W2D felt it was a hindrance to the success of the teams that they were not "departmentalized." Principal W also felt this was important and had planned to implement separate department-based teams for core content subjects the following year. He explained his hope that "this will enhance the team meetings because we're covering the content alignment with common planning times" and using cross-content teams as an "opportunity for those with common students to be able to visit and collaborate on strategies or activities that are working for particular, even more difficult, students." Teacher W5C looked forward to such an arrangement stating that he was "a little bit stronger advocate for a traditional PLC where you're meeting with all English teachers, same discipline" and that "the ideal situation would be to have common planning." Teacher W3B agreed saying, "it would be nice if [our department] had a set time [to meet]."

There was a difference of opinion across subject areas, though, about the need for departments to meet together. The only teachers who could use such time for horizontal content alignment were Teacher W2D and Teacher W5C who both taught two junior

level English classes. However, such a schedule increased the workload for each teacher because they were each forced to teach another level of English, as well. Teacher W5C admitted that this was his first time with "multiple preps"—of which he was not a fan—but that doing so "gives us a chance to talk and share ideas about something we teach." Teacher W5C went on to say that even if he did not teach a specific class with another English teacher, English as a subject was conducive to collaborating about non course-specific items such as "graphic organizers" and "reading strategies." He concluded that "subject matter relevancy would be a little more important than teaching the exact same course." Teacher W6A somewhat agreed stating,

> Being a small school, we don't have a department. I am the biology department. Now do we have a science department? Yeah, sure. And so would it be nice to maybe see if we can link biology, physical science to chemistry and stair step it that way? Sure, that would be nice to be able to do that, but the reality is with the staff being low, you may not always be able to do that. If you can't, then you've got to look more at practice-based things.

Teacher W4A, however, completely disagreed. She credited the lack of conflict between her and the other math teachers with the fact that they taught such completely discrete courses that "there is really nothing that we could come to a disagreement on." Such a statement reflects the lack of foundational commonality necessary for meaningful dialogue. The only discussions that she found valuable as a department were those based on vertical content alignment. She explained that she checks in with the other math teachers "at least once a week" to make sure that her former students are being successful

in their current math classes and, if not, to determine how to alter her instruction to alleviate future problems. She added,

> It's just a matter of what do I need to do to better prepare my kids for when they get them, and then what can [the geometry teacher] do to kind of help his geometry kids transition into [the] Algebra II class. We just kind of talk about what needs to be done for each class to help each other out.

She concluded, "I don't know how all three of us having the same planning period is really going to matter. I mean, we could talk about it in the morning like we do now."

Beyond the physical makeup of the teams, Principal W was also responsible for the overall leadership of each team. While he took this role seriously, faculty members provided evidence that Principal W was not always consistent with his leadership. This theme is discussed next.

**Leadership**

Principal W described his leadership philosophy as follows.

> I want to be the supporter. I don't want to be the dictator. I want to be able to stay away and this school to run efficiently. I don't have to check on it because my leaders, my teachers are taking care of it. They see the importance. They see the value, and they're the ones that are running the show.

Thus, Principal W chose to "initiate" the process of team meetings through a book study using Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of Team*. He believed this choice "gave them that structure early. It just gave them the model as to what these meetings should look like if I'm not available, if I'm not able to sit in." He wanted to "coach them as to how a true PLC works, how it's teacher led rather than administrator led."

Unfortunately, not all of the faculty at West made those connections. The only two faculty members that found value in the book were those involved in other leadership positions at West—Teacher W6A and Counselor W1D. Teacher W6A believed "there was some good things that came out of that," and Counselor W1D noted, "That brought out a lot of good conversation about issues that were going on here." Others disagreed. Though Teacher W1D liked the book, she reflected, "We thought it could compare to what we are doing here and how we could improve things. So, it was kind of a self-help, but not really because we didn't see any problems." Teacher W4A added, "I could see some purpose of this having to do with a school but very little, because this was all about a business."

Principal W recognized that some teams "need a little more facilitating than others" and noted that was a deciding factor when choosing between two teams that were meeting at the same time. In hopes of fostering "more diffused leadership," Principal W tried to "strategically place" one member from his teacher advisory group in each team to "help facilitate the process." However, Team W-B did not have a representative from the teacher advisory group. Instead, the assistant principal was assigned to Team W-B. Consequently, he described Team W-A, Team W-C, and Team W-D as "pretty much self-sufficient—[Team W-A] and [Team W-C] specifically" and Team W-B as "definitely need a little more structure, a little more guidance." In Team W-A, Team W-C, and Team W-D, he "tried to take a minimal role, try not to take the lead at all, try to sit back and allow the teams to facilitate themselves." He believed Team W-B needed "a little bit more support," so he tried to meet with them whenever possible.

Principal W believed—second only to teachers' relationships with one another—"the most important part of any team or PLC is a focused topic or an agenda in which they go in knowing what they need to talk about and having that agenda ahead of time so they can prepare to go into that meeting." Because this was the first year of the team meetings at West, Principal W felt it was his responsibility to "plan and prepare for these meetings with agendas and specific topics of discussions and focus." In Teacher W1D's evaluation, "I think him setting it up and giving us something that guides us with a question is very good, because I think we'd go in there and be what are we doing? So, that's definitely helpful." Teacher W4A agreed. However, Teacher W3B said, "sometimes we don't really know what we need to discuss." She added that her team was scheduled to meet the following week, and was "not sure what we have to talk about yet." Teacher W4A also admitted not knowing what to discuss the day I observed her team meeting. She said that her and Teacher W6A "just kind of made up our own topic and went with it."

Principal W acknowledged that the teams were "still young" and needed "a little more work on what true PLCs do, specifically how to develop focused agendas and focused topics." He gave an example of a recent team meeting in which the agenda was to discuss preparation for state-mandated assessments. He asked the teachers to "brainstorm some ideas" and hoped that would lead teachers to share techniques and strategies they were using that they believed were working. He noted,

> Sometimes that bridge is crossed and sometimes the blinders are focused specifically on the topic at hand rather than bridging that gap in making that transition from the topic to what's best for our students related to that topic.

Principal W noted, "It's okay to go into a meeting with an idea and a specific direction but for that conversation to take kind of a side track as long as it stays on a professional discussion." He added,

> I want my teachers to be able to sit down and have those collaborative discussions—professional discussions—about what's working in my class. I'm having trouble with this student. Do you have this student? Those conversations that need to take place in order for our school to continue to improve, especially for our students.

Not all teachers felt Principal W's support regarding such "off-shoots" (Teacher W6A), though. Teacher W6A believed his group was free to venture off topic "as long as what we're doing is constructive." He went on to say,

> I almost feel like if we said, "Hey, we're just going to do our own thing. Can we just email you a list of what we want to do," I think he would have been fine with it to a point. He may have certain things he wanted us to go over, but I think he would've been okay with that. He's pretty open to that kind of stuff. That helps productivity here."

Teacher W7B disagreed. He believed that team meetings were a good time to "blow off steam, talk about things going on in the classroom." However, he felt a preset agenda restricted his team's ability to "do that and a little bit of minor problem solving." Hence, they were more likely to have those conversations when Principal W was not present. Teacher W7B added that these feelings did not hold true in regard to the assistant principal's attendance. Instead, "there's not the stress with him as there is [with Principal W]. He attributed this stress to the longevity of the relationship between himself and the

assistant principal saying, “I know how to talk to him. I don’t know what to expect out of [Principal W].”

There was a lot of discussion among the faculty at West about the effect Principal W’s presence had on team meetings. While he believed his presence was “extremely important,” many of the teachers viewed his presence as a hindrance. Teacher W6A believed his group had “done better when [Principal W]’s not here” because group members “feel a little more free” and “aren’t as afraid to say what they really think.” Teacher W4A added that it was “quieter” when Principal W was present. Teacher W3B felt similarly. She explained feeling “like things get shot down” when Principal W was present. As a result, she said the members of her team “probably close up.” Teacher W5C concurred saying, “when he’s not in there, there’s a little bit more openness.” He believed such a reaction was “natural.” Teacher W1D concurred. Counselor W1D and Teacher W5C were the only faculty members who considered Principal W’s presence helpful because “he brings up good ideas for us” (Counselor W1D), and “teachers like to know that the principal is part of it, not up here looking down” (Teacher W5C). Nonetheless, Counselor W1D also found Principal W’s presence to be a hindrance. He noted that some group members were intimidated by Principal W and were “a little more comfortable to share when he’s not in there.” He added, “when he’s in here, he’s pretty much in control.” Consequently, he concluded, “It might be a little more tense—just to be honest—when he’s in here.”

Whether he was present or not, Principal W asked each team to “write up a little summary of what we’ve done, what you met about”. Teacher W3B verified this saying, “I type up what we talk about.” Though Principal W expected absent team members to

"go to the team and get the information that was discussed," none of the teachers mentioned such an expectation in their interview, and all teachers reported a lack of consequence for missing team meetings.

In addition to the team meetings, Teacher W1D also discussed Principal W's leadership as it related to the grade-level sponsor teams. According to Teacher W1D, the grade-level sponsors had been "switched" that year without adequate communication as to what teachers' new responsibilities were. She explained, "That's really all we got this year—that we're on the team. Well, they did say, 'So-and-so did it before. You want to talk to them.'" She went on to say,

> At the beginning of the year, we didn't even meet. I think if we had, that would've been helpful because I don't know if everybody really knew what all a sponsor has to do. I felt like we should have all met together so that everybody knew what was going to happen.

When asked if she was expected to meet with the other sophomore sponsors on a regular basis, she replied, "I'm not sure if we are. I know this sounds awful but like seniors have graduation. Juniors have prom. I don't really know if sophomores had anything this year." She concluded, "I think they need to strengthen that a little bit more because that definitely helps everybody to feel a little more relaxed with it. We also need a little more time to collaborate so that we can have the right preparation for it."

The final structural resource that teachers at West High School discussed was that of decision-making authority. Different types of collaborative groups were granted different levels of freedom regarding decisions. This final theme is presented next.

**Decisions**

Principal W admitted that his natural leadership tendency "lends itself to dictation." He realized, however, that "in the overall goal of what I want to accomplish as a leader, that's not the way I'm going to achieve it." Hence, he felt the need to "step back and hand over the reins a bit more." He claimed, "I'm going to see how this plays out. I'm not going to get involved unless I see this going off the cliff, and even if we get close to the edge that's a learning experience in itself." He believed that giving more power to the teachers allowed them "to see I trust them."

This power was not given over to the teams, though. Being the first year West had implemented teams, Principal W saw their "primary purpose" as "beginning the process of opening dialogue" among the faculty rather than making any decisions. Principal W "controlled the topics just to take that off their shoulders" but foresaw allowing teams to come up with their own topics the following year. According to Principal W, each team decided "when and where they meet," but faculty members indicated that there was an expected date for them "to meet around or on" (Teacher W3B). Counselor W1D clarified, "He set it up to meet after every faculty meeting, which are monthly—not on that day but right around the same time, like a week after." teams were free to choose the exact date and time within that expected range. Teacher W5C and Teacher W4A both expressed the expectation that teams "email him a time." Teacher W3B liked having that expectation. She explained, "I like somebody telling me you need to meet around this time, because it's hard to set it up if you don't have somebody to say you need to do this."

When faculty members were asked to differentiate between easy decisions and difficult decisions they made with their teams, most could not. Teacher W7B replied, "We've presented things, but I don't know that we've actually formally decided this is what we're going to do. It's just kind of an idea kind of a thing." Teacher W1D concurred and added, "It would be a decision that we would bring to a faculty meeting that we would all talk about, but it isn't the ultimate decision. He hasn't said, 'Hey, you guys decide something.'"

Instead, faculty decisions at West were made by grade-level sponsor groups and Principal W's teacher advisory group. Grade-level sponsor groups were responsible for decisions that affected their given grade level. For example, Junior Sponsors planned prom, and Senior Sponsors planned graduation. Teacher W1D explained that having previously been a Junior Sponsor, she knew how important it was for Sophomore Sponsors to raise money for prom the following year. Consequently, all the decisions made by Sophomore Sponsors were in regards to fundraisers. The only fundraising decision that she mentioned needing Principal W's permission for involved the selling of candy during the school day. Counselor W1D believed that the administration helped the group of Senior Sponsors be successful by not getting "heavily involved." He went on to say that he felt trusted by the administration to make any necessary decisions for the senior class.

The only group involved in making decisions that affected the entire school was Principal W's teacher advisory group. In some cases like when Teacher W6A described helping formulate team compositions, Principal W made the final decision. He explained, "It just allows me their perspective and allows them the input into how some

of the decisions are made, especially some of the big decisions that are really going to impact everyone." Such decisions included those made at the district level by groups of administrators across the district. Principal W believed that the teacher advisory group provided teachers with an opportunity to "voice their opinion through me so to speak."

In other cases, the teachers were allowed the final decision. In preparing for teachers to have common plan times the following year, Principal W anticipated asking his teacher advisory group to decide how often departments should be required to meet—weekly versus biweekly. In doing so, "when we roll it out it's not a mandate." When asked if other faculty members were involved in such decisions, Principal W indicated that was up to the teacher advisory group. "If they're not comfortable making that decision on their own, they have that opportunity." He added,

> That's another reason why it's important for me to be in those [team] meetings, because we do have that dialogue together. I have opportunity to get their input on what they feel is best and what actions and what direction we need to continue to push our students in and what I can do to help the teachers in this process.

**Summary of Research Question 2**

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? For collaborative work groups to be successful, certain structural resources must be provided by administration. The teachers and principal at West High School spoke about four structural resources—time for teachers to meet, structure of collaborative meetings, leadership within collaborative work groups, and the decisions that teachers are allowed to make within collaborative work groups. All four teams expressed similar feelings

about the structural resources that were available to them, though varying perspectives were present within the teams. Faculty members expressed limited amounts of frustration that teams were required to meet before or after school but seemed happy to do so when close proximity did not provide adequate time to collaborate with the peers of their choice. Because some faculty members did not have peers in their content area at West, they were also grateful that time was reserved on in-service days for them to meet with their peers across the district. Some faculty members were pleased with how the teams were structured across content areas, but others expressed a desire for more time to meet with their departments. Though several faculty members welcomed Principal W's leadership within the teams, most also felt his presence was a hindrance to their success. Finally, faculty members seemed consistently pleased with the amount of decision-making power they were given. They were content with the minor freedom given to select the time and place of their team meetings and equally so with making any remaining decisions in other collaborative groups. Research Question 3 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 3: West High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 3: What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of four collaborative work group observations. No artifacts were present during any observation of the four groups. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at West High School are referred to as Group W-A, Group W-B, Group W-C, and Group W-D. Principal W referred to these groups as teams.

The observation protocol for this study included seven elements of effective collaborative work groups—initial commonality, discussion, unified norms, collective ingenuity, deprivatization of practice, new commonality, and resources supplied (see Appendix E). In each observation, frequency counts were calculated to identify the number of items on the observation protocol for which evidence was observed during the group meeting. These numbers are referred to as the Group Frequency. As a reference, the Maximum Possible frequency for each component was also noted.

Additionally, frequency counts were calculated to identify the extent to which individual group members contributed to the collaborative process. The frequency counts for interview participants are labeled by teacher and indicate the number of incidences in which the teacher showed any indication of a particular component on the observation protocol. To quantify which teachers were more active, teachers were marked as many times as necessary in any given category. The results for Group W-A are provided in Table 18 and are discussed first.

**Group W-A**

Group W-A had the highest relative frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, and listened to one another. Both teachers' contributions were highest in this category, as well.

Table 18

*Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-A*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | W4A | W6A | | |
| Initial Commonality | 1 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 18 | 18 | 6 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 1 | 0 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 1 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 6 | 10 | 9 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 29 | 31 | 21 | 43 |

Group W-A demonstrated the lowest relative frequency counts in the category of Collective Ingenuity. While there was evidence that the group offered creative solutions to problems, there was no evidence that this group jointly participated in research, agreed upon any future actions, or worked together to develop curriculum, create artifacts, or evaluate student learning or previous artifacts or agreed upon actions. Both teachers' contributions were lowest in this category, as well, with Teacher W6A offering no creative solutions during the observation. Teacher W6A's contribution in the category of New Commonality was also nonexistent. Unlike Teacher W4A, he did not exhibit a

shared memory of stories or experiences from within the group. The results for Group W-B are provided in Table 19 and are discussed next.

**Group W-B**

Group W-B had the highest possible frequency counts in the categories of Initial Commonality and Discussion. Evidence showed that this group had an explicit purpose and that all group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. Evidence also showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Both of the teachers interviewed also exhibited their highest contributions in the category of Discussion.

Group W-B demonstrated the lowest relative frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms. While some members expressed a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose, there was no evidence that members were held accountable to one another. There was also no explicit definition, monitoring, or reviewing of group norms. Teacher W7B's contribution in this category was nonexistent, as was his contribution in the categories of Collective Ingenuity and New Commonality. Unlike Teacher W3B, Teacher W7B offered no creative solutions to problems posed by the group. However, there was no evidence from either teacher of a shared vocabulary, style, or memory within the group nor a set of communal resources established by the group. The results for Group W-C are provided in Table 20 and are discussed next.

Table 19

*Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-B*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | W3B | W7B | | |
| Initial Commonality | 2 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Discussion | 6 | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 3 | 0 | 2 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 1 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 4 | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 17 | 16 | 20 | 43 |

**Group W-C**

Group W-C had the highest relative frequency counts in the category of Discussion. Evidence showed that group members adhered to professional topics, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, and listened to one another. Teacher W5C's highest contributions were in this category as well as the category of Resources Supplied where he demonstrated respect for and support of other group members.

Table 20

*Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-C*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|
| | W5C | | |
| Initial Commonality | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| Discussion | 4 | 5 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 4 | 5 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 9 | 13 | 43 |

Group W-C had the lowest possible frequency counts in the categories of Unified Norms, Deprivatization of Practice, and New Commonality. There was no explicit definition, monitoring, or reviewing of group norms, and group members did not hold one another accountable or express a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose. There was no discussion of practice or instructional observations of team members, nor was there evidence of a communal set of resources established by the group or a shared vocabulary, style, or memory within the group. Just as Teacher W5C's contributions in these categories were nonexistent, so was his contribution in the category of Initial Commonality. He referenced no explicit purpose for the group meeting and did

not demonstrate a shared commitment to the purpose or a similar belief system as the other group members. The results for Group W-D are provided in Table 21 and are discussed next.

**Group W-D**

Group W-D had the highest possible frequency counts in the categories of Initial Commonality and Discussion. Evidence showed that this group had an explicit purpose and that all group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. Evidence also showed that group members adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Teacher W2D and Counselor W1D also exhibited their highest contributions in the category of Discussion, but Teacher W1D exhibited her highest contribution in the category of Resources Supplied where she demonstrated competence and confidence and was caring, respectful, and supportive toward other group members.

Group W-D had the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence of a communal set of resources established by the group or a shared vocabulary, style, or memory within the group. Each group member's contributions were also nonexistent in this category as were Teacher W1D's contributions in the category of Initial Commonality. She referenced no explicit purpose for the group meeting and did not demonstrate a shared commitment to the purpose or a similar belief system as the other group members.

Table 21

*Observation Frequency Counts for West High School Group W-D*

| COMPONENT | TEACHER | | COUNSELOR | GROUP FREQUENCY | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | W1D | W2D | W1D | | |
| Initial Commonality | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 3 |
| Discussion | 8 | 32 | 51 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 12 | 2 | 6 | 8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 22 | 38 | 61 | 21 | 43 |

**Cross-Group Analysis at West High School**

Both Group W-B and Group W-D had the highest possible frequency counts in the categories of Initial Commonality and Discussion. Evidence showed that both groups had an explicit purpose and that members of both groups exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose. Evidence also showed that members of both groups adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. Group W-A and Group W-C had the highest relative frequency counts in the

category of Discussion and the second highest relative frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. In contrast to Group W-B and Group W-D, Group W-A and Group W-C did not demonstrate a similar belief system within their groups and did not engage in philosophical debate. Group W-C did not participate in reflective assessment of practice, either.

Both Group W-C and Group W-D had the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence of a communal set of resources established by either group or a shared vocabulary, style, or memory within either group. Group W-C also exhibited the lowest possible frequency counts in the categories of Deprivatization of Practice and Unified Norms, the latter of which was the lowest category for Group W-B. While some members of Group W-B expressed a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose, there was no evidence that members of either group were held accountable to one another. There was also no explicit definition, monitoring, or reviewing of norms in either group. Group W-A was the only group that demonstrated the lowest relative frequency counts in the category of Collective Ingenuity. However, Group W-C and Group W-D had the second lowest relative frequency counts in this category. While there was evidence that all three groups offered creative solutions to problems, there was no evidence that any of the three groups jointly participated in research, agreed upon any future actions, or worked together to develop curriculum, create artifacts, or evaluate student learning or previous artifacts or agreed upon actions. Research Question 4 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 4: West High School

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 4: How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? Data collected for this question came in the form of four collaborative work group observations, seven teacher interviews, and one counselor interview.

Excerpts from teacher and counselor interviews regarding teachers' attitudes toward their work were grouped into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. General responses were analyzed first and a percentage was given indicating the percent of responses that were positive, neutral, and negative. Second, only those responses about collaboration were analyzed and a percentage was given indicating the percent of positive, negative, and neutral responses that pertained to collaboration.

Responses are given for each observed group. For the purposes of this study, the observed collaborative work groups at West High School are referred to as Group W-A, Group W-B, Group W-C, and Group W-D. Each group's total frequency count from the observation protocol is used as a quantitative indication of the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met. Results are illustrated in Table 22.

Table 22

*Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work at West High School*

| | Positive Attitude | Neutral Attitude | Negative Attitude | Total Excerpts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Group W-A (Frequency Count = 21) | | | | |
| General Responses | 11 (79%) | 1 (7%) | 2 (14%) | 14 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 1 (10%) | 1 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 2 (14%) |
| Group W-B (Frequency Count = 20) | | | | |
| General Responses | 5 (42%) | 1 (8%) | 6 (50%) | 12 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 2 (40%) | 1 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 3 (25%) |
| Group W-C (Frequency Count = 13) | | | | |
| General Responses | 4 (80%) | 0 (0%) | 1 (20%) | 5 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) |
| Group W-D (Frequency Count = 21) | | | | |
| General Responses | 22 (85%) | 0 (0%) | 4 (15%) | 26 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 4 (18%) | 0 (0%) | 0 (0%) | 4 (15%) |

The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was highest in Group W-A and Group W-D and was nearly as high in Group W-B. The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was lowest in Group W-C. Yet teachers' attitudes toward their work were highest in Group W-D and lowest in Group W-B. Overall, less than 25% of the excerpts about teachers' attitudes toward their

work were in reference to collaboration, and none of the excerpts expressing negative attitudes were associated with collaboration.

### Summary of Analysis for West High School

Teachers' attitudes toward their work at West High School were influenced by eight variables: their relationship with Principal W, the support they received from Principal W, their perception of Principal W's competence and values, the behaviors of their coworkers, their experiences with teacher collaboration, the internal feelings they had about teaching, and the external forces that affected their career. Principal W supported the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups by requiring a set time for teachers to collaborate and structuring teams by grade level, but none of the groups were given any decision-making authority. He personally provided the leadership for each group, but his presence was met with mixed reviews. While three of the groups' adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were relatively similar, one group was significantly lower than the others. However, the extent of that adherence did not seem to have a convincing effect on teachers' attitudes toward their work. A cross-case analysis for all three schools in the study is provided in Chapter 7.

# CHAPTER 7

## CROSS-CASE ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Chapter 7 is the final chapter detailing the qualitative and quantitative data and analysis both within and across three cases. This multi-site case study was designed to explore how teachers' attitudes toward their work are influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. The following research questions were addressed:

1. How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? (Qualitative)
2. How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Qualitative)
3. What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? (Quantitative)
4. How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? (Quantitative and Qualitative)

Findings at each site were based on interviews, observations, and artifacts. Each collaborative work group was observed once, and from that group teachers were selected for interviews until saturation was achieved. Principals were also interviewed. Artifacts included handouts from observed group meetings and documents created as a result of observed group meetings. For a complete review of data collection methodologies, please see Chapter 3.

## School Contexts

The three schools that served as cases for this study were each located in the same region of the same southeastern state. All three were public high schools providing instruction in grades 9-12. South High School and North High School were located within the same district—both in cities with a thriving tourist industry, while West High School was located in a small, rural historic town in a district approximately 70 miles away. Though West High School is the oldest organization of the three, it was housed in a new building constructed in 1993 consisting of two main hallways and was connected by covered walkways to other buildings housing the cafeteria, library, and related arts courses. South High School was a similar size to West's main building, but was the youngest of the three schools having been established in 1999. North High School was the largest campus consisting of two buildings large enough to house two independent high schools—as was its intention in 1967 when one building served as the district's vocational school and the other housed North High School. These two schools were later consolidated under the name of North High School.

Each of the three schools in this study employed some form of security upon entering the building, but once inside, the atmospheres were different. West High School was the most orderly with students rarely in the hallways except during class changes, and administrators were visibly keeping a watchful eye over students during these exchanges. Principals were also visible and attentive at South High School, but there was more energy and enthusiasm present amidst the overall atmosphere of order there. While principals were visible at North High School, they were not nearly as attentive and the school operated with significantly less order than the other two schools.

**Student Demographics and Academic Progress**

The three schools in this study varied greatly in size with North being the largest and West being the smallest. The composition of the student body at West was also slightly different than the other two schools with more students of color, economically disadvantaged students, and students with disabilities. A summary of student demographics for all three schools is provided in Table 23.

The three schools were similar in their academic progress as measured by the state, but some variations were evident. Each school was required to meet a different number of gap closure goals, but none of the schools were able to meet all of those goals. However, the state gave each school a goal to meet in five areas and measured each school's proficiency level in eight subjects. Whether or not the schools trailed or exceeded state averages in those eight subjects, along with other academic achievements, is provided in Table 24. Regardless of any shortcomings, all three schools had an overall value-added score of 4 or 5 demonstrating above average effectiveness compared to other schools in their state.

**The Principals**

The principals in this study had different experiences with their individual schools. Principal S and Principal W had each only been principals for three years, but Principal S had a significant history with South High School. Prior to his appointment as principal, he served as English teacher at South for five years followed by an additional five years as an assistant principal at South. He only left the school to serve as an assistant principal at another school in the district for one year before being named the head principal of South. Having spent 13 years of his 15-year career at South gave him an

Table 23

*Cross-Case Analysis of Student Demographics*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Student Population | 722 | 1599 | 340 |
| Caucasian | 89% | 90% | 84% |
| Hispanic or Latino | 8% | 6% | 2% |
| Black or African American | 2% | 3% | 13% |
| Economically Disadvantaged | 60% | 60% | 65% |
| Students with Disabilities | 10% | 9% | 16% |

Table 24

*Cross-Case Analysis of Academic Progress*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Graduation Rate | 92.9% | 87.1% | 92.5% |
| Average Daily Attendance | 95.9% | 92.9% | 94.3% |
| Average ACT Composite | 19.8 | 19.4 | 17.0 |
| Gap Closure Goals Met | 67% | 20% | 0% |
| Overall Value-Added Composite Score | 5 | 5 | 4 |
| Average State Achievement Score | | | |
| Algebra 2 | Trailed | Exceeded | Exceeded |
| Biology 1 | Trailed | Exceeded | Exceeded |
| Algebra 1 | Exceeded | Trailed | Trailed |
| Chemistry | Exceeded | Exceeded | Exceeded |
| English 1 | Exceeded | Exceeded | Trailed |
| English 3 | Exceeded | Exceeded | Trailed |
| US History | Exceeded | Exceeded | Exceeded |
| English 2 | Exceeded | Exceeded | Exceeded |
| Goals Set by State | | | |
| Algebra 1 | Not Met | Met | Not Met |
| Algebra 2 | Met | Met | Met |
| English 2 | Not Met | Not Met | Not Met |
| English 3 | Not Met | Met | Not Met |
| Graduation Rate | Not Met | Not Met | Met |

in-depth understanding of the school's history as well as the faculty that worked within the school.

Principal W had no previous relationship with West High School, its faculty, or its district before becoming its head principal. He had also never served as an assistant principal during his 12-year career in education, though he did serve as a department head for six years. As secondary supervisor for the district, the former principal at West served as his immediate superior and was still very much involved in any decisions made by the current principal.

Principal N had been in education for longer than Principal S and Principal W combined, and most of that experience occurred at North High School. He served as an assistant principal at North for fourteen years before assuming the role of head principal seven years prior to this study. He also coached football at North for 25 years.

## Research Question 1: Cross-Case Analysis

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? Data for this question were collected from 27 teacher interviews and 1 counselor interview across three schools. Many of these participants had strong ties to either the school at which they worked or to their faculty colleagues. Though none of the teachers interviewed at South indicated being alumni of the school, six of the eleven teachers interviewed there had an attachment to either the school or the community. Three teachers mentioned having been with the school since its inception (Teacher S5A, Teacher S11A, and Teacher S9C), while three others either worked at or attended other high schools in the district (Teacher S1A, Teacher S2B, and Teacher S8B). Three of the

teachers interviewed at North High School were alumni of North (Teacher N1A, Teacher N2B, and Teacher N5A) while a fourth (Teacher N3C) graduated from another high school in the district. Of the remaining five interviewed teachers, three (Teacher N4C, Teacher N8B, and Teacher N9C) had worked at North for nearly 20 years or more. Only the school counselor and one other interview participant at West High School (Teacher W5C) were alumni of West, but four of the eight interview participants (Counselor W1D, Teacher W2D, Teacher W4A, and Teacher W6A) worked together previously at a nearby high school in an adjacent district. More information regarding interview participants across the three schools is provided in Table 25. Specific information regarding interview participants at individual schools can be found in Table 7 (Chapter 4), Table 12 (Chapter 5), and Table 17 (Chapter 6) for South, North, and West High Schools, respectively.

For this stage of data analysis, all teacher interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 1 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to ultimately arrive at three major themes, Nature of the Leadership, Nature of the Coworkers, and Nature of the Work. The code mapping process for Research Question 1 is shown in Table 4 in Chapter 3.

Table 25

*Cross-Case Analysis of Interview Participants*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Interviews | 11 | 9 | 8 |
| Percentage of Staff Interviewed | 20% | 8% | 30% |
| Department Heads Interviewed | 4 | 1 | 0 |
| Alumni Interviewed | 0 | 3 | 2 |
| Interviewees' Average Years of Teaching Experience | 14 | 18 | 17 |
| Interviewees' Average Tenure at Observed School | 8 | 14 | 4 |

*Note.* Because of the small faculty size at West, departments did not have designated department heads.

**Nature of the Leadership**

Mason (1999) found that employees were more empowered to complete their work and exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction and a stronger sense of achievement when they were guided by effective leadership. The findings in this study confirm that. Under the overarching theme of leadership, teachers' attitudes toward their work at North were specifically influenced by their perceptions of Principal N's administrative competence, support, and values. In addition to these variables, teachers' attitudes toward their work at West and South were also influenced by their relationships with their principal.

Though the faculty at South had recently undergone a change in administration, the teachers felt that change was positive. They perceived Principal S to be highly competent and praised his organizational skills. They felt his decisions were reasonable

and well thought out, and they appreciated the predictability that his leadership provided in their workplace. Principal S communicated his expectation of success to his teachers, and they were grateful for the efforts he made to help them be successful, especially in regard to implementing the new Common Core State Standards.

The faculty at West had also recently undergone a change in their administration, but the response was not nearly as positive as Principal S experienced at South. Principal W's predecessor was described as "a tough act to follow" (Counselor W1D), and Principal W was also hired at a time of great change across the state. Teachers were faced with a new curriculum, new state assessments, and a new evaluation model—all delivered by a new principal with whom the faculty had no previous relationship. Furthermore, teachers at West doubted Principal W's competency regarding the implementation of these reforms and other educational initiatives such as a fully inclusive model of instruction for students with disabilities.

Teachers at North expressed a similar concern about Principal N's competence regarding the new Common Core curriculum and corresponding state assessments. They were frustrated with being placed in a PLT group assigned to study either the math or language arts component of Common Core when they neither associated with or would be held accountable for student performance on the component their group was studying. They further described Principal N as disorganized citing examples such as not knowing what they would be teaching the following school year and not being offered positions until late in the summer.

Teachers at West and North also complained about poor communication from Principal W and Principal N, respectively. Teachers at both schools described a lack of

"clear directives" (Teacher N8B) while teachers at West added that there was a lack of communication regarding pertinent details such as ACT dates, state testing dates, and final exam schedules. This caused frustration when it impeded teachers' abilities to plan their courses or organize their work days.

Additionally, teachers at South High School felt that Principal S had a strong awareness regarding both that which occurred at South as well as leadership as a whole. Whereas the teachers at South felt that Principal S was aware of their informal collaborative activities, Teacher W3B was unsure if Principal W was aware of her participation in district-wide special education meetings. Teacher N4C also expressed her frustration that the administration at North "didn't even know" about her collaboration with two other teachers in the building.

Just as teachers' perceptions of their principal's competence varied across the three schools, so did their perceptions of their principal's values. Teachers at South and West were well aware of their principals' values, but teachers at West did not support those values as well as teachers at South did. Teachers at South bought in to the culture Principal S was creating by prioritizing students, academics, and overall school improvement and were proud to be a part of the success the school was experiencing as a result. They applauded the direction and vision Principal S had provided the school and noted his protection of class time as evidence of the importance he placed on academics. After the last evaluation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Principal S divided the faculty into four groups to address areas of weakness as indicated by the evaluation. Each group chose their own school improvement goal, and every teacher in the school worked together with their group to meet that goal. This led

teachers at South to feel included in the process of school improvement. Their input was valued, and they knew that.

Like teachers at North, teachers at West appreciated Principal W's efforts to protect instructional time and limit distractions. They viewed this as a reflection of the importance Principal W placed on students, learning, and test scores. While some teachers supported that emphasis, others worried that Principal W overemphasized "rules, order, and rigor" (Teacher W1D, Teacher W7B) and placed the school before the children in order of priority.

It was difficult for teachers at North to support Principal N's values because it was not clear to them what those values were. Ultimately, teachers named teamwork, state directives such as graduation rate and test scores, community involvement, safety, and keeping parents happy. In contrast to both West and South, teachers at North felt that teaching time was not valued and complained about persistent, unnecessary interruptions. Teacher N2B also wished Principal N would place more value on teacher collaboration. She wanted to collaborate with others who taught the same subject as she did but believed Principal N's lack of emphasis on collaboration created a hindrance.

Teachers across the three schools also varied in the level of support they felt from their principals. Teachers at South High School believed that Principal S genuinely cared about them and supported them. Only teachers at South specifically noted their principal's attentiveness to the needs of new and struggling teachers. The only complaint offered regarding Principal S was that consistency could be improved. Though Principal S was open about his expectations for the school and staff, consistently enforcing those expectations seemed to be a struggle.

Teachers at North had the same complaint about inconsistent discipline for both teachers and students. Nonetheless, teachers at North did feel supported. However, because the administrative staff at North consisted of one head principal who diffused leadership among his four assistant principals, teachers experienced support at North in a way that was different from those at West and South high schools. Most teachers felt supported by the assistant principal who provided them the most direct leadership but felt a lack of support from Principal N. They believed Principal N had failed to act upon issues they had brought forth and consequently felt that their voices were not valued.

Most teachers at West believed that Principal W's support in regard to providing structure and enforcing discipline was "extraordinary" (Teacher W5C) and better than any they had experienced in other schools. They felt Principal W's consistent discipline made their jobs easier. They also felt supported instructionally with Principal W providing training opportunities and handling all of the arrangements for that training. Only one teacher specifically mentioned not feeling supported by Principal W, and that was in regard to special education issues.

One might be tempted to assume that teachers who experienced greater administrative support also had stronger relationships with their principal. There was no evidence of such a connection in this study. Teachers at South reported strong relationships with their principal, while teachers at West did not. Teachers' relationships with Principal W varied based on the experiences they had with him. Those who had spent a significant amount of time with Principal W trusted him and felt they had a positive relationship with him. Others described confrontational encounters with Principal W in his office, in front of their students, and during faculty meetings. This led

teachers to refrain from being honest with Principal W for fear of what reaction he may display.

In contrast, teachers at South believed that Principal S trusted them and felt that trust was instrumental in their desire to work at South. Because of the genuine care Principal S exuded, the teachers reciprocated their trust in and loyalty to him. Communication was a contributing factor to that sense of trust. In addition to the opportunities teachers were given to voice their own needs and concerns, Principal S openly shared his expectations with his staff and communicated pertinent information with them. Teachers at South also valued Principal S's honesty with them, specifically in offering feedback about why he believed their ideas may not be feasible for implementation.

In summary, attitudes toward the leadership at the three schools in this study varied greatly. The relationships that the teachers at South had with Principal S and the faith they placed in him as a result of their perception of his competence and values were strong contributors to their attitudes toward their work. Though some teachers at West were pleased with the support they received from Principal W, many teachers described a lack of trust in Principal W's leadership. Both their positive and negative feelings toward Principal W were strong contributors to the attitudes they felt toward their work. Teachers at North offered some positive comments but were overall disappointed with Principal N's leadership. Their frustration over a lack of consistency, organization, and accountability were strong contributors to their attitudes toward their work, but those attitudes were not influenced by their relationship with Principal N. However, teachers'

attitudes toward their work at all three schools were also influenced by the nature of their coworkers. This theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Coworkers**

Teachers' interactions with their peers were an important contributor to teachers' attitudes toward their work at all three schools. Specifically, teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by coworker behaviors and collaboration. However, teachers at South were more passionate about this theme than teachers at West and North. Only teachers at South used the word "love" (Teacher S1A, Teacher S8B) to describe the people with whom they worked. Their relationships were characterized by open communication, humor, flexibility, respect, and a lack of jealousy. They seemed to generally care about and look out for one another and shared stories about teachers helping one another in times of personal crisis, celebrating together in times of personal joy, and supporting one another professionally.

Though teachers at all three schools felt there was a family atmosphere present, teachers at North only expressed that sentiment in the vocational building. Teachers at West and South also spoke at length about the personal friendships they held with some of their colleagues. Because of this closeness, teachers at both of those schools felt "comfortable with each other" (Teacher S8B, Teacher W5C), and their friendships provided a healthy foundation for handling conflict. They did not have to worry about hurting one another's feelings and valued the differences that others brought to the table. In contrast, teachers at North complained about other teachers whose personalities differed from theirs and described conflicts that had arisen as a result of those differences.

Teachers mentioned two factors that they believed contributed to the relationships they had with their colleagues—the size of the school in which they worked and the length of the relationships they held with one another. The faculty at North was double the size of South's faculty and four times that of West. Consequently, teachers at South and West made comments like, "It's a small school, so we pretty much know everybody" (Teacher S5A), whereas teachers at North complained that they knew very few members of the faculty. Those who worked in the vocational building at North credited the smaller size of that building with the closeness they felt between one another but felt they barely knew the teachers in the academic building.

Additionally, only the teachers at West and South described having lengthy relationships with their colleagues. Many of the teachers at South had worked at the school since its inception and believed the experience of opening a new school together and continuing to work together for the next fifteen years had helped forge the bond they felt with one another. Though many of the teachers interviewed at West had worked there for just a few years, they described working with one another in various capacities prior to their employment at West. The bond they held with one another and the traditions they built together were seamlessly integrated into the new professional life they shared at West.

Regardless of the depth of the relationships teachers experienced with their peers, teachers at all three schools talked about the importance of helping one another. Teachers at West spoke specifically about receiving help from their peers when they first began working at West. While teachers at North and South talked about receiving help from others in the beginning, too, they also indicated that they continued to desire and

seek out the help of their peers on a regular basis. Teachers at North and South also spoke at length about offering their assistance to others. Though a few of the teachers at North acknowledged that it was easier to help those who had positive attitudes and with whom you got along well, the general consensus among all of the teachers at North and South was that helping one another was a natural tendency and a reflection of their deep-rooted philosophical beliefs. They believed that you should treat others as you hoped to be treated in return and that, because they were all in the "same boat" (Teacher N5A), therefore, helping others benefited everyone.

The types of help that teachers described at North and South fell into two categories—sharing resources and sharing ideas. Teachers at South described sharing tests, lesson plans, and power points. Because several of the them had either been travelling teachers (unassigned to a particular room for the entire school day), had a classroom used by a travelling teacher, or worked in an inclusive classroom with two teachers, they were accustomed to either observing other teachers in action or being observed themselves. Thus, they looked to one another for feedback about their lessons and interactions with their students. Teachers at North also described sharing tests, rubrics, and other instructional materials, but observing one another in action was less common.

The teachers in this study participated in multiple types of professional interactions. Teachers at all three schools were required to attend the cross-curricular meetings that were observed for this study although the frequency of those meetings varied from school to school. Teachers at each school also met formally and informally

with various other groups, but only teachers at South and West were assigned to a second group—subject area groups at South and grade level groups at West.

When interviewed, all teachers were asked to describe the types of collaborative activities in which they engaged. Though all teachers were required to attend at least one meeting at each school, not all teachers mentioned those meetings. Teachers at West were the only teachers to consistently mention their team. When questioned about their omission, teachers at South and North gave varying explanations. Teachers at South defined collaboration as an activity in which teachers worked together to plan lessons or learn from one another as opposed to a meeting in which one person disseminated information to the rest of the group. Teachers at North also viewed their PLT meetings as a dissemination of information and, consequently, those who did not need the information found the meetings to be "a waste of time" (Teacher N6A) or "not worthwhile" (Teacher N2B).

In contrast, when teachers participated in what they felt was meaningful collaboration, those experiences influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work in a positive way. New teachers at all three schools found collaborative experiences to be especially valuable because of the expertise that their collaborative partners offered. They viewed this time as an opportunity to get answers to questions about their students, curriculum, pacing, and instructional ideas as well as the daily operations of their school. Table 26 lists the specific reasons teachers liked participating in meaningful collaborative experiences.

The most meaningful collaborations in which teachers engaged had several common components. They began with some sort of initial commonality, continued with

valuable discussion, manifested collective ingenuity, resulted in a new commonality, and were supported by certain necessary resources. For some teachers, the initial commonality came in the form of pre-existing relationships, common subject areas, common experiences, or common students. For others, group members shared a common purpose, goal, or mere desire to attend. Teachers at South and West both described feelings of "resentment" (Teacher W4A) when they felt their collaborative experiences were "forced" (Teacher S1A) or lacked purpose. Though many teachers at each school expressed a desire for their required groups to be department-based so that "they could collaborate about their work and their students" (Teacher S11A, Teacher S3B), teachers at West were less consistent. Some of the teachers at West did not share students or curriculum with the other teachers in their department and, therefore, preferred to collaborate with someone who had the "same set of problems" (Teacher W7B) as they did.

Each PLC group at South had a different purpose aimed at achieving a school-wide goal. Not only could teachers at South identify the purpose of their group, but many could also identify the purpose of other groups. Such clarity was not present at North or West. At these schools, each PLT group or team, respectively, followed the same agenda as the others. Nonetheless, when asked what the purposes of those groups were, many teachers stated that they did not know their group's purpose. Teacher W6A was the only interview participant at West who also served on Principal W's teacher advisory team and was the only interview participant who could definitely state the purpose of the teams at West.

Table 26

*Reasons Teachers Liked Meaningful Collaboration*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Learning about upcoming initiatives, assessments, and resources | x | x | |
| Preferred small group setting over email and large faculty meetings | x | | |
| Interacting and building relationships with other adults | x | | x |
| Reduced feelings of isolation | | x | |
| Increased feelings of support | | x | |
| Helping one another improve practice | x | x | x |

In contrast, initial commonality and purpose were evident and easily defined for the grassroots collaborative endeavors in which nearly every teacher participated. Teachers at all three schools found time to meet with the colleagues with whom they had a desire to collaborate. Special education teachers met with other regular and special education teachers with whom they shared students to monitor the students' progress and accommodations. Regular education teachers met with other teachers in their content area to discuss curriculum and instructional practices. Some teachers at each school also met with teachers in other content areas to plan cross-curricular units, while a few teachers at North and West met with teachers across their respective districts to share resources and brainstorm solutions to common problems they encountered.

In each of these cases, teachers felt that the common goal they shared with their collaborative partners was what made their collaborative experiences successful. Likewise, failure to share a common goal inhibited collaborative productivity. This was especially evident at North and West where teachers expressed their frustrations about trying to collaborate in assigned PLTs or team meetings, respectively, with colleagues to whom they felt disconnected. In these two schools, failure to rally around a common goal left teachers feeling unproductive because they lacked the common goal necessary to provide a foundation for collaborative discussion.

Discussion was an integral part of teacher collaboration at all three schools. For collaboration to be worthwhile, teachers expected their colleagues to participate in the discussion, offer "some sort of input" (Teacher N8B), and listen to what others had to say. Teachers at all three schools also believed that honesty was essential. Nonetheless, teachers at all three schools acknowledged that personality played a role in how comfortable teachers felt engaging in honest discussion with their colleagues. Teachers at South presumed that quiet teachers were merely introverted, but less vocal teachers at both North and South were quick to describe their silence as an issue of familiarity. As those teachers "got to know everyone" (Teacher N1A) in their group, they felt more comfortable offering suggestions and contributing to the discussion. Teacher S4A added that his silence was due to a known philosophical difference between himself and the other teachers in his PLC. Rather than cause a problem, he simply remained quiet.

Teachers at North, though, associated a lack of participation with a lack of meaningfulness. When teachers were interested in the topic at hand, they were eager to participate in collaborative endeavors. While the focus of discussions varied greatly

among collaborative groups and across the three schools, they were all strongly aligned to each group's purpose. However, only teachers at West and North mentioned discussions centered on maintaining consistency among group members, and only teachers at South mentioned discussions centered on school-wide improvement.

Teachers at all three schools most liked the ideas that they received from their colleagues during collaborative discussions. Though a few teachers at North and West included a reflective assessment of practice in this exchange, it was much more prevalent at South where teachers believed that sharing an honest and open critique of their successes and failures was necessary to achieve the growth they desired. Beyond just the sharing of ideas, teachers at South and North also shared resources with one another. Worksheets, lesson plans, lab equipment, and tests were shared at both schools, and English teachers at each school spoke at length about how difficult it was to teach new subject matter without such assistance from their peers. In fact, the only teacher that mentioned sharing resources at West was an English teacher. Aside from sharing ideas and/or resources, teachers at North and West also liked the opportunity that collaborative endeavors gave them to "vent" (Teacher N3C) about their professional struggles.

Though philosophical debate is often associated with meaningful collaborative discussion, there was only evidence of this at South where teachers gave specific examples of conflicts that had occurred and how resolutions were achieved. They believed that such philosophical debate was necessary for true collaboration and growth to occur. Though there was no evidence of philosophical debates among the collaborative endeavors at North and West, conflict was present at North both in and outside of PLT meetings. However, only three teachers at North mentioned efforts to

resolve conflict. Others indicated that conflict was either "swept under the rug" (Teacher N4C) or that teachers deferred to administrators to resolve any conflict that arose in collaborative settings. Teachers at North believed that the relationship they held with their colleagues dictated which approach they took, i.e. those with positive relationships were more inclined to discuss conflict with one another while those with negative relationships did not.

At West and South, most teachers described a general lack of conflict within their assigned teams and PLCs. This was most commonly attributed to the fact that these groups were not being asked to make major decisions upon which group members might disagree. Most of the conflict that occurred within teams at West was described as a result of Principal W's presence at team meetings or arose in collaborative settings outside of the assigned teams. Rather than address conflict at either school, most teachers tried to avoid it or deferred to their principal for resolution when possible. Though most of the collaborative work groups were not asked to make formal decisions, teachers felt that when a consensus needed to be reached, they usually did so.

Teachers at South and West both gauged the success of their assigned collaborative groups by what they produced, but the only assigned groups in this study that demonstrated any collective ingenuity were the PLCs at South. Specifically, PLC S-B created a hall of fame, and PLC S-C was in the process of designing a school-wide advisory program. In contrast, the purpose of the PLTs at North was to disseminate information, and the teams at West were designed to perform a preset list of tasks. Thus, neither setting provided much opportunity for collective ingenuity. Instead, collective ingenuity at North was manifested among Freshman Academy teams, departmental

teams, or grassroots collaboration between teachers. In these settings, teachers created projects and lessons, brainstormed solutions to shared problems, and set expectations for student performance. However, the only mention of new ideas devised at West came from Counselor W1D in reference to the group of senior sponsors and the new plans they had decided to implement for graduation—new student seating arrangements and presentation of faculty.

Only teachers at South experienced a new commonality within their assigned collaborative work groups as a result of their discussion, brainstorming, and problem solving. PLC S-C built a communal set of resources to be used the following year in the implementation of their new school-wide advisory program, and there was evidence of a shared language in PLC S-A. Outside of the collaborative work groups, there was also evidence of another shared language school wide.

The most common social resources mentioned by teachers at all three schools pertained to respect and professionalism. Teachers expected their collaborative partners to demonstrate professional respect through humility, empathy, and considerate behavior. They also expected their collaborative partners to be present, have a positive, cooperative attitude, and stay on task. Just as teachers believed these resources were crucial aspects of their successful collaborations, teachers at North also expressed frustration when these resources were not present. Teachers at South and West emphasized that these expectations extended beyond their collaborative activities, too. If teachers failed to demonstrate respect and professionalism outside of a collaborative setting, conflict would arise and create tension within the collaborative setting.

Teachers at South also placed value on compliance. Because PLCs were required, they expected group members to "be receptive" (Teacher S9C), exhibit a commitment to achieving the group's short-term and long-term goals, and follow through with any promises made. They believed that everyone's opinions were valued equally and that there was no hierarchy among the teachers at South. Teachers at West added that professional competence and trust must be present, and collaborative partners had to "pull their fair weight" (Teacher W7B). Though some teachers at West believed their current trust in one another provided the foundation upon which they were building their collaborative partnerships, others noted they were still in the process of building that necessary trust.

In summary, teachers at all three schools expressed both positive and negative feelings regarding the nature of their coworkers. Most of the comments regarding PLCs at South and team meetings at West were positive. Teachers at West had not always felt that way, but over the course of their first year in teams teachers had grown to value spending time with one another in professional discourse. In contrast, few teachers at North found value in PLT meetings. They spoke much more highly about their collaborative endeavors in the Freshman Academy teams, in their departments, and with other teachers. Though teachers at West were relatively positive about their teams, some of them also preferred to collaborate with teachers in their same subject area. Because of the relatively small size of West and the manner in which the school schedule was arranged, though, some teachers found such collaboration difficult or unnecessary. In addition to the nature of the administration and coworkers, teachers' attitudes toward

their work at all three schools were also impacted by the nature of their work. This final theme is addressed next.

**Nature of the Work**

Teachers at all three schools had positive feelings about their career. Even those who never intended to become teachers were pleased with their decision to do so. They mentioned how much they enjoyed coming to work and described teaching as a calling or a passion. Many viewed their career as an opportunity to help someone or make a difference in their life. Several also related teaching to their own positive experiences with school when they were students. Only one teacher in the study admitted that teaching was not "all [his] heart's desire" (Teacher S4A).

When asked how they got into teaching, 19 of the 28 teachers interviewed indicated that teaching was not their first choice as a career. In fact, a few mentioned their concerted efforts to avoid teaching as a profession. Nonetheless, they all expressed very positive feelings about their career. They enjoyed influencing how students viewed the world and teaching them something new, especially in a field about which they felt passionate.

Adding to the general aspects of their career, teachers' attitudes toward their work at North and South were also influenced by the passion they felt for their subject areas. Many named that passion as a motivating factor in choosing education as a career. However, only two teachers at West mentioned their subject area when describing what they liked about their jobs. Instead, nearly every teacher at West talked about the students. Though teachers spoke positively about their own students, they were also impressed with the student body as a whole. They described the students' behavior and

attitudes as better than they had experienced at other schools and felt the relationships they built with students outweighed any negative experiences they may have had with other aspects of their job.

Teachers' attitudes about their students at South and North were mostly positive, as well. Beyond their enjoyment of working and building relationships with adolescent students, they also described their students as supportive and caring. They expressed their frustrations, though, with students' attendance, behavior, and apathy. Furthermore, they lamented the lack of support they received from students' parents.

Teachers at all three schools also noted how their workloads influenced their attitudes toward their work. Though some complained about grading papers, most expressed frustration with paperwork and other responsibilities that were unrelated to their primary responsibility of instruction. Two teachers had previously studied to be or held roles as school counselors in addition to Counselor W1D, and all three of these individuals made reference to the responsibilities also placed on school counselors outside of counseling students.

Teachers at all three schools differentiated between their positive internal feelings regarding their careers and the negative feelings they felt regarding external forces that affected those careers. Teacher W6A best summarized the feelings of most teachers interviewed when he said, "Everything I have a problem with is not something any of us at this school can do anything about. It's at the highest levels. Until people are voted out, that's not going to change." Specifically, they expressed frustration over the new teacher evaluation system, testing, Common Core, and the legislators who put those initiatives in place.

Teachers expressed their hatred for the paperwork associated with the new evaluation system and considered it an extra responsibility that took away from their primary role of instruction. They stressed over state testing and were disgruntled with the state's value-added system for measuring student growth on those assessments. Furthermore, they were frustrated with the process of transitioning to Common Core and the influx of testing associated with that move. Veteran teachers felt that all of these changes combined had caused their jobs to be less enjoyable than they used to be and placed the blame on state officials who had little to no experience with the work of public education.

Teachers at North and South expressed additional frustrations related to politics that resulted in their schools lacking appropriate resources for instruction. Amidst large amounts of money that had been spent to improve athletic facilities, teachers described science labs that were not properly equipped for either Biology or Chemistry, desks that were falling apart, and a lack of sufficient technology. Other teachers at North complained about the building itself, describing it as a dump. Rather than repair North or build a new school to replace it, district officials had chosen to build a separate new school to alleviate overcrowding at North. In doing so, teachers at North perceived that too many teachers had been pulled from their school to work at the new school thus resulting in smaller class sizes at the new school compared to those at North. Additionally, multiple teachers at North felt demonized by the media and not respected by those "at the top" (Teacher N4C).

When asked if pay was an issue for teachers in the study, answers varied based on the school at which the teachers taught. Teachers at North were more vocally disgruntled

than those at South and West. Though some teachers responded mildly with phrases like "somewhat" (Teacher N1A) and "of course I would like to be paid more" (Teacher N3C), three teachers again expressed their frustration with political decisions in their district. Some teachers chose to work in the district because the salary was higher than their home district, but they were frustrated with district officials' failure to acknowledge that teachers across the district had voiced their preference to be paid year-round rather than only the ten months school was in session. Teachers at South also expressed frustration with the politics surrounding teacher pay in their district, but the complaints were not as prolific. Teachers felt their pay did not accurately reflect their workload but acknowledged that they knew the pay when they chose the profession.

Teachers at West, however, were unanimous that pay was not an issue for them. Many of them had worked elsewhere and explained that the pay and/or benefits at West were better than any they had previously received. In fact, three teachers had come to West specifically for the pay. In contrast to North and South, teachers at West believed they paid appropriately for their job responsibilities.

**Summary of Research Question 1**

Teachers' attitudes towards their work at all three school were influenced by the nature of the leadership in their building, the nature of their coworkers, and the nature of the work they do. However, their attitudes toward each of these themes varied drastically from school to school. Three variables contributed to teacher's attitudes toward their leadership at all three schools—perceived administrative competence, administrative support, and administrative values. A fourth variable—teachers' relationship with their

principal—was only present at South and West high schools. Table 27 shows teachers' attitudes towards each of these variables.

Two variables contributed to teachers' attitudes toward their coworkers at all three schools—coworker behaviors and collaboration. Table 28 shows a list of ten coworker behaviors and the extent to which those behaviors were present at each school. According to Little's 1981a study that serves as the conceptual framework for this research, there are seven critical elements of effective collaborative work groups. Table 29 outlines the extent to which teachers indicated six of those critical elements were present among the assigned collaborative work groups that were observed for this study and the other collaborative endeavors in which teachers partook. The seventh element is that of necessary social resources. Teachers at different schools indicated varying social resources they believed must be present for collaboration to be successful. Hence, Table 30 depicts which social resources were deemed necessary at each school.

Two variables also contributed to teachers' attitudes toward their work at all three schools—their internal feelings about their careers and the external forces that affected those careers. Teachers at all three schools agreed that their students, their workload, and their subject area affected the internal feelings they had about their jobs. They also agreed that their state's evaluation system, testing system, and transition to Common Core were external forces that affected their attitudes toward their career. However, there were other contributing factors that were not unanimous across all three schools. Table 31 illustrates these similarities and differences.

Table 27

*Teachers' Attitudes Regarding the Nature of the Leadership in Their Building*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Perceived Administrative Competence | ☺ | ☹ | ☹ |
| Administrative Support | ☺ | 😐 | ☺ |
| Administrative Values | ☺ | ☹ | 😐 |
| Relationship with Principal | ☺ | N/A | 😐 |

*Note.* ☺ = mostly positive; 😐 = either neutral or a mix of positive and negative; ☹ = mostly negative.

Table 28

*Coworker Behaviors Present*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Professionalism | ☐ | ☐ | ☑ |
| Family Atmosphere | ☑ | ☑[1] | ☑ |
| Personal Friendships | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| All Faculty Know One Another | ☑ | ⊗ | ☑ |
| Lengthy Relationships | ☑ | ☐ | ☑ |
| Helping New Teachers | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| Helping Other Teachers | ☑ | ☑ | ⊘ |
| Observing Other Teachers | ☑ | ⊘ | ⊘ |
| Sharing Ideas | ☑ | ☑ | ☑ |
| Sharing Resources | ☑ | ☑ | ⊘ |

*Note.* ☑ = common; ⊘ = uncommon; ⊗ = not present; ☐ = not mentioned

[1] The family atmosphere at North was only present in the vocational building.

Table 29

*Presence of Critical Elements for Effective Collaborative Work Groups*

| | | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Initial Commonality | Explicit Purpose | ✵ | ★ | ★ |
| Discussion | Professional Topics | ✵ | ✵ | ✵ |
| | Reflective Assessment of Practice | ✵ | ✵ | ★ |
| | Philosophical Debate | ★ | ■ | ■ |
| Collective Ingenuity | Joint Participation in Research | ✵ | ■ | ■ |
| | Joint Creation of Artifacts | ✵ | ★ | ★ |
| Deprivatization of Practice | | ■ | ■ | ■ |
| New Commonality | Shared Language | ✵ | ■ | ■ |

*Note.* ✵ = present in observed collaborative work group; ★ = present in other collaborative endeavors; ■ = not present

Table 30

*Social Resources Necessary for Effective Collaboration*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Respect | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Professionalism | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Commitment | ✓ | | |
| All Members Treated as Equals | ✓ | | |
| Competence | | | ✓ |
| Trust | | | ✓ |

Table 31

*Contributing Factors to Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Careers*

| | | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Internal Feelings (Positive) | Subject Area | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Students | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Making a Difference | | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Schedule | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Autonomy | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Internal Feelings (Negative) | Students | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Workload | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| External Forces (Negative) | Evaluation System | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Testing | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Common Core | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| | Lacking Resources | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Class Size | | ✓ | |
| | Pay | ✓ | ✓ | |
| | Media Treatment | | ✓ | |
| | Technology Push | | ✓ | |

This concludes analysis for Research Question 1: How do the critical elements of effective collaborative work groups influence teachers' attitudes toward their work? While elements of effective collaborative work groups did influence teachers' attitudes toward their work, teachers' experiences with collaboration addressed only one aspect of of their overall feelings about their job. Teachers' attitudes about collaboration were closely related to their attitudes about their coworkers, which was only one of three themes determined to influence teachers' attitudes toward their work. Teachers' attitudes were also influenced by the nature of the leadership in their building and the nature of the work of they do. These results held true for all three schools. A cross-case analysis of Research Question 2 will be presented next.

## Research Question 2: Cross-Case Analysis

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of 3 principal interviews, 27 teacher interviews, and 1 counselor interview across three schools. For the purposes of this study, the principals of South, West, and North high schools are referred to as Principal S, Principal W, and Principal N, respectively. A summary description of the three principals' educational experience is provided in Table 32. More information regarding teacher interview participants is provided in Table 7, Table 12, Table 17, and Table 25.

For this stage of data analysis, all interviews were transcribed and coded using Research Question 2 as a lens. Codes were categorized in a three-step process to

Table 32

*Principals' Experience in Education*

| | Educational Career | Tenure at South/North/West | Tenure as Principal of South/North/West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Principal S | 15 | 13 | 3 |
| Principal N | 31 | 22 | 7 |
| Principal W | 11 | 3 | 3 |

ultimately arrive at four major themes. The code mapping process for Research Question 2 is shown in Table 5 in Chapter 3.

**Time**

Every teacher in the study was assigned to one observed collaborative work group at their school. Principal S indicated that the PLCs at South were "a priority" to him and that it was important to him that all of his teachers "take this seriously." Thus, he organized the PLCs so that teachers could meet during their planning time and not have to stay after school. Principal N had the same intention holding only one meeting outside of school hours existing for the purpose of providing a make-up opportunity for those who were not able to attend during their planning time. Like Principal S, Principal W also placed an "importance" on the teams he had established at West. However, he differed from Principal S and Principal N in that he required the teams at West to meet before or after school.

Principal S was the only principal in the study to specifically note the importance of setting time limits on required collaborative work group meetings and maintaining a

routine schedule for those meetings. Specifically, he believed that groups needed a minimum of 30 minutes to be productive but did not want to consume more than 45 minutes of the teachers' 90-minute plan times. Teachers at North were frustrated with the lack of consistency in their meeting schedule, and Principal W's failure to establish time limits left teachers at West feeling he did not respect their time.

Teachers at all three schools were generally positive about the amount of time they were required to meet but varied in their opinions about the frequency of those meetings. Most teachers at North and South felt that two weeks between meetings was optimal because it provided time to process the information they received at meetings and adequately perform any task needed before the next meeting. Teachers at West felt that once a month was an adequate amount of time to accomplish the minimal goals set forth for their teams.

Teachers at all three schools preferred to meet during their planning times rather than outside of school hours. Teachers at West indicated that meeting outside of school hours placed a time constraint on teachers and also conflicted with the bus duty schedule. No team meeting ever experienced 100% attendance because at least one member was always on bus duty. Though Principal W acknowledged that a teacher missing due to a doctor's appointment meant a team missing "a significant percentage of the team," there was no mention of a solution to the attendance problem caused by the bus duty schedule.

There were also problems with arranging collaborative work groups by planning period. At South, there was only one PLC per plan period. This meant teachers were not able to choose their group, which Principal S saw as a hindrance to teacher motivation and investment in the PLC process. Also, because South used a block-schedule format,

groups changed in composition every semester as teachers' plan periods changed. Principal S believed the groups could be more productive if they could stay together longer than one semester. Though some teachers acknowledged that this change meant new, fresh ideas, most teachers agreed with Principal S saying, "Right when we're getting a momentum going it changes the next semester" (Teacher S2B).

Rarely was time set aside for other collaborative meetings at any of the schools. Instead, teachers conducted as much business over email as possible, met during school hours when the opportunity arose, and met before or after school when necessary. However, all three principals provided their teachers with classrooms in close proximity to others with whom they collaborated most. At South and West, teachers of the same department were located together. While this was mostly true at North High School, too, Freshman Academy teachers were located in a different wing of the building next to other teachers on their Freshman Academy team. Principal S worried that such a model created departmental closeness but hindered the development of cross-department relationships, but both he and the teachers at South offered examples of relationships that minimized that theory. Teachers at all three schools liked this arrangement because it gave them the opportunity to collaborate during class changes. In rare cases, some teachers' classrooms at North and West were isolated from others', and each of those teachers specifically noted this lack of classroom proximity as a problem.

Principal W indicated that he intended to create common plan times for departmental collaboration the following school year, but until such a move could be arranged teachers' close proximity to one another was the only resource that supported their ability to collaborate during the school day. Principal S was unable to give

departments common plan times, so he arranged for them to have a common lunchtime instead. Principal N also provided common departmental lunchtimes, but again Freshman Academy teachers had a common lunchtime with one another instead of their departments. When these opportunities did not provide adequate time for collaboration, teachers at both South and West mentioned meeting informally with their colleagues after school while they waited on students to clear the premises or in the morning before students arrived.

Time as a structural resource created mixed emotions. Though teachers' attitudes regarding this resource varied depending on the type of collaboration, they remained fairly consistent across all three schools. In general, when teachers felt their meetings were purposeful and necessary, they did not object to frequent meetings or meetings held outside of school hours. Teachers at West also noted that their attitudes toward the frequency of team meetings would likely improve if those meetings were held during the school day.

The greatest disagreement occurred in all three schools—whether or not departments should be required to meet and, if so, when. Some teachers felt the time they spent collaborating with their departments was sufficient, and there was no need for that collaboration "to be forced on us more often" (Teacher S2B). Other teachers commented that it would be nice to have formal time set aside and required to be used for department meetings. Teacher S6B noted that such time would be especially valuable for her as a first-year teacher.

Though teachers at all three schools were grateful for what time they had to collaborate, time was a structural resource on which each administration in this study had

room to improve. Principal S and Principal W were each aware of this and contemplating ways to remedy the situation. Aside from time, the structure of collaborative meetings was another prominent theme and is discussed next.

**Structure**

Principals at three schools assigned teachers to their respective collaborative work groups for a specific reason. At South, they were merely assigned based on their planning time, but teachers understood both how their groups were formed and what the purpose of their group was. Principal N intended for teachers to be assigned to either a math or literacy PLT based on which was more applicable to their subject area, but that was not always the case. Consequently, teachers who felt misplaced were often resistant to the purpose of their PLT. Teachers at West, however, had no idea how their groups were formed. They guessed they were meeting with teachers of other subject areas so that they would get to know one another better, but Principal W's intent was for teachers to meet with other teachers who shared the same students in hopes of working together to improve student success. Failure to communicate this intent left teachers unable to accomplish the unspoken purpose set forth for their team and feeling that their time would be better spent in a team with others whom they had more in common such as their department.

Regardless of composition, teachers at both North and South mentioned how much they liked the size of their required collaborative work groups. In each case, there were between 10 and 15 people per group, a size that teachers preferred over large faculty meetings. Principal N indicated that one of the reasons for creating the PLTs at North was to offer teachers a small group setting in which they could have "a voice." This was

precisely what some teachers liked about the smaller sized groups. Teachers at both schools felt more comfortable speaking up and asking questions in these smaller settings. Yet other teachers at North felt this opportunity was not fully maximized.

In addition to size and regularly scheduled meetings, Principal S also believed that teachers' being able to expect "this is how we're going to conduct each meeting" was essential to collaborative success. PLCs at South were the only required collaborative work groups in this study to be given parameters within which their groups must operate. Yet some of the greatest complaints about collaborative activities at South pertained to how those PLC meetings themselves were individually organized and executed. In addition to the time limits set forth by Principal W, the last five minutes of PLC meetings were to be reserved for teachers to share concerns that were not PLC related. Additionally, all PLC members were to take turns as leader, timekeeper, and notes taker. Beyond that, the actual structure of the PLC meeting was left to the group to establish. Some groups struggled with that freedom, and teachers in those groups were frustrated with the lack of structure in their meetings.

Though teachers at West were not given a set of parameters within which their teams must operate, Principal W did offer them a guide. He chose to "initiate" (Principal W) the process of team meetings through a book study using Patrick Lencioni's *The Five Dysfunctions of Team*. He believed this choice "gave them that structure early. It just gave them the model as to what these meetings should look like if I'm not available, if I'm not able to sit in." His goal was to "coach them as to how a true PLC works, how it's teacher led rather than administrator led." Unfortunately, not all the faculty at West made those connections. The only two faculty members that found value in the book were

those involved in other leadership positions at West. Though others liked the book, they were unable to see the connections between the business it described and the school in which they worked.

While group members took turns leading individual meetings at both South and West, an administrator was tasked with overseeing each of the required collaborative work groups in this study. Many teachers felt the productivity of their collaborative time together hinged on the leadership that administrator provided. This theme is discussed next.

**Leadership**

Principal S believed that one of the best ways he could show his support to the collaborative work groups at South was to "make sure people are there," including an administrator. Attendance was less important at West and North. While teachers at both schools were required to participate with their team or PLT, respectively, neither Principal W nor Principal N were overly concerned with teachers missing a meeting. In stark contrast to Principal S, Principal N specifically excused coaches from meetings because they "don't have much time to meet." This lack of accountability was pervasive at North and was a source of frustration for the faculty there.

Principal S noted how important it was that he "pick the right people to lead" the collaborative work groups at South. Principal N delegated that task to an assistant principal and indicated that administrators volunteered to lead certain groups without any particular reason. Nonetheless, teachers at both North and South agreed they needed someone who "knows what they're doing" (Teacher S3B) to lead their groups. However, they did not always agree that such leadership was in place at either school.

Because both schools followed a model in which teachers changed collaborative work groups each semester, teachers at both North and South had experienced working with a variety of administrators and felt strongly about how much those administrators' leadership affected teachers' attitudes toward collaboration. Teachers praised administrators who were positive and knowledgeable, communicated effectively, motivated conversation and participation, listened to concerns, kept the group focused, and followed through with any unanswered questions from the previous meeting. They complained about administrators who were not present, acted like leading a group was a burden, or seemed unable to recognize a group's inefficiency and adjust accordingly.

Principal W tried to "strategically place" one member from his teacher advisory group on each team at West to "help facilitate the process," but it was he who ultimately provided the leadership for each team. He tried to attend as many meetings as possible and recognized when teams "need a little more facilitating than others." Though he wanted the teams to be self-sufficient without him, he felt that because this was the first year of team meetings it was his responsibility to set the agenda. Like teachers at North and South, teachers at West valued that.

Unlike the teachers at North and South, though, teachers at West had mixed feelings about Principal W's presence in their team meetings. While he believed his presence was "extremely important," many of the teachers viewed his presence as a hindrance. They liked knowing that he was involved in the process but felt that their teams were more productive when he was not there. They felt that team members were more quiet and meetings were more tense when Principal W was present. In contrast, they felt more comfortable speaking honestly and openly with their team members when

Principal W was not present. Furthermore, they felt team meetings were a good opportunity to "blow off steam, talk about things going on in the classroom" (Teacher W7B) but felt they did not have the freedom to do so when Principal W was present.

The final structural resource that teachers discussed was that of decision-making authority. The number of decisions made by teachers varied from school to school. This final theme is presented next.

**Decisions**

Though teachers at all three schools were limited to the number of decisions they were given the authority to make, teachers at West described the most freedom regarding decisions. Principal W admitted that his natural leadership tendency "lends itself to dictation" but realized such a leadership style would not help him achieve his overall goal of lessening his faculty's dependence upon him. Hence, he felt the need to "step back and hand over the reins a bit more." He believed that giving more power to the teachers provided a learning experience for them and allowed them "to see I trust them."

This power was not given over to the teams, though. As the first year West had implemented teams, Principal W felt their primary purpose was opening dialogue rather than making decisions. They were permitted limited freedom to decide when and where to meet but nothing more. In contrast, grade-level sponsor groups and Principal W's teacher advisory group were both given the freedom to make more significant decisions that affected the entire school such as changes to graduation traditions and how often departments would be required to meet the following year during their common plan time. No other groups in this study had such power.

Principal S and Principal N also expressed their desire for teacher input but did not allow their teachers to make any major decisions that would affect the entire school. Principal S admitted that his leadership style was very "top down" but explained that when he was hired to be the principal of South he was told that he "needed to be pretty tough because a lot of things had gotten delegated that maybe shouldn't have been delegated" under the previous administration. While PLC groups were given varying amounts of autonomy, the decisions they made were limited to when and where they would meet and what process they would use to accomplish their goal. Nonetheless, Principal S had tremendous respect for his teachers' opinions and sought their input as often as possible. In fact, such was the purpose of all four PLC groups as well as the department heads and teacher advisory group that met with Principal S. However, Principal S always made the final decision.

At least twice during his interview, Principal N spoke about how important it was to have small PLT meetings "so [teachers] could have a voice," and while teachers did feel free to voice their opinions in PLT meetings, they were granted less decision-making authority than any other group in the study. Unlike the observed groups at West and South, PLTs were not given the freedom to select when and where their group would meet. Instead, all decisions pertaining to PLTs were made by the administrator assigned to that PLT. Though the teachers at North were not permitted to make any school-wide decisions, they spoke more about the decisions they made in their non-observed collaborative settings than did teachers from South and West. They described "easy" (Teacher N6A) decisions regarding pace, curriculum, and student awards, and more

difficult decisions involving grading philosophies, discipline philosophies, and other "sensitive matters" (Teacher N8B).

Though Counselor W1D did note that the freedom he had been given to make decisions as a senior sponsor made him feel trusted by his administration, none of the teachers in the study complained about not having the authority to make school-wide decisions. In fact, many teachers indicated a lack of conflict in their collaborative endeavors as a result of not making decisions. Teachers at South added that they were at times "eager to defer" (Teacher S9C) to Principal S for final decisions because they trusted that any decision he made would be well thought out.

**Summary of Research Question 2**

Principals at each of the three schools in this study influenced teachers' collaborative experiences through four structural resources—time, meeting structure, leadership, and decision-making authority. More important to teachers than whether or not they gathered inside or outside school hours was that the time they spent together be meaningful. They especially appreciated meetings with time limits and were grateful for opportunities for grassroots collaboration throughout the day made possible by their close proximity to the peers with whom they collaborated most. They differed, however, on whether or not departments should be required to meet. Several teachers wished for more time with the colleagues in their department and looked to their principal to create such a time. Others felt no need to meet with the colleagues in their department and hoped their principals would not impose such a requirement. These opinions were consistent across all three schools. The specific ways in which principals supported time for the observed collaborative work groups in this study is presented in Table 33.

Table 33

*How Principals Supported Time for Observed Collaborative Work Groups*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Time to meet during the school day | ✓ | ✓ | |
| Required frequency of meetings | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Time-limited meetings | ✓ | | |

Though all three principals provided structure for observed group meetings, that structure was not always made known explicitly to teachers. In regard to group composition, this caused frustration at North when teachers felt they were misplaced and left teachers at West unable to fulfill the purpose Principal W had intended for them of discussing students whom they shared. Furthermore, Principal W required teachers to read a book modeling the meeting format he desired, but because teachers were not explicitly told the purpose of the book they failed to find value in it. The extent to which structure was provided and explicitly communicated to teachers at all three schools is indicated in Table 34.

Principals at all three schools provided leadership for the observed collaborative work groups, but the extent to which that leadership yielded productive meetings varied. An administrator was present for all meetings of the observed collaborative work groups at North and South but not always at West. Though teachers at West liked that Principal W provided an agenda for their meetings, many of them felt their groups were more productive when he was not present. Additionally, Principal S was the only principal in

Table 34

*How Principals Provided Structure for Observed Collaborative Work Groups*

| | South | North | West |
|---|---|---|---|
| Well-organized Group Compositions | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Explicit Group Compositions | ✓ | | |
| Meeting Format | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Explicit Meeting Format | ✓ | | |
| Limited Group Size ( $\leq$ 15) | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

the study who emphasized attendance at these meetings. Table 35 provides a summary of the extent to which each principal provided leadership for the observed collaborative work groups at their school.

All three principals spoke about how important it was for their teachers to have a voice, but none of the observed collaborative work groups in this study were granted the power to make decisions that would affect their entire school. However, other collaborative work groups at West were given that power. Otherwise, the only decisions that observed collaborative work groups at South and West were permitted to make were those that affected their individual groups such as when and where they would meet and what process they would use to achieve group goals. The observed collaborative work groups at North were not given any decision-making authority. While most teachers attributed the peace in their observed collaborative work groups to a lack of being asked to make decisions, teachers at West who were involved in decisions that affected their

Table 35

*Extent to Which Principals Provided Leadership for Observed Collaborative Work Groups*

| | Administrator Present at (All/Most) Meetings | Attendance Emphasized (Yes/No) | Productive Meetings Facilitated |
|---|---|---|---|
| South | All | Yes | Depended on Administrator |
| North | All | No | Depended on Administrator |
| West | Most | No | Depended on Principal W's presence or absence |

school seemed empowered by that ability. Table 36 indicates which groups in the study were allowed to make school-wide decisions.

This section concludes analysis for Research Question 2: How do principals support the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? For collaborative work groups to be successful, certain structural resources must be provided by administration. The teachers and principals at all three schools spoke about four structural resources—time for teachers to meet, structure of collaborative meetings, leadership for collaborative work groups, and the decisions that teachers are allowed to make within collaborative work groups. The extent to which these resources were provided varied greatly across the three schools. Teachers at South were given the most time for collaboration and the most structure for required collaborative meetings; teachers at West were given the most decision-making authority; and all three principals struggled

Table 36

*Extent to Which Principals Provided Decision-Making Authority to Collaborative Work Groups*

| | Decisions that Affected Only Their Group | Decisions that Affected Their Entire School |
|---|---|---|
| South | | |
| Observed Collaborative Work Groups | ✓ | |
| Non-Observed Collaborative Work Groups | ✓ | |
| North | | |
| Observed Collaborative Work Groups | | |
| Non-Observed Collaborative Work Groups | ✓ | |
| West | | |
| Observed Collaborative Work Groups | ✓ | |
| Non-Observed Collaborative Work Groups | ✓ | ✓ |

to provide consistent leadership for required collaborative meetings. Research Question 3 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 3: Cross-Case Analysis

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 3: What is the extent of adherence to the critical element and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups? Data collected for this question came in the form of ten collaborative work group observations and artifact collection. For the purposes of this

study, the observed collaborative work groups at South High School are referred to as Group S-A, Group S-B, and Group S-C; the observed collaborative work groups at North High School are referred to as Group N-A, Group N-B, and Group N-C; the observed collaborative work groups at West High School are referred to as Group W-A, Group W-B, Group W-C, and Group W-D. Principal S, Principal N, and Principal W referred to these groups as PLCs, PLTs, and teams, respectively.

The observation protocol for this study included seven elements of effective collaborative work groups—initial commonality, discussion, unified norms, collective ingenuity, deprivatization of practice, new commonality, and resources supplied (see Appendix E). In each observation, frequency counts were calculated to identify the number of items on the observation protocol for which evidence was observed during the group meeting. These numbers are referred to as the Group Frequency. As a reference, the Maximum Possible frequency for each component was also noted. The results for all ten observed collaborative work groups are provided in Table 37. The average frequency counts for each school are provided in Table 38. Additionally, frequency counts were calculated to identify the extent to which individual group members contributed to the collaborative process. That information is recorded for South High School, North High School, and West High School in Chapter 4, Chapter 5, and Chapter 6, respectively.

The observed collaborative work groups at South had higher frequency counts than those at North and West for five of the seven elements—discussion, unified norms, collective ingenuity, deprivatization of practice, and new commonality. Unlike groups at North and West, there was evidence that PLCs at South had an explicit definition of norms, autonomy, decision-making authority, and a communal

Table 37

*Observation Frequency Counts by Group*

| | South | | | North | | | West | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| COMPONENT | S-A | S-B | S-C | N-A | N-B | N-C | W-A | W-B | W-C | W-D | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
| Initial Commonality | 2 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 3 |
| Discussion | 7 | 7 | 7 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 4 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 0 | 0 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 6 | 6 | 8 | 8 | 8 | 5 | 9 | 5 | 5 | 8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 21 | 21 | 28 | 17 | 20 | 11 | 21 | 20 | 13 | 21 | 43 |

Table 38

*Average Group Frequency Counts by School*

| COMPONENT | South | North | West | MAXIMUM POSSIBLE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Initial Commonality | 2 | 2.3 | 2.5 | 3 |
| Discussion | 7 | 4.7 | 6.3 | 7 |
| Unified Norms | 1.7 | 0 | .8 | 5 |
| Collective Ingenuity | 4 | .7 | 1.3 | 7 |
| Deprivatization of Practice | 1 | .7 | .8 | 2 |
| New Commonality | 1 | .7 | .5 | 4 |
| Resources Supplied | 6.7 | 7 | 6.8 | 15 |
| TOTAL | 23.3 | 16 | 18.8 | 43 |

*Note.* Maximums and minimums for each average are available in Table 37.

set of resources. Group members were committed and held accountable to one another, jointly participated in research, developed curriculum, and evaluated student learning, and gave time and attention to acclimate new members to group norms.

In further comparison, the observed collaborative work groups at West had higher frequency counts than those at North for six of the seven elements, including that of Initial Commonality in which they also had a higher frequency count than the observed collaborative work groups at South. Unlike groups at North, there was evidence that team members at West trusted one another, expressed a shared responsibility for

achieving their group's purpose, agreed upon actions to be completed, and held discussions aimed at improving practice.

In a comparison of the seven elements, the observed collaborative work groups at South and West both demonstrated the highest and lowest relative frequency counts in the same categories. PLCs at South had the highest possible frequency counts in the category of Discussion. The teams at West also had the highest relative frequency counts in this category. Evidence showed that group members at these schools adhered to professional topics, participated in reflective assessment of practice, kept discussion aimed at improving practice, suspended feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions, questioned without predetermined answers, listened to one another, and engaged in philosophical debate. These groups also had their lowest relative frequency counts in the category of New Commonality. There was no evidence that members of these groups had grown together in such a way that they had developed a shared style.

In contrast, the observed collaborative work groups at North had the highest relative frequency counts in the category of Initial Commonality. Evidence showed that PLTs had an explicit purpose and that group members exhibited a shared commitment to that purpose as well as a similar belief system. However, the PLTs demonstrated the lowest possible frequency counts in the category of Unified Norms. There was no explicit definition of norms, monitoring of norms, or reviewing of norms during the observations of their meetings. Members did not express a shared responsibility for achieving their group's purpose, nor was there any evidence that members of those groups were held accountable to one another.

The types of artifacts collected also varied greatly across the three schools. Artifacts at South were specific to the PLC group in which they were collected. They included solutions group members had researched to achieve their group's purpose, minutes from previous meetings, agendas, and documents that were jointly created within PLCs. These artifacts demonstrated the professional nature of PLC meetings, explicitly stated their PLC's purpose, and showed evidence of group members' shared commitment to achieve that purpose. They further demonstrated a shared responsibility among group member to achieve their group's purpose and improve practice by jointly participating in researching new and creative solutions and discussing the use of those solutions in teachers' practice. These artifacts formed a shared communal set of resources for PLC groups and included in their presentation was a shared vocabulary. Furthermore, these artifacts showed evidence of Principal S's participation, communication among group members between meetings, and structural resources provided by Principal S such as group leadership and meeting structure.

Though the same artifact was collected in each PLT meeting at North, it was also modified to be specific for the PLT in which it was distributed. It was modified in format (single-sided vs. double-sided), delivery method (one sheet at a time with discussion in between vs. all at once), and content (literacy only, math only, or both literacy and math). The artifact itself provided evidence of the groups' purpose while the delivery method demonstrated the variation in the structural resource of leadership provided to each PLT group. No artifacts were available to collect at West. Research Question 4 will be addressed next.

## Research Question 4: Cross-Case Analysis

This section will examine the data collected for Research Question 4: How are teachers' attitudes toward their work influenced by the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups are met? Data collected for this question came in the form of ten collaborative work group observations, 27 teacher interviews, and one counselor interview.

Excerpts from teacher and counselor interviews regarding teachers' attitudes toward their work were grouped into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. General responses were analyzed first and a percentage was given indicating the percent of responses that were positive, neutral, and negative. Second, only those responses about collaboration were analyzed and a percentage was given indicating the percent of positive, negative, and neutral responses that pertained to collaboration.

Responses are given for each school. Each school's total frequency count from the observation protocol is used as a quantitative indication of the extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met. Results are illustrated in Table 39.

The extent to which the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups were met was highest at South High School and lowest at North High School. Teachers' attitudes toward their work were also highest at South and lowest at North. Overall, less than 20% of the excerpts about teachers' attitudes toward their work were in reference to collaboration.

Table 39

*Excerpt Analysis of Teachers' Attitudes Toward Their Work: Cross-Case Analysis*

| | Positive Attitude | Neutral Attitude | Negative Attitude | Total Excerpts |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| South High School (Average Frequency Count Total = 23.3) | | | | |
| General Responses | 114 (77%) | 6 (4%) | 28 (19%) | 148 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 13 (11%) | 4 (67%) | 1 (4%) | 18 (12%) |
| North High School (Average Frequency Count Total = 16) | | | | |
| General Responses | 49 (52%) | ----- | 46 (48%) | 95 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 10 (20%) | ----- | 0 (0%) | 10 (11%) |
| West High School (Average Frequency Count Total = 18.8) | | | | |
| General Responses | 42 (74%) | 2 (4%) | 13 (23%) | 57 |
| Responses about Collaboration | 7 (17%) | 2 (100%) | 0 (0%) | 9 (16%) |

## Summary of Cross-Case Analysis

Teachers' attitudes toward their work at North High School were influenced by seven variables: the support they received from their administrative team, their perception of the administration's consistency and values, the behaviors of their coworkers, their experiences with teacher collaboration, the internal feelings they had about teaching, and the external forces that affected their careers. Teachers' attitudes toward their work at South and West were additionally influenced by their relationship with Principal S and Principal W, respectively. In comparison, teachers' attitudes toward

the leadership in their school were most positive at South and least positive at North. The same held true for teachers' attitudes regarding coworker behaviors. Additionally, teachers at South reported a higher presence of the critical elements for effective collaborative work groups than did teachers at North and West except in the category of social resources in which teachers at South and West reported the same amount of social resources, more so than was present at North. The extent to which teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their internal feelings about their job and the external forces affecting those jobs was also noticeably different at North. Teachers at North indicated more contributing factors in the categories of positive internal feelings and negative external forces than did teachers at South or West. Though teachers at South and West reported a similar amount of factors contributing to their positive internal feelings about their career, teachers at South reported more negative external forces than did teachers at West.

The extent to which principals supported the structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups varied greatly across the three schools. Principal S provided the greatest amount of support in regard to time, structure, and leadership for collaborative activities. However, Principal W was the only principal to grant teachers the power to make decisions that affected their entire school. Principal W also provided the least amount of support in regard to time and leadership for collaborative activities, but Principal N provided the least amount of structure for collaborative activities.

Again there was variance in the schools' adherence to the critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups with South exhibiting the greatest amount of adherence and North exhibiting the least. Unlike the individual group

results within each school, this overall adherence did coincide with teacher's overall attitudes toward the work with teachers at South exhibiting the most positive attitudes and teachers at North exhibiting the least positive attitudes.

Chapter 8 includes discussion of the findings across all schools in this study. Implications for practice based on these findings will follow. The chapter will end with recommendations for future research.

# CHAPTER 8

# DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The research questions for this study addressed how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences within collaborative work groups. More so than collaborative experiences alone, teachers' attitudes toward their work were primarily influenced by the relationships they held with their peers, students, and administrators. Because this study focused on teacher's experiences within collaborative work groups, the only two relationships included in this discussion are those that mediated the influence that collaborative work groups had on teachers' attitudes toward their work—relationships with peers and relationships with administrators. The following discussion examines how these relationships both directly influenced teachers' attitudes toward their work and mediated the influence of collaborative experiences on teachers' attitudes. The implications of these findings for principals, district leaders, and state policy makers are then presented. The chapter concludes with recommendations for future research and for implementing collaborative experiences that enhance teachers' attitudes towards their work.

## Discussion

Independent of collaborative experiences, teachers who displayed the most positive attitudes towards their work also described the strongest relationships with their peers. However, the influence that collaborative work groups had on teachers' attitudes toward their work was mediated by both their relationships with their peers as well as their relationships with their administrators. While in some cases, teachers' relationships with their principal had the most impact on teachers' collaborative experiences, in other

cases it was teachers' relationships with assistant principals that was most impactful. The sections that follow detail the extent to which each of these relationships influenced teachers' attitudes towards their work or mediated attitudes that were influenced by collaborative experiences. The discussion concludes with a summary of the role of relationships in effective teacher collaboration as measured according to the conceptual framework that guided this study.

**Relationships with Peers**

Teachers' relationships with their peers directly influenced attitudes toward their work and also mediated attitudes that were influenced by collaborative experiences. Independent of collaboration, teachers asserted that the relationships they held with their peers strongly influenced how they felt about working at their individual schools. One teacher compared it to a church saying, "It's not the building. It's the people" (Teacher N2B). They felt their peers made work fun and, because of their bond, preferred to stay at their individual schools rather than pursue educational job opportunities elsewhere.

Many of the teachers in this study described working together for numerous years and spending time together outside of school. Such lengthy relationships contributed to a positive culture in which teachers were comfortable with one another and genuinely cared about and respected one another. They did not hesitate to ask others for help and were quick to offer their own help as well by sharing resources or providing a listening ear. Teachers who did not have these lengthy relationships noted how important they were. Some teachers expressed frustration with the number of faculty they did not know, and teachers new to the school acknowledged that they needed more time to build relationships and trust with their peers.

Just as listening to one another was a valued component of faculty relationships, it was also a valued component of effective collaboration. Teachers expected their collaborative partners to listen to one another. Not only was listening a sign of professional respect, it was also the foundation of collaborative discussion. Confirming Ueland's (1998) statement, "When we are listened to, it creates us, makes us unfold and expand" (p. 1), listening to collaborative partners share ideas with their group fostered teachers' own ideas and allowed the collective dialogue to progress.

Numerous studies over the years have noted teachers' desires to collaborate with their peers, e.g. Bacharach, Bauer, and Shedd (1986), MetLife (2008), and the findings of this study indicate this continues to be the case today. The teachers in this study enjoyed working together with their peers but agreed with Senge (1990) that doing so was easier when they got along with the teachers with whom they were collaborating. As van Velzen et al. (2012) and Grierson et al. (2012) found, the mutual trust and respect that grew as a result of teachers' relationships with one another provided a necessary resource for effective collaboration. Teachers who felt comfortable with and trusted their collaborative partners were more likely to partake in open, honest dialogue about their beliefs, values, and teaching practice. They were also more inspired to help colleagues whom they respected. In contrast, teachers who lacked respect for their peers viewed those colleagues as uninterested in improvement and felt that any attempts to collaborate with those individuals was futile. Furthermore, they believed a lack of professional trust often contributed to teachers' resistance to any change suggested in a collaborative environment and a lack of respect outside of collaborative activities often led to conflict or tension during collaborative activities.

**Relationships with Administrators**

In addition to teachers' relationships with their peers, the influence that collaborative experiences had on teachers' attitudes toward their work was also greatly affected by teachers' relationships with their administrators. While they viewed their principals as being responsible for providing structural resources necessary for effective collaboration—time, meeting structure, size, etc., other administrators also participated in leadership roles for various collaborative endeavors. In this capacity of leadership, teachers' relationships with their administrators were affected by their collaborative experiences.

The principals in this study differed greatly in the relationships they held with their staff and the leadership they provided for teacher collaboration. Confirming the findings of Mason (1999), teachers at South exhibited the most positive attitudes toward their jobs and worked for a principal who they greatly respected and who was highly involved in providing leadership for collaborative endeavors. Not only did the teachers at South trust their principal to make decisions that were meaningful and in the best interest of students and teachers, but they also believed Principal S trusted them. This reciprocated trust contributed to teachers' willingness to partake in the collaborative groups that were established and the empowerment they felt to influence school wide improvement through those groups. Teachers at South believed Principal S genuinely cared about, respected, and supported them, and the commitment teachers demonstrated to the collaborative process Principal S set forth was in large part a reflection of their loyalty to him.

Principal S was open and honest with teachers about expectations and intentions for the collaborative work groups, which Rosenholtz (1986) noted was important for teachers. Furthermore, teachers at South were encouraged to be open and honest in return and were provided opportunities to do so. This created a culture of open communication and honesty that permeated the collaborative work groups at South. Teachers felt comfortable offering suggestions and appreciated Principal S's honest feedback regarding why particular ideas might not be feasible.

Teachers at South felt their principal was a good leader over the school organization as well as over the collaborative work groups he led. Teachers valued Principal S's efforts to be present, participate, model respectful dialogue, and ensure that collaborative discussion remained focused upon the group's overall goal. However, teachers did not echo the same sentiments and praise for the other administrators or the leadership they provided to the collaborative work groups. Two of the administrators worked part-time, so teachers interacted with them less. In collaborative meetings, teachers felt the part-time administrators were less involved in the collaborative process. Teachers looked to their administrators to be present, provide focus, and correct any inefficiency within a collaborative work group and were frustrated when this did not happen.

Teachers at West exhibited the second most positive attitudes toward their jobs and worked for a principal who was highly involved in providing leadership for collaborative endeavors but with whom they did not have a strong relationship. As the only administrator involved in the collaborative work groups, it was Principal W's relationship with his faculty that impacted teachers' collaborative experiences. Principal

W provided time, structure, and leadership for teacher collaboration but failed to communicate expectations or intentions with his staff. As a result teachers were unaware of how their groups were formed or the purposes of their groups.

Not only was Principal W perceived as not open or honest with the faculty, but teachers also felt they could not be open or honest with the principal. Lack of trust was an essential element in this relationship. Teachers did not trust Principal W's evaluation methods, did not trust his knowledge of Common Core, and did not trust him personally. Without a foundation of trust and respect, teachers were afraid of what reaction Principal W might have if they expressed an opposing view to him. When teachers provided suggestions, they often felt those suggestions were not valued, perceiving Principal W dismissed them without offering any feedback regarding why their ideas were not feasible. Consequently, teachers were less likely to participate in collaborative discussions when Principal W was present and felt their collaborative work groups were more productive when he was not present.

The poor quality of the relationship between Principal W—the sole leader of the collaborative work groups—and teachers was a hindrance to the potential productivity of the groups. According to Hord (1997), successful collaborative endeavors pose creative solutions to current and relevant problems. Such creativity was stifled as a result of teachers' hesitation to participate in meaningful dialogue. As noted by both Hord (1997) and Newmann and Wehlage (1995), collaborative work groups need leaders who are caring, respectful, and support experimentation. Teachers must feel supported to take risks and try new techniques and ideas (Kruse et al., 1994). Teachers look to their principals to create a climate that legitimizes their collaborative efforts and any resulting

change that those efforts bring to the organization (Boyd, 1992). Such a climate was not present under the conditions at West.

Teachers at North exhibited the least positive attitudes toward their jobs and worked for a principal for whom they had little respect and who was minimally involved in providing leadership for collaborative endeavors. Instead, the other three administrators provided the bulk of the leadership for the formal collaborative work groups that were observed for this study. Consequently, it was teachers' relationships with those administrators that had the greatest impact on how teachers' collaborative experiences influenced their attitudes toward their work.

In contrast to the principal, most of the teachers at North interacted primarily with one of three other administrators. Teachers demonstrated more trust in and respect for two of those administrators and consequently found the collaborative endeavors led by those two administrators to be more meaningful. Teachers appreciated the level of involvement demonstrated by those administrators, the positive attitude they maintained, and the effort they made to communicate openly with and listen to the teachers, provide a focus for collaborative group meetings, motivate teachers to participate in collaborative discussion, and ensure that discussion remained focused on the group's overall goal. Teachers had less trust in and respect for the third administrator. Teachers felt the collaborative work group led by that administrator was disconnected, lacked structure, and did not provide adequate opportunity for true collaborative discussion. To some extent, the attitudes that teachers' expressed toward their collaborative endeavors were a reflection of the attitudes presented by their group's leadership. When administrators

acted as though the collaborative endeavor was a burden for them, teachers at North echoed that sentiment.

**The Role of Relationships in Effective Teacher Collaboration**

The critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups discovered by Little in her 1981 case study of three high schools and three elementary schools varying in success and collaborative activity provided the conceptual framework for this study and are depicted in Figure 2. Using that framework to categorize the collaborative work groups in this study from most effective to least effective, the findings of this study indicated that teachers who participated in more effective collaborative work groups exhibited more positive attitudes toward their jobs than did teachers who participated in less effective collaborative work groups. However, the relationships that teachers held with their peers and administrators mediated the influence that collaborative experiences had on their attitudes toward their work.

Though Little (1981a) acknowledged that the nature and extent of collegial relationships among teachers and between faculty and administrators was a significant factor in the effectiveness of teacher collaboration, she failed to address exactly how those relationships impact collaborative endeavors. Furthermore, she listed time, competence, and commitment as necessary resources for effective collaboration but did not specify that relationships provided yet another necessary resource. The findings of this study indicate that strong, positive relationships among teachers and between faculty and administrators create a mutual trust and respect that is not only necessary for collaboration to be effective but also provides a foundation from which teachers can grow professionally. These findings suggest the modified model presented in Figure 3. When

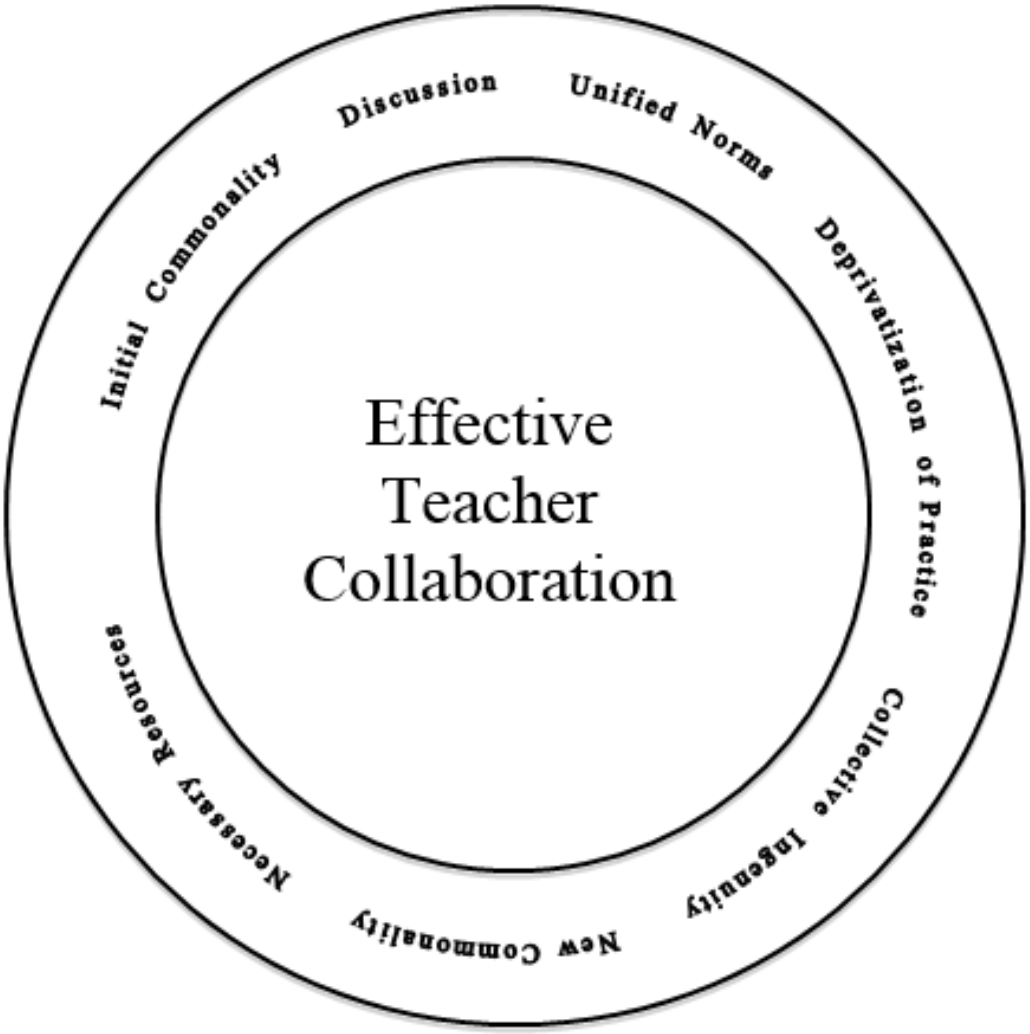


*Figure 2.* Depiction of Little's (1981a) Findings

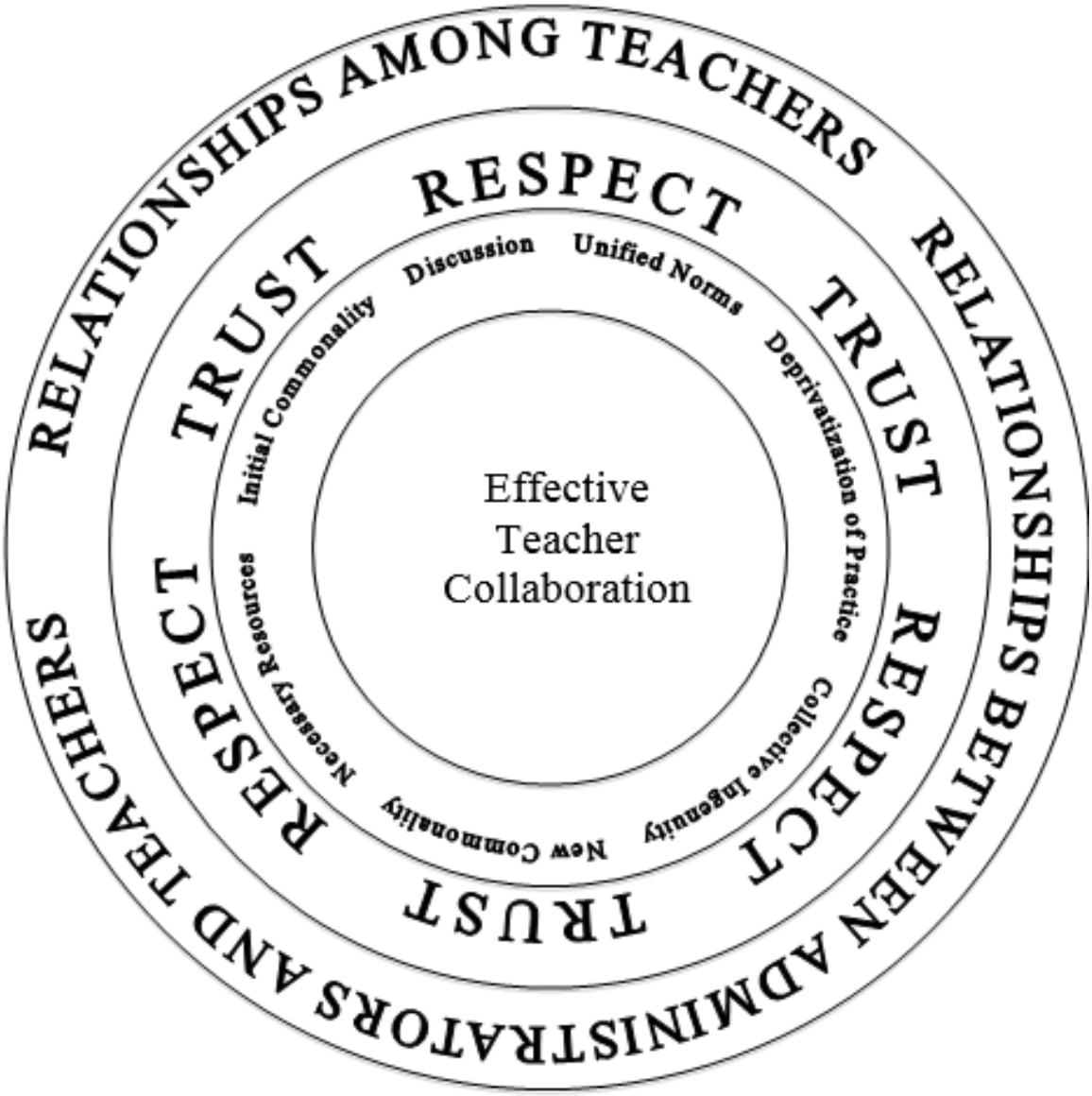


*Figure 3.* Model of the Role of Relationships in Effective Teacher Collaboration

teachers build strong relationships with their administrators and peers, they develop a trust and respect that are necessary for teachers to fully experience the seven critical elements and structural conditions of effective collaborative work groups as indicated by Little.

## Implications

The findings of this study have implications for anyone interested in the implementation of effective collaborative work groups. Student achievement is at the forefront of the minds of policymakers nationwide. Research has shown that happier teachers who work together rather than in isolation will have higher student achievement scores and will more likely remain in their current positions with continued positive results (Brown & Schainker, 2008; Goddard et al., 2007; Ingersoll, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Smith & Ingersoll, 2004). Rather than blindly implementing initiatives that mandate teacher collaboration, the findings of this study inform decision makers at the state and district level about what must be present for teacher collaboration to be successful. These decision-makers are better informed of the role that internal school relationships play on teacher collaboration and the external assistance they can offer to improve collaborative efforts. This knowledge will help decision-makers plan appropriate individualized professional development for principals, administrators, and teachers on how to maximize collaborative productivity. They are also better informed of the need for creative scheduling that provides opportunities for teachers to engage in meaningful collaborative activities during normal working hours.

This study provided case study examples of how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences with collaborative work groups. Such

knowledge informs principal preparation programs of how best to implement valuable collaborative opportunities for their teachers. Findings inform principals of how teachers responded when critical elements and structural resources were or were not present in their collaborative work groups. Both the model presented in Figure 2 and the findings of the study point to specific areas upon which principals should focus for collaborative productivity to be maximized. Principals are better informed of the crucial role that relationships among teachers and between faculty and administrators play in effective teacher collaboration. Principals also have a better idea of the vital role they play in providing valuable social and structural resources for teacher collaboration. The findings inform principals of the importance of modeling open and honest communication with their staff in an effort to build reciprocated trust and respect between the administration and the faculty. This trust and respect will improve teachers' commitment to the collaborative process and inspire their creative spirit to solve current and relevant problems present at their individual schools.

The model presented in Figure 2 and the findings from this study also inform teachers, administrators, and other personnel tasked with leading collaborative work groups of the various elements and resources necessary for effective teacher collaboration. While principals provide external resources for teacher collaboration, team leaders gain a better understanding of how they can provide and nurture valuable internal resources for teacher collaboration. They are better informed of the role that relationships among teachers play in their willingness to fully participate in the collaborative process and can work within the group to create a safe environment in

which teachers feel comfortable discussing their practice and seeking the assistance of their collaborative partners in improving that practice.

## Recommendations for Educational Leaders

The findings from this study demonstrate how teachers' attitudes toward their work were influenced by their experiences with collaborative work groups. Teachers want to collaborate with their peers, but they want that collaboration to be meaningful. While it is recommended that principals establish collaborative work groups in their schools, such collaborative work groups should have an articulated purpose that teachers understand and buy into. Dividing large faculty meetings into smaller faculty meetings should not be misconstrued as teacher collaboration. Collaborative settings should encourage teachers to engage in philosophical debate regarding the issues that face their school and to ignite their collective ingenuity to devise creative solutions for those issues.

The findings from this study also demonstrate the important role that principals play in providing necessary resources for successful teacher collaboration. While collaborative work groups may not be the appropriate setting for teachers to "blow off steam," such interactions are vital for the development of teacher relationships. Teachers should be given adequate opportunities to socialize with one another to build the trust and respect necessary for effective teacher collaboration to occur. These opportunities require time but not necessarily large amounts of funding. Rather than teachers eating lunch individually or in small groups on teacher in-service days, teachers might be encouraged to participate in one large pot-luck lunch bi-annually in which teachers can mingle with those whom they rarely see. Creating staff workrooms where they can eat lunch together on regular school days also provides opportunities for teachers to socialize

and build relationships with one another. The overarching recommendation here is for principals to encourage teacher socialization and limit isolation.

Principals and district leaders are also encouraged to work together to establish teacher work schedules that provide ample opportunity for teachers to collaborate during the school day. At the school level, principals should be intentional about the arrangement of teacher planning periods and lunch periods to create opportunities for teachers to engage with those whom they have the most need to collaborate. If teachers must collaborate before or after school, principals should be intentional about the arrangement of bus duty or other extra-curricular responsibilities to avoid conflicts that create abundant absences in collaborative work groups. However, district leaders should explore scheduling options that allow teachers to collaborate during their regularly scheduled working hours that are not necessarily limited to teacher planning periods or lunch periods. Such options include weekly or monthly days in which students either arrive late to school or leave school early to allow teachers to collaborate with colleagues whom they do not share a common planning or lunch period.

District, state, and national leaders should further consider allocating funds or providing grant money for professional development on effective teacher collaboration. This professional development should be appropriate for the audience it serves. While all such professional development should address the critical elements and structural conditions of effective teacher collaboration, professional development for principals and district leaders should focus on how those players can best provide and support the external resources necessary for teacher collaboration such as time, meeting structure, group decision-making authority, and relationships among teachers and between faculty

and administrators. Professional development for other administrators and teacher leaders of collaborative work groups should focus on how to provide, support, and nurture the internal resources necessary for teacher collaboration such as maintaining focused meetings that are respectful and productive.

## Recommendations for Future Research

Future teacher collaboration research continues to be essential for the field. None of the schools in this study exercised a deprivatization of practice to the extent Little and other researchers suggest. There was no model in place at any of the three schools for teachers to routinely observe one another in practice and discuss that observation. Do other schools also struggle to implement this practice? If so, why? What are the barriers to implementing such a practice? How do schools with effective deprivatization models overcome those barriers? Additionally, no quantitative instrument exists to date that measures the extent to which teachers collaborate. The creation of such an instrument would open the door for more research that quantifies the effect of teacher collaboration on other educational constructs such as teacher job satisfaction, teacher efficacy, teacher burnout, and student achievement.

## Conclusion

The findings of this study indicate that teacher collaboration occurs in schools whether principals sanction and organize it or not. Many teachers are naturally drawn to one another to discuss the successes and frustrations they experience in the classroom. When teachers use those professional interactions to influence organizational change, their pride, sense of empowerment, and loyalty to their school, students, and leaders more greatly solidifies. Principals who encourage and foster such a positive, collaborative

environment earn the respect of their faculty and create a climate of which teachers are eager to be a part.

Though many principals understand the value of teacher collaboration, not all understand how best to implement a model of *effective* teacher collaboration. This study details how teachers responded when various critical elements and structural resources of effective teacher collaboration were or were not present in their collaborative activities. Principals interested in building a collaborative model in their school need not be overwhelmed with immediately instituting all of Little's (1981a) critical elements and structural resources. The model presented in Figure 3 and the findings of this study suggest that the first step toward effective teacher collaboration is building strong, positive relationships among teachers and between faculty and administrators. Principals can strive to build, encourage, and nurture these relationships while taking the time to study the other critical elements and structural resources of effective teacher collaboration and design a plan that will empower their teachers to make the organizational changes necessary to take their schools from good to great.

# REFERENCES

Alliance for Excellent Education. (2005). Spotlight on success: Every student at high-poverty, high-minority Massachusetts school accepted to college. *Straight A's: Public education policy and progress, 5*(17), 1-2.

Anfara, V. A., Brown, K. M., & Mangione, T. L. (2002). Qualitative analysis on stage: Making the research process more public. *Educational Researcher, 31*(7), 28-38.

Argyris, C., & Schon, D. A. (1974). *Theory in practice: Increasing professional effectiveness*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Attard, K. (2012). Public reflection within learning communities: An incessant type of professional development. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 35*(2), 199-211.

Bacharach, S. B., Bauer, S. C., & Shedd, J. B. (1986). *The learning workplace: The conditions and resources of teaching*. West Haven, CT: National Education Association.

Bakhtin, M. M. (1986). *Speech genres and other late essays* (V. M. McGee, Trans.). Austin, TX: University of Texas Press.

Beers, J. S. (2009). Negotiating the transition between different teaching contexts through shared responsibility and shared reflections. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 4*(2), 443-447.

Bohm, D. (1990). *On dialogue*. Ojai, CA: David Bohm Seminars.

Boyd, V. (1992). *School context: Bridge or barrier to change?* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Brown, K. M., & Schainker, S. A. (2008). Doing all the right things: Teacher retention issues. *Journal of Cases in Educational Leadership, 11*(1), 10-17.

Cajkler, W., & Hall, B. (2012). Multilingual primary classrooms: An investigation of first year teachers' learning and responsive teaching. *European Journal of Teacher Education, 35*(2), 213-228.

Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and resesarch design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W., Plano Clark, V. L., Gutmann, M. L., & Hanson, W. E. (2003). Advanced mixed methods research designs. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 209-240). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Danielowich, R. M. (2012). Other teachers' teaching: Understanding the roles of peer group collaboration in teacher reflection and learning. *The Teacher Educator, 47*(2), 101-122.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2000). Introduction: The discipline and practice of qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1-29). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

DuFour, R., & Eaker, R. (1998). *Professional learning communities at work: Best practices for enhancing student achievement*. Bloomington, IN: National Educational Service.

Durkheim, E. (1982). *The rules of sociological method and selected texts on sociology and its method* (W. D. Halls, Trans.). New York, NY: The Free Press.

Emmett, J., & McGee, D. (2012). A farewell to freshmen. *The Clearing House: A Journal of Educational Strategies, Issues and Ideas, 85*(2), 74-79.

Feng, L. (2012). Teacher and student responses to interdisciplinary aspects of sustainability education: What do we really know? *Environmental Education Research, 18*(1), 31-43.

Gardner, D. P. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative educational reform*. Washington, DC: National Commission on Excellence in Education.

Garmston, R. J. (2007). Collaborative culture. *Journal of Staff Development, 28*(1), 69-70.

Glaser, B. G., & Strauss, A. L. (2007). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research* (4th ed.). Piscataway, NJ: Transaction.

Goddard, Y., Goddard, R., & 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*(4), 877-896.

Greene, J. C., Caracelli, V. J., & Graham, W. F. (1989). Toward a conceptual framework for mixed-method evaluation designs. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 11*(3), 255-274.

Grierson, A. L., Tessaro, M. L., Grant, C., Cantalini-Williams, M., Denton, R., Quigg, K., et al. (2012). The bricks and mortar of our foundation for faculty development: Book-study within a self-study professional learning community. *Studying Teacher Education: A Journal of Self-Study of Teacher Education Practices, 8*(1), 87-104.

Griffith, J. (2004). Relation of principal transformational leadership to school staff job satisfaction, staff turnover, and school performance. *Journal of Educational Administration, 42*(3), 333-356.

Grossman, P., Wineburg, S., & Woolworth, S. (2001). Toward a theory of teacher community. *Teacher College Record, 103*(6), 942-1012.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times: Teachers' work and culture in the postmodern age*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Herriott, R. E., & Firestone, W. A. (1983). Multisite qualitative policy research: Optimizing description and generalizability. *Educational Researcher, 12*(2), 14-19.

Hord, S. M. (1997). *Professional learning communities: Communities of continuous inquiry and improvement*. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

Hu, X., Kaplan, S., & Dalal, R. S. (2010). An examination of blue- versus white-collar workers' conceptualizations of job satisfaction facets. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 76*(2), 317-325.

Imel, S. (1992). *Reflective practice in adult education.* ERIC Digest No. 122. Columbus, OH: ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career, and Vocational Education, ED 346 319.

Ingersoll, R. M. (2001). Teacher turnover and teacher shortages: An organizational analysis. *American Educational Research Journal, 38*(3), 499-534.

Isaacs, W. (1999). *Dialogue and the art of thinking together: A pioneering approach to communicating in business and in life*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Jappinen, A.-K., & Maunonen-Eskelinen, I. (2012). Organizational transition challenges in the Finnish vocational education: Perspective of distributed pedagogical leadership. *Educational Studies, 38*(1), 39-50.

Johnson, R. B., & Onwuegbuzie, A. J. (2004). Mixed methods research: A research paradigm whose time has come. *Educational Researcher, 33*(7), 14-26.

Kruse, S. D., Seashore, L. K., & Bryk, A. S. (1994). Building professional community in schools. *Issues in Restructuring Schools*(6), 3-6.

Leithwood, K., Louis, K. S., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *How leadership influences student learning: Review of research*. Minneapolis, MN: Center for Applied Research, University of Minnesota.

Levine, D. U., & Lezotte, L. W. (1990). *Unusually effective schools: A review and analysis of research and practice*. Madison, WI: The National Center for Effective Schools Research and Development.

Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Little, J. W. (1981a). *The power of organizational setting: School norms and staff development*. Paper presented at the American Educational Research Association.

Little, J. W. (1981b). *School success and staff development: The role of staff development in urban desegregated schools*. Boulder, CO: Center for Action Research.

Little, J. W. (2003). Inside teacher community: Representations of classroom practice. *Teachers College Record, 105*(6), 913-945.

Marzano, R. J., Waters, T., & McNulty, B. A. (2005). *School leadership that works: From research to results*. Aurora, CO: Mid-continent Research for Education and Learning.

Mason, L. (1999). Lead the way to increased productivity. *Outlook,* (3), 50-55.

Maxcy, S. J. (2003). Pragmatic threads in mixed methods research in the social sciences: The search for multiple modes of inquiry and the end of the philosophy of formalism. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 51-89). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Merriam, S. B. (1998). *Qualitative research and case study applications in education*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Merriam, S. B. (2009). *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

MetLife. (2008). *The MetLife survey of the American teacher: Past, present, and future*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company.

Moolenaar, N. M., Sleegers, P. J., & Daly, A. J. (2012). Teaming up: Linking collaboration networks, collective efficacy, and student achievement. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(2), 251-262.

Morse, J. M. (2003). Principles of mixed methods and mutimethod research design. In A. Tashakkori & C. Teddlie (Eds.), *Handbook of mixed methods in social and behavioral research* (pp. 189-208). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Murata, N. M., & Tan, C. A. (2009). Collaborative teaching of motor skills for preschoolers with developmental delays. *Early Childhood Education Journal, 36*(6), 483-489.

New Leaders for New Schools. (2009). *Principal effectiveness: A new principalship to drive student achievement, teacher effectiveness, and school turnarounds*. New York, NY: Author.

Newmann, F. M., & Wehlage, G. G. (1995). *Successful school restructuring: A report to the public and educators by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools*. Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).

Osterman, K. F. (1990). Reflective practice: A new agenda for education. *Education and Urban Society, 22*(2), 133-152.

Palus, C. J., & Drath, W. H. (2001). Putting something in the middle. *Reflections, 3*(2), 28-39.

Pang, M. F., & Ling, L. M. (2012). Learning study: Helping teachers to use theory, develop professionally, and produce new knowledge to be shared. *Instructional Science: An International Journal of the Learning Sciences, 40*(3), 589-606.

Patrick, A. S. (2007). *An examination of teacher workplace satisfaction and student achievement* (Doctoral dissertation). Georgia Southern University, Statesboro, GA.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Penuel, W., Riel, M., Krause, A., & Frank, K. (2009). Analyzing teachers' professional interactions in a school as social capital: A social network approach. *Teachers College Record, 111*(1), 124-163.

Popkewitz, T. S., & Myrdal, S. (1991). *Case studies of the Urban Mathematics Collaborative Project: Program report 91-3.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Reeves, D. (2009). Level-five networks: Making significant change in complex organizations. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan (Eds.), *Change wars* (pp. 237-256). Bloomington, IN: Solution Tree.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1985). Effective schools: Interpreting the evidence. *American Journal of Education, 93*(3), 352-388.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1986). *Understanding the learning workplace: The NEA conditions and resources of teaching survey and the research on effective teaching*. New York, NY: National Education Association.

Rosenholtz, S. J. (1989). *Teachers' workplace: The social organization of schools*. New York, NY: Teachers College Press.

Senge, P. M. (1990). *The fifth discipline: The art and practice of the learning organization*. New York, NY: Doubleday.

Sergiovanni, T. J. (2000). *The lifeworld of leadership: Creating culture, community, and personal meaning in our schools*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Shen, J., Leslie, J. M., Spybrook, J. K., & Ma, X. (2011). Are principal background and school processes related to teacher job satisfaction? A multilevel study using Schools and Staffing Survey 2003-2004. *American Educational Research Journal, 49*(2), 200-230.

Shotter, J. (2005). Acknowledging unique others: Ethics, "expressive realism," and social constructionism. *Journal of Constructivist Psychology, 18*(2), 103-130.

Smith, J. K. (1983). Quantitative versus qualitative research: An attempt to clarify the issue. *Educational Researcher, 12*(3), 6-13.

Smith, T. M., & Ingersoll, R. M. (2004). What are the effects of induction and mentoring on beginning teacher turnover? *American Educational Research Journal, 41*(3), 681-714.

Spradley, J. P. (1979). *The ethnographic interview*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.

Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 435-454). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Talbert, J. E., & McLaughlin, M. W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school contexts. *American Journal of Education, 102*(2), 123-153.

Turner, H. C. (2007). *Predictors of teachers' job satisfaction in urban middle schools* (Doctoral dissertation). Universtiy of North Carolina, Chapel Hill, NC.

Ueland, B. (1998). *Tell me more: On the fine art of listening*. Tuscon, AZ: Kore Press.

van Velzen, C., Volman, M., Brekelmans, M., & White, S. (2012). Guided work-based learning: Sharing practical teaching knowledge with student teachers. *Teaching and Teacher Education, 28*(2), 229-239.

Vanasupa, L., McCormick, K. E., Stefanco, C. J., Herter, R. J., & McDonald, M. (2012). Challenges in transdisciplinary, integrated projects: Reflections on the case of faculty members' failure to collaborate. *Innovative Higher Education, 37*(3), 171-184.

Wassell, B., & LaVan, S. K. (2009). Tough transitions: Mediating beginning urban teachers' practices through coteaching. *Cultural Studies of Science Education, 4*(2), 409-432.

Wenger, E. (1998a). *Communities of practice; Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.

Wenger, E. (1998b). Communities of practice: Learning as a social system. *Systems Thinker, 9*(5), 2-3.

Wenger, E., McDermott, R., & Snyder, W. M. (2002). *Cultivating communities of practice: A guide to managing knowledge*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Woodgate-Jones, A. (2011). The student teacher and the school community of practice: An exploration of the contribution of the legitimate peripheral participant. *Educational Review, 64*(2), 145-160.

Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

Summary of Sources Reviewed

| TEACHER COLLABORATION | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Source | Quantitative Empirical Study | Qualitative Empirical Study | Theoretical | Type of Source |
| Argyris and Schon (1974) | | | x | Book |
| Attard (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Bacharach, Bauer, and Shedd (1986) | x | | | Report |
| Bakhtin (1986) | | | x | Book |
| Beers (2009) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Bohm (1990) | | | x | Book |
| Boyd (1992) | | | x | Report |
| Cajkler and Hall (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Danielowich (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| DuFour and Eaker (1998) | | | x | Book |
| Emmett and McGee (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Feng (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Garmston (2007) | | | x | Peer-reviewed article |
| Grierson, Tessaro, Grant, Cantalini-Williams, Denton, Quigg, et al. (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Grossman, Wineburg, and Woolworth (2001) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Hargreaves (1994) | | | x | Book |
| Hord (1997) | | | x | Report |
| Imel (1992) | | | x | Report |
| Isaacs (1999) | | | x | Book |
| Jappinen and Maunonen-Eskelinen (2012) | x | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Kruse, Seashore, and Bryk (1994) | | | x | Report |
| Little (1981b) | | x | | Report |
| Little (2003) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| MetLife (2008) | x | x | | Report |
| Moolenaar, Sleegers, and Daly (2012) | x | | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Murata and Tan (2009) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Newmann and Wehlage (1995) | x | x | | Report |
| Osterman (1990) | | | x | Peer-reviewed article |
| Palus and Drath (2001) | | | x | Peer-reviewed article |
| Pang and Ling (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Reeves (2009) | | | x | Edited book |
| Rosenholtz (1989) | x | x | | Book |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Senge (1990) | | | x | Book |
| Sergiovanni (2000) | | | x | Book |
| Shen, Leslie, Spybrook, and Ma (2011) | x | | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Shotter (2005) | | | x | Peer-reviewed article |
| Ueland (1998) | | | x | Book |
| van Velzen, Volman, Brekelmans, and White (2012) | x | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Vanasupa, McCormick, Stefanco, Herter, and McDonald (2012) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Wassell and LaVan (2009) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |
| Wenger (1998a) | | | x | Book |
| Wenger (1998b) | | | x | Article (*Systems Thinker*) |
| Wenger, McDermott, and Snyder (2002) | | | x | Book |
| Woodgate-Jones (2011) | | x | | Peer-reviewed article |

## APPENDIX B

Permission to use Figure 1

From: Binur, Michelle [Michelle.Binur@sagepub.com]

Subject: RE: Doctoral Student Use

Date: August 22, 2013 1:27:06 PM EDT

To: Jennifer Beavers [jpence@utk.edu]

Dear Jennifer:

Thank you for your request. Please consider this e-mail as permission to reprint the material as [presented] in your upcoming dissertation. Please note that this permission does not cover any 3rd party material that may be found within the work. We do ask that you credit the original source, SAGE Publications. Please contact us for any further usage.

Good luck with your dissertation,

Michelle Binur

## APPENDIX C

Teacher Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon! Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. My name is Jennifer Beavers and I am here to ask you a few questions about your experiences with teacher collaboration. In conjunction with this interview, I will also observe your collaborative work group in action. All of your answers will be recorded but will be kept strictly confidential. No one other than myself and my transcriptionist will hear your responses. Shall we begin?

1. This study has been explained to you and you have agreed to participate. Is that correct?

2. Tell me what about yourself.
    a. How many years have you been teaching?
    b. How did you get into teaching?
    c. Why (subject) ?
    d. If you had it to do over again, would you still become a teacher? Why or why not?
    e. Some teachers complain about the pay. Has that ever been an issue for you?

3. Tell me about this school.
    a. What is it like working here?
    b. What is important to the principal of this school? How do you know?
    c. What kind of relationship do you have with your colleagues?

4. What types of collaborations do you participate in here at this school?
    a. How did you get involved?
    b. What is the purpose of this collaboration?
    c. How often do you meet? How do you feel about that amount of time—too much, too little, just right?
    d. How do you find the time to meet?

5. Tell me about these meetings.
    a. What do you do?

b. What do members of the group expect from one another in these meetings?
c. How often does the group come to a consensus?
d. What kinds of decisions are easiest/most difficult to agree upon?
e. How is conflict handled?

6. Have you ever observed each other teaching?
    a. How do you feel about that?
    b. What sort of expectations do you have for each other in this process?
    c. Is there any kind of follow-up to the observation?
    d. How often do you do this?
    e. How do you find the time to do this?

7. Tell me what it is like for new people to join your group.
    a. How are new members socialized into the group? How do they learn the norms and how things operate in the group?
    b. What difficulties and/or successes have you encountered when a new person joins your group?
    c. Why do you think that is?
    d. What is expected of a person who joins this group?

8. What makes this collaboration work?
    a. What does your administration do that helps the group be successful?
    b. What does your administration do that hinders the success of the group?
    c. What do group members do that makes the collaboration successful?
    d. What do group members do that hinders the success of the group?

9. Would you say that you are satisfied or dissatisfied with this job?
    a. What about your job do you particularly like?
    b. What about your job is particularly frustrating?
    c. How does the collaboration contribute to those feelings?

10. Is there anything you would like to say or add that you feel would contribute to this study?

Thank you for your time.

## APPENDIX D

Principal Interview Protocol

Good morning/afternoon! Thank you for agreeing to be interviewed. My name is Jennifer Beavers and I am here to ask you a few questions about your experiences with teacher collaboration. All of your answers will be recorded but will be kept strictly confidential. No one other than myself and my transcriptionist will hear your responses. Shall we begin?

1. This study has been explained to you and you have agreed to participate. Is that correct?

2. Tell me what about yourself.
    a. How many years have you been in education?
    b. How did you get into education?
    c. Why administration?
    d. What is your leadership philosophy?

3. Tell me about this school.
    a. What is it like working here?
    b. What kind of relationship do you have with your staff?
    c. What kind of relationship do the teachers have with one another?

4. Tell me about the collaborative work groups that are active in this school?
    a. What are the purposes of these collaborative work groups?
    b. How involved are you with these collaborative work groups?
    c. How do you feel about these collaborative work groups? Do you find them to be a help or hindrance toward achieving your administrative goals?
    d. How are collaborative work groups formed in this school?
    e. How do collaborative work groups decide when to meet?
    f. What kinds of decisions are collaborative work groups allowed to make?
    g. Do collaborative work groups ever make decisions that affect the whole school?
    h. How do you show your support to collaborative work groups?

5. Do teachers in this school observe one another teaching?
    a. How do you feel about that?
    b. What sort of expectations do you have for teachers in this process?
    c. Is there any kind of follow-up to the observation?
    d. How often do teachers do this?
    e. How do teachers find the time to do this?

6. What makes this collaboration work?
    a. What do you as an administrator do that helps the group be successful?
    b. What additional resources would you like to offer in the future that would further contribute to the success of the collaborative work groups?

7. Is there anything you would like to say or add that you feel would contribute to this study?

Thank you for your time.

## APPENDIX E

Group Observation Protocol

| Section | Component | Descriptor | √ | Anecdotal Notes | ITMC* |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | **Initial Commonality** | Explicit purpose | | | |
| | | Shared commitment to the purpose | | | |
| | | Similar belief system | | | |
| **2** | **Discussion** | Professional topics | | | |
| | | Reflective assessment of practice | | | |
| | | Aimed at improving practice | | | |
| | | Suspension of feelings, beliefs, and/or assumptions | | | |
| | | Questioning without predetermined answers | | | |
| | | Listening to one another | | | |
| | | Philosophical debate | | | |
| **3** | **Unified Norms** | Explicit definition of the norms | | | |
| | | Explicit monitoring of the norms | | | |
| | | Explicit reviewing of the norms | | | |
| | | Members express a shared responsibility for achieving the group's purpose | | | |
| | | Members are held accountable to one another | | | |
| **4** | **Collective Ingenuity** | Joint participation in research | | | |
| | | Creative solutions to problems | | | |
| | | Agreed upon actions | | | |
| | | Joint development of curriculum | | | |
| | | Joint creation of artifacts | | | |
| | | Joint evaluation of previous artifacts and/or agreed upon actions | | | |
| | | Joint evaluation of student learning | | | |
| **5** | **Deprivatization of Practice** | Members discuss observations of one another in action | | | |
| | | Discussions remain focused on practice not persons | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **6** | **New Commonality** | Shared vocabulary | | | |
| | | Shared memory – stories, experiences | | | |
| | | Shared style | | | |
| | | Communal set of resources – tools, artifacts, strategies | | | |
| **7** | **Resources Supplied** | Time to meet | | | |
| | | Classrooms in close proximity | | | |
| | | Autonomy / decision-making authority | | | |
| | | Administrative encouragement, support, and/or respect | | | |
| | | Communication with other groups | | | |
| | | Members are respectful toward one another | | | |
| | | Group is small | | | |
| | | Members are caring | | | |
| | | Members are supportive of one another | | | |
| | | Members are competent | | | |
| | | Members are confident | | | |
| | | Members trust one another | | | |
| | | Members are committed to one another | | | |
| | | All members are treated as equals | | | |
| | | Time and attention is given to new members to acclimate them to group norms | | | |
| **8** | **(Totals)** | | | | |

ITMC* = Individual Team Member Counts, i.e. How many times did this particular team member exhibit adherence to the given descriptor?

## APPENDIX F

Site Selection Checklist

| **Collaborative Characteristic** | **School Name:** | **School Name:** | **School Name:** | **School Name:** | **School Name:** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| The principal nurtures the entire staff's development as a community. | | | | | |
| The staff works together to make decisions about programs and processes. | | | | | |
| The principal participates in professional development. | | | | | |
| The principal treats teachers with respect and as professionals, and works with them as peers and colleagues. | | | | | |
| Teachers engage in frequent, continuous talk about students, student learning, and teaching practice. | | | | | |
| The school schedule is arranged in such a way that staff have the time they need to meet and talk about student learning. | | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| A norm of continuous critical inquiry and continuous improvement pervade the school culture. | | | | | |
| Staff adhere to a widely shared vision or sense of purpose. | | | | | |
| Student-teacher-administrator relationships are positive and caring. | | | | | |
| Teachers regularly visit each other's classrooms to observe, script notes, and discuss observations with each other. | | | | | |
| **Total Score** | | | | | |

## APPENDIX G

Collaborative Work Group (CWG) Selection Checklist

| **Collaborative Characteristic** | **CWG Name:** | **CWG Name:** | **CWG Name:** | **CWG Name:** | **CWG Name:** | **CWG Name:** |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers engage in frequent, continuous talk about teaching practice | | | | | | |
| Teachers share a common language about the practice of teaching | | | | | | |
| Teachers experiment with new and meaningful strategies | | | | | | |
| Teachers observe one another in the practice of teaching | | | | | | |
| Teachers provide one another with meaningful feedback | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Teachers plan, design, research, evaluate, and prepare teaching materials together | | | | | | |
| Teachers adhere to a joint standard of expectations for themselves as well as their students | | | | | | |
| Teachers share their knowledge with the rest of their staff | | | | | | |
| **Total Score** | | | | | | |

## VITA

Jennifer Beavers was born in Knoxville, TN, where she graduated from West High School in 1997. She obtained a Bachelor's degree in Mathematics with minors in Spanish and Secondary Education in 2001 and a Master's degree in Mathematics Education in 2002, both from the University of Tennessee. This dissertation is the culmination of her doctoral work in Education with a concentration in Leadership Studies. Jennifer has served in public education as a high school mathematics instructor for 15 years. She continues to live in Knoxville with her husband, Matt, son, Pence, and dog, Lolli.