PRINCIPALS AND PLCS: HOW DO PRINCIPALS NEGOTIATE THE TENSION BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HIGH STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY?

By

Sean Garrett Taylor

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Doctoral Committee

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Samantha Paredes-Scribner, Ph.D.

_____
Gary Crow, Ph.D.

_____
Paula Magee, Ph.D.

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Sean Garrett Taylor

PRINCIPALS AND PLCS: HOW DO PRINCIPALS NEGOTIATE THE TENSION

BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND HIGH

STAKES ACCOUNTABILITY POLICY?

In an era of high stakes accountability where national and state policies like *NCLB, Race to the Top, SEA1* and *A-F School Letter Grades* have intended outcomes of pushing schools to raise student achievement and punish them for continued failure, the principal's role in developing and sustaining professional learning communities is arguably critical to demonstrating school improvement via higher test scores. The purpose of this study was to examine the narratives behind how three elementary school principals made sense of their role within the professional learning community development process now that policies require schools and educators to be evaluated not only on how well they collaborate but also how well their students demonstrate growth and proficiency on high stakes tests. Using qualitative methods such as interviews and observations, certain themes were routinely evident in the research. First, principals believed their main role in this process was to support teacher development. They acknowledged there was pressure to perform placed upon educators in their schools as a result of high stakes accountability policy. The principals believed PLC development was critical to school improvement and should follow a routine process leading to immediate action impacting classroom instruction. Finally, principals felt inadequately equipped to facilitate and evaluate PLC development in their schools based upon their principal preparation programs and district-level leadership support. The implications of this interpretivist study supported the notion that principals are in a strategic position to promote or inhibit teacher and student learning in schools. Yet, various factors influence how principals enact this critical

role. Federal and state policy makers, district leaders, as well as schools of education could take these factors into consideration when preparing future school leaders.

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Samantha Paredes-Scribner, Ph.D.

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Gary Crow, Ph.D.

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Paula Magee, Ph.D.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Reforming public schools has been popular among policy makers even though it is argued that few reforms actually change school and classroom practices (Cuban, 1990;Tyack, 1991). Three such policy reforms namely *No Child Left Behind, Race to the Top,* and *SEA1* attempted to reshape the current educational environment at the state and local level. Malen and Cochran (2008) explained that these policies reduced discretion afforded to site actors and narrowed the domains in which they may exercise their influence. This proposed study explores the implications of these changes on the role of the principal in promoting a professional community of learners in a school.

The logic common to these policies is clear: improved student achievement will follow increased accountability. In a study of successful school districts entitled *Beyond Islands of Excellence*, the Learning First Alliance argued that large-scale improvement will elude us until we redefine leadership (Togneri, 2003). The era of increased accountability and high stakes testing has placed a tremendous amount of pressure on school leaders without truly redefining or reshaping the leader's role in and of itself according to Leithwood and Louis (2010).   Principals are the first to be held accountable for the failure of a school to meet state and/or federal accountability measures (Herman, 2008: Miller, 2009). To wit, it is essential that the most effective leadership practices be found with a focus on the mediating factors that have the greatest impact on student achievement outcomes. Recent national and state policies appear to be reshaping work in schools focusing in particular on instructional leadership. According to Grisson and Loeb (2009) principals in the state of Florida are devoting more significant time on instructional leadership duties in an attempt to raise student achievement.

Statement of the Problem

One area of school leadership being heavily emphasized both in the professional development and research literature is school leadership's ability to foster a culture of collaboration (Leithwood, 2004; Hord, 2007; Fullan, 2007; Scribner, 2007; Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). Many authorities in the field of leadership research believe that principals' roles are key in developing a professional community of learners comprised of teachers and students (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). Schmoker (2006) explained that leadership begins with the recognition that we must eliminate the senseless things that now divert school leaders' time and attention away from the two elements most vital to school success: *How* we teach, which is best improved through focused teacher collaboration or professional learning communities, and *What* we teach – a guaranteed and viable curriculum.

And yet – we cannot ignore the fact that principals are also responsible for the management of a bureaucracy as well. Michael Fullan best depicts this complex problem:

> The net effect is that the principalship is being placed in an impossible position. In short, the changes required to transform cultures are far deeper than we understood; principals do not have the capacity to carry out the new roles; and principals are burdened by too many role responsibilities that inhibit developing and practicing the new competencies – add-ons without anything being taken away. Hard change, low capacity, plenty of distraction – a recipe for frustration. In sum, the principal is key, but we haven't figured out how to position the role to fulfill the promise. (Fullan, 2007, p.168)

Even though these new accountability policies appear to focus on the principal and his or her role as an instructional leader to improve student achievement, Cuban (2008) stated that a single-minded focus on principals as instructional leaders operationalized through direct contact with teachers might be detrimental if it forsakes the important role of principals as organizational leaders. McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) explained that because of their positional authority and control over school resources, principals have traditionally been in a strategic position to

promote or inhibit the development of a teacher learning community in their school. Therefore, performance accountability policies likely influence the role of a principal as well as this collective effort; however, understanding the lived experiences of those role players potentially influenced is worthy of further investigation.

Purpose of Study

This paper highlights some of the relevant and substantive literature that focuses on the question of how do principals negotiate the tensions created by the intersection of accountability polices and PLC reform in schools in an era of high stakes accountability? The purpose for researching this problem is summarized best by Scribner et al (2007),

> Leadership potential may be curtailed when organizations leave
> teams to their own devices without support and meaningful feedback. Similarly, team
> performance may also be constrained when collaborative activity is too tightly bound
> through standardized organizational expectations and monitoring. We have found that the
> line between organizational support and surveillance is quite thin. Clarifying this
> distinction with a critical eye should be one area of future research (p.95).

The line the authors refer to is best described as the professional community-bureaucracy continuum. They argue that the most important facilitating or impeding factor for the school's position along this continuum greatly depends on the role of the principal. The principal's style is critical in the degree of professional community achieved, yet the literature is limited in identifying the narratives behind how a principal makes sense of his or her role within this complex collaborative process especially now that our schools are graded based on achievement and collaboration is part of teacher and administrator evaluation rubrics.

Professional Learning Community practices have been documented repeatedly in studies of teaching and coincide with conclusions from research on how people learn and environmental factors that support learning. Creating these conditions is the core challenge facing system initiatives that aim to develop PLCs. Yet, school and district leaders do not instinctually know

how to promote these conditions of teachers' work. In fact, common administrative practices and patterns of inequality across district schools often undermine them (Talbert, 2010).

Significance of Study

Even though new accountability policies appear to focus on the principal and his or her role as "instructional leader" to improve student achievement, it is not entirely clear how this role is practiced, how it is changing and what supports are needed (Leithwood et al, 2004). Increasing student achievement is at the forefront of the accountability movement that in turn leads to school reform. Research shows that students attending schools who have reformed their collaboration practices into professional learning communities have a decreased dropout rate, lower absenteeism, larger academic gains in reading, math, and science when compared to traditional schools, and smaller achievement gaps between students from different backgrounds (Hord,1997).

Principals are widely perceived as indispensable to innovation. No reform effort, however worthy, survives a principal's indifference or opposition (Evans, 2010). Therefore if building a professional learning community is the type of reform necessary to achieve school improvement in an era of high stakes accountability, then a deeper understanding of principals' current perceptions of their roles within this context is necessary in order to inform current and future school and district leaders. National and state policy mandates may have implications on the roles principals play as leaders within collaborative processes such as professional learning communities. As a result, it is necessary to research the role of school leaders who appear to be crucial to school improvement in effort to understand how they experience this change. Therefore, a study such as this could inform practitioners such as principals and district leaders who are engaged in and support instructional as well as organizational leadership. This

investigation can offer insights into the pre-service preparation and in-service support for school leaders working in performance accountability environments. Further, the study will contribute to our understanding of the ways reform policies are re-shaping and re-defining the role of the principal. This examination could help to inform policy makers trying to craft policies to improve accountability and enhance instructional practices in schools.

Research Questions

1. How do principals make sense of their role(s) as an instructional leader in professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability?
    a. How do principals narrate their role in fostering professional learning communities?
    b. What factors influence their sense-making with regard to their role within professional learning community development?

2. How do principals facilitate, participate, and evaluate professional learning communities from their perspective and from observations?

3. How do principals define leadership success and failure in the context of professional learning community development?

Scope of the Study

The research in this interpretive case study was organized around developing an understanding of how principals make sense of their role in building and sustaining professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability. Through interviews, observations, and collection of artifacts I explored, described and analyzed the lived experiences of principals as they interacted with this process (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). This study focused on three elementary school principals in one metropolitan school district who are currently responsible for building and sustaining professional learning communities within a tightly-defined standard set forth by district leadership. These principals have diverse backgrounds in terms of age, years of experience, and past teaching assignments but have consistent understanding of professional learning communities through district training and implementation expectations.

The paradigm for this proposed study involved an interpretivist phenomenological case study where the nature of reality was based upon the notion that understanding and knowledge are constructed and that there is one reality but multiple knowledges of this reality. The nature of knowledge was grounded within the epistemological belief in discerning reality through the interpretations of others. The phenomenological aspect of the study aligned with Kant's definition of objects as interpreted by human sensibility and understanding. In this proposed area of research, the phenomenon of how principals make sense of their role within Professional Learning Communities was the object investigated and interpreted through the multiple knowledges of this phenomenon from the narratives told by principals.

Definition of Terms

The substantive literature was primarily informed by key terms of accountability policy's impact on the role of principal as organizational as well as instructional leader, professional learning communities as structures for school improvement, and principals' roles in establishing and sustaining professional learning communities in schools.

<u>External Accountability</u>

Accountability through annual federal, state and local testing drives schools to focus on improving test scores and possibly facing consequences such as staff reassignments, transfers, even termination if enough improvement does not occur.

<u>Internal Accountability</u>

Internal Accountability involves principals establishing and facilitating work-place norms, local decision-making, as well as goals and consequences within schools they lead to meet the demands and pressure of external accountability (Adams & Kirst, 1999)

<u>Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)</u>

A professional learning community or PLC is a school-wide cultural practice that became more common after the passage of NCLB in which teamwork is "expected, inclusive, genuine, ongoing, and focused on critically examining practice to improve student outcomes" (Waters, et. al., 2004).

Instructional Leadership

According to Johnson and Snyder (1986), the principal must be an instructional leader— that is, one who engages in activities, discussions, and planning to promote school-wide characteristics that will enhance curriculum and instruction for the benefit of increasing student achievement.

Organizational Leadership

In this study, organizational leadership refers to how principals organize staff and manage the bureaucracy of schools.

Student Achievement

Student performance outcomes as measured and reported on standardized test and/or state and federal accountability assessments in accordance with state and federal accountability models.

School Improvement

Schools must demonstrate continuous improvement based upon standardized tests outlined in yearly plans which indicate strategies and practices for school staff to implement to improve student achievement outcomes.

Delimitations and Limitations

In quantitative research, external validity may generalize the findings to other situations, but this study is more aligned to reader transferability whereby each reader of the research determines the applicability of the findings in their own situations (Wilson, 1979). Taking a

qualitative approach where interviewing and investigating can create rich and descriptive data may help readers with transferability. Particularly in this case, the study represented data collected and coded on behalf of just three urban elementary school principals; however, the depth of the data collected should improve relatability based upon similar experiences or qualities enacted by these leaders. Applicability may come to into question though due to the fact that such a small sample may not display experiences shared with mother elementary school or secondary principals. In order to gain rich descriptions for each participant I had to establish techniques such as triangulation, member checking, and reflective commentary to strengthen credibility. I aimed to investigate findings that serve as an awareness or reflective guide for leaders not only in urban schools, but also for those working in different school settings. A final challenge involved inter-rater reliability as I was not working with a team of researchers; however, I utilized the guidance of my committee chairperson and director to the optimal level to ensure reliability of data interpretation.

In addition to triangulation where I utilized multiple methods (interviews, observation, artifacts) to improve the reliability and validity of the naturalistic inquiry methods, I also deployed member checks. Lincoln and Guba (1985) consider member checking to be a critical practice for improving credibility where the researcher provides feedback to the participants regarding the emerging data or interpretations of the data allowing them the opportunity to react. Member checking has limitations due to the concern that participants may not disagree with the data interpretations either because of the desire to be polite or feeling as if the researcher may be more knowledgeable of the particular phenomena.

Organization of Dissertation

The chapters in this dissertation are arranged in the following order: Chapter 1 has presented the introduction, a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study, research questions, significance of the study, limitations, delimitations, and definition of terms.

Chapter 2 consists of a comprehensive review of the available literature on federal and state accountability policy, policy impact on principals and schools, professional learning communities, as well as principals' roles in professional learning communities.

Chapter 3 describes the methods followed in the study. It contains the procedures used for generating data and the data analysis.

Chapter 4 describes each question of relevance to the research and provides a description of the findings.

Chapter 5 contains a summary of the study, its findings, conclusions, and some general recommendations. The limitations of the study and implications for further research are discussed. The dissertation provides transcriptions of all data gathered as well as a list of references of all citations for the studies used in the process of completing the analysis.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Many researchers believe that school principals are in a strategic position to promote or hinder the development of improved learning within a school community (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). Nonetheless, national and state policy reform may impact how principals negotiate the tensions between professional learning communities and high stakes accountability in schools they serve. Below I will be discussing the research on the principals' role in relation to recent accountability policy as well as how the reform model of professional learning communities has evolved into a structure with implications on the role principals may play in building and sustaining them.

Accountability Policy: Impact on Principals

Accountability policies over the last decade have followed a basic logic: student achievement will improve with increased accountability. No Child Left Behind or *NCLB* was introduced by President George W. Bush in 2001 as an ambitious legislative reform movement where 100% of students are to be proficient according to state assessments for grades 3 through 8 and high school by 2014 (Leithwood et al., 2004). Popham (2006) predicted how the majority of schools would likely be considered "in need of improvement or failing" if *NCLB* were still in place today. These labels influence public perception of the educators in these schools adding pressure to improve performance or possibly face termination. Fullan (2007) shared that this "powerful accountability measure exhausted resources in assessment as opposed to building the capacity of educators to meet the demands of their roles." In other words, the effects of this measure increased demands on educators but the policy did very little to improve or invest in the

development of school and district leaders as well as teachers in order to better understand what needed to occur to fulfill the expectations of such accountability policy.

Introduced by President Barack Obama in 2009, Race to the Top provides competitive federally-funded grants to encourage and reward states that create the conditions for education innovation and reform. One particular reform focus of *RTT* is holding teachers and principals accountable for student performance in that it expects states to ensure that student growth measures are including in teacher and administrator evaluation as well as compensation. Furthermore, Indiana Senate Enrolled Act 1 (SEA 1) requires school districts in the state of Indiana to implement a new annual performance evaluation system that includes more observations for all teachers and standardized test results. Indiana's *SEA 1* is intended to increase time administrators spend on instructional leadership activities like observations, coaching, and professional development planning in addition to the organizational management of the schools revealed as a priority in prior studies (Hornig, Klasik, and Loeb 2009).

Accountability and Outcomes

Research findings on increased accountability measures within schools demonstrate mixed results for students, teachers and administrators. There is evidence that high-stakes tests are prompting a rise in dropout rates, especially for black and Hispanic students. Schools face the high-stakes front-page headlines of their results for inadequate progress. Administrators may be transferred or reassigned if scores are not high enough or trending upward (Hoffman, Paris, Salas, Patterson, & Assaf, 2003). High-stakes tests are driving good teachers, who entered the field because of intrinsic rewards, out of the profession (Hoffman, et. al., 2003). As high-stake assessment results are used for teacher pay raises or reprimands, stress and the intensity of teacher's work is at an all time high. Too often teachers work in isolation and increasingly feel

frustrated and burnt-out with imposed curriculum and accountability demands (Fullan, 2007).

Accountability, through annual testing, drives schools to focus on improving test scores and education professionals look externally for ways to meet achievement goals. "Districts seek the best programs to teach reading and the most effective professional development providers for their teachers' in-service. Publishers of test preparation materials provide schools with resources needed to improve student scores" (Cobb, 2005, p. 472). Studies have suggested that classroom curriculum narrows to tested content at the expense of untested content. For example, teachers instruct specific subject matter and formats used on the test rather than fundamental concepts or principles (Hoffman, et. al, 2003). It could be argued that high stakes accountability policy has influenced the teaching role with regard to reduced teacher creativity, lessened autonomy, and increased performance pressure whereas the role of the principal certainly has similar unintended consequences as well. Principals are challenged with leading a school to continuous improvement by determining which instructional strategies, reform models, budget allocations and professional development plans should be implemented to ensure external accountability demands are met.

Not all studies conducted on accountability and the pressure it puts on school leaders have been negative. In fact, Springer (2008) found in his economic study that *NCLB*'s threat of sanctions were in fact positively correlated with test score gains by below-proficient students in failing schools and that greater than expected test score gains by below-proficient students do not occur at the expense of high-performing students in failing schools. He concluded that failing schools were able to benefit low-performing students and that the threat of sanctions may stimulate greater productivity. So despite a narrowing of the curriculum and more demanding working conditions for educators as a result of sanctions, some students are demonstrating higher

achievement on state assessments in these failing schools than students in non-failing schools.

External vs. Internal Impact on Principals

A recent shadow study of what 65 principals did each day during one week in 2008 in Miami-Dade county (FLA) shows that even under *NCLB* pressures for academic achievement and despite widely accepted concept of instructional leadership, Miami-Dade principals spend most of their day in managerial tasks that influence the climate of the school but may or may not affect daily instruction. According to Cuban (2009) principals who spend the most time on organizing and managing the instructional program lead schools with higher test scores and have higher teacher and parental satisfaction rates than those principals who spend time coaching teachers and doing classroom walk throughs. Ironically, external accountability has reshaped the role of the principal in some aspects as they are expected to spend more time observing teaching practices, working with teacher teams on instructional improvement plans, and studying student achievement outcomes more frequently. This reshaping or shift in focus has been referred to as internal accountability which also involves establishing and facilitating work-place norms, local decision-making, as well as goals and consequences within schools (Adams & Kirst, 1999).

According to Gamoran et. al. (2003), principals are pressured by community stakeholders including local school board members, superintendents as well as state departments of education to address external accountability with internal accountability practices that organize and engage teachers in meaningful, collaborative discourse around standards, measures, and learning objectives. One area where principals facilitate professional development is through an internal accountability reform structure such as professional learning communities that encompasses the aforementioned practices. The challenge with external accountability expectations is the pressure placed on principals to effectively facilitate internal accountability practices such as developing

high quality professional learning communities in order to demonstrate continuous school improvement outcomes.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional Learning Communities are a structure used in schools and districts to organize and ensure teachers and administrators are committed to learning and data-driven professional development. PLCs have spread quickly and widely due to systems of high stakes accountability. The following section discusses PLCs as a strategy for school improvement in reforming the culture of schools, and its implications on role of the principal in building professional community.

A professional learning community or PLC is a school-wide structure that became a more common practice after the passage of NCLB in which teamwork is "expected, inclusive, genuine, ongoing, and focused on critically examining practice to improve student outcomes" (Waters, et. al., 2004). Ideally, in such learning communities, school administrators and teachers build a collaborative culture in which they work together and embrace accountability for the learning of all students (Waters, et. al., 2004). Elmore (2004) made the definitive case that no external accountability scheme can succeed without internal (school/district) accountability, which he defines as the capacity (resources, skills, knowledge) of the organization for individual and collective responsibility to engage in daily improvement practices. Fullan (2007) stated that heavy-handed accountability systems omit or seriously underestimate capacity-building meaning that teachers are not given the resources or time to develop professionally in a manner that will allow widespread success.

As Smith and his coauthors (2004) pointed out, "what has made professional learning communities attractive and widespread is their adaptability; educators can shape and reshape the

strategy around specific needs (p. 22). Professional development in a PLC can be teacher-driven, flexible and embedded in daily practice as opposed to one shot workshops that fail to provide the necessary skills and knowledge (Smith, et al, 2004).

Characteristics of Professional Learning Communities

Researchers (Hord, 1997; Louis & Marks, 1998) have identified broad characteristics of a school-wide professional community: shared leadership, shared values and vision, deprivatized practice, collective creativity, and supportive conditions. This model implicates principals as it would be their role to ensure these characteristics are evident within one's school organization. For example, a principal is responsible for the creation or co-creation of the school improvement plan that requires a team of multiple stakeholders (teachers, parents, counselors, and students) engage in a process where a shared vision and mission statement can be determined. This team, in general, is often referred to as a leadership team that helps guide improvement in schools.

Louis and Marks (1998) provide a more refined definition of PLC that have important implications on the principal's role as an instructional leader. Louis and Marks describe PLCs as being defined by the following components of a professional culture: reflective discussion, open sharing of classroom practices, developing a common knowledge base for improvement, collaborating on the design of new materials and curricula, and establishing norms related to pedagogical practice and student performance. These components have been stressed in some schools and districts in Indiana as vital to improved student achievement particularly low performing, urban - Title I Schools who may have a greater sense of urgency for improved test results due to the increased accountability demands placed upon them. As a result, principals feel pressure to not only ensure teachers engage in this process but are also responsible for evaluating how teachers perform or comply to these component expectations. How principals

perform or make sense of their role as instructional leaders within this particular PLC context or structure may inform educators of practices or perceptions that help or hinder school improvement.

Benefits of Professional Learning Communities

Studies demonstrate that schools with strong professional learning communities produce important outcomes for students and school professionals such as higher student achievement on some standardized tests, lower absenteeism, and less teacher-turnover (Crow et al., 2002; Toole & Louis, 2002). Collaborative conversations make public what has traditionally been private—goals, strategies, materials, pacing, questions, concerns, and results (DuFour, 2004). Teachers ask questions about their practice and view teaching in a more analytic fashion (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999). Engaging in discussion with colleagues about their work and examining the assumptions basic to quality practice lead to deepened understandings of the process of instruction (Schmoker, 2006). Toole and Louis (2002) suggest that research findings indicate that professional learning communities lead to improved school functioning. A professional learning community is seen as a powerful staff development approach and potent strategy for school change and improvement (Hord, 1997, 2004). There are multiple examples from various empirical research studies that show the positive effects of using PLC elements and their effect on student achievement. For example, high school students attending schools with professional learning communities demonstrated higher levels of achievement in math, reading, science, and history (Lee, V. E., Smith, J. B., & Croninger, R. G., 1995) whereas elementary students achieved higher reading proficiency (Tighe, E., Wang, A., & Foley, E., 2002). Hispanic students demonstrated higher levels of academic achievement when their schools began functioning as PLCs (Reyes, P., Scribner, J. D., & Paredes-Scribner, A., 1999). Students

achieved higher levels of authentic learning where teachers worked interdependently and used authentic pedagogical and assessment practices (Louis, 1998). Elementary students were three times more likely to improve in math and reading with schools that had established high trust communities (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Students were absent less often and were less likely to drop out of school before graduating from high school (Hord, 1997).

Not only did students perform well in the PLC research studies, but teachers also benefited (Shellard, E., 2003). When teachers engaged in ongoing professional conversations with other teachers, their knowledge increased with subject matter and teaching skills, and their morale increased significantly. In addition, teachers reported feeling energized and renewed (Louis, 1998). These problem-based dialogues increased the levels of trust, which provided a necessary foundation to build student-focused collective action among teachers (Bryk, A. & Schneider, B., 2002). In another study, faculty who were involved in a PLC provided higher intellectual learning tasks for their students because they were engaged in more collaborative learning, which was more powerful than independent learning (Hord, S. M. & Sommers, W. A., 2008).

Potential Pitfalls of PLCs

PLCs, as Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) discuss, have the potential to increase teacher retention rates and be forums for providing praise for those teachers whose practices are yielding the desired result; however, standardization and accountability measures have turned authentic teacher inquiry into what they refer to as "contrived collegiality". They argue that not all conversations should be about targets to raise test outcomes to meet policy mandates, but lively learning communities that review and renew professional values as opposed to places to just implement government policies and rack up results.

Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) caution school leaders to be conscious of "contrived collegiality" where data or performance -driven change, mandated coaching and collaboration have often turned genuine teacher inquiry into an empty, ritualistic practice. They explain how "data-driven improvement within PLCs has stapled teachers to their spreadsheets and kept them calculating and concentrating on tested achievement gains, instead of inspiring animated professional discussion about students and their learning" (p.92).

Fullan (2007) states that PLCs should not be thought of as a technology or curricular program of practice but as a new culture to be developed, that the term travels faster than the concept as the concept requires deep, careful and persistent attention. In fact McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) argue that PLC development occurs in three stages: novice, intermediate and advanced. Therefore, thinking of professional learning communities as a quick, prescribed act of compliance can endanger the community development process for teachers and students (Talbert, 2010). Yet studies of principal practices in schools with regard to their role in professional learning communities are mixed. Cohen (2008) argues that spending time in classrooms to observe, monitor, and evaluate classroom lessons does not necessarily lead to better teaching or higher student achievement on standardized tests according to the Miami-Dade County Study. Where there is a correlation between principals' influence on teachers and student performance, it occurs when principals create and sustain a culture of collaboration in the school, organize instruction across the school, and align school lessons to district standards and standardized test items. Nonetheless, further investigations into the principals' perceptions of their roles in PLCs may help us better understand how they attempt to create, organize and sustain this structure in their schools taking into account high stakes external accountability pressures placed upon them.

Principals' Role in Professional Learning Communities

Current policy environment at the state and federal level changed the stage and conditions by which school administrators operate within professional learning communities (Scribner, et al, 2007). In cultivating a professional learning community committed to professional inquiry, data-based decision making, and "best practices", as well as helping teachers learn to adapt to new standards of accountability, principals can either help or hinder their schools in achieving higher levels of productivity and success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). The principal's role in nurturing a professional learning community is complex, challenging and problematic because of their positional authority, performance pressure due to accountability demands, lack of expertise as well as lack of resources. Principals are in a strategic position to promote or inhibit the development of a teacher learning community in their school regardless of the challenges bestowed upon them within the current educational market-place; nonetheless, researchers continue to explore and attempt to better understand leadership practices or styles most conductive to improved PLCs.

Huffman and Jacobson (2003) set out to determine the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their schools as professional learning communities and the leadership style of their principals. The subjects of the study were eighty-three prospective principals enrolled in an education administration course at a Texas university. Each subject identified their principal as having one of three possible leadership styles: a) directive, b) collaborative, or c) non-directive. Participants in the study rated collaborative-style principals as more supportive of two key measures of professional learning communities: a) contribution – providing a safe environment for diverse ideas, beliefs and strategies, and b) conscience – being an organization guided by positive principles, ethics, and values. The significance of this study suggests that a collaborative style is found to be more supportive to teachers yet we are unsure this style improves student

achievement. Consequently, we also are limited in understanding what a collaborative –style means to the principals who are "perceived" as leading PLCs this way. Is it necessary for a principal to occasionally be more directive in certain contexts of PLCs? Either way, we need to study how principals negotiate their position within PLCs to gain more insight into how they make sense of their role within certain PLC development contexts.

Professional learning community development comes up against a competing conception of effective teaching practices that poses a challenge to the principal's role (Talbert, 2010). Accountability policies impose a view of teaching as implementing a set of curriculum according to district pacing guides with adopted curricular "best practices" implemented in classrooms with fidelity. This curriculum implementation model is more likely found in lower performing districts where pressure is placed on principals to be more directive than collaborative because teacher practices are under greater microscopic scrutiny when results are not where they are expected to be (Talbert, 2010). The assumption in this scenario is that poor student achievement results as measured by standardized tests are the effect of weak curriculum and instruction practices.

Principals who lead collaboratively provide the strategies and resources to develop individual as well as the collective capacity of the team. Principals take on the role of co-learners who model and facilitate the practices of questioning, investigating and seeking solutions (Klein-Kracht, 1993; Harris, 2003). Principals may lead with a technical-rational approach making sure curriculum is implemented with fidelity, an agenda is followed, and spreadsheets are completed and turned into administration. Ogawa & Bossert, (2000) and Harris (2003) proposed that it was the hierarchical organizational structure, with its clearly defined roles and communication channels that prevents principals from sharing leadership with teachers. Whether principals lead

with a collaborative or a directive style, they influence PLC development (Talbert, 2010). The compliance or directive strategy may cause anxiety and teachers may resist the time given for professional learning to develop limiting a school's ability to grow as an effective professional learning community. However, principals may feel the need to occasionally act in a manner that is more directive in nature and more collaborative or non-directive in other situations. Principals make decisions depending on the context of each situation; therefore, it proves worth examining and noting when principals may have to favor one style over another depending on the context of that particular PLC structure.

A New Brunswick study of 166 principals showed that the majority of them were open to a collaborative approach to leadership (Williams, 2006). Principals in the study, however, preferred the directive approach. The study posed the question "Why do principals persist in using a leadership style that fails to foster teacher collaboration?" The reasons may stem from the fact that the current hierarchical system in education reinforces a directive, analytical approach. 85% of a person's performance is determined by the system in which they work (Sagor & Barnett, 1994). Principals are simply behaving in a manner that they perceive the system expects of them. According to Williams (2006), school leadership has its roots in a rational technical bureaucracy that relies heavily on hierarchical roles and relationships and this bureaucracy extends beyond the school into district offices and state boards of education. The policies, procedures, roles and relationships that pervade the educational system appear to support a more directive leadership style.   Thus, tension can exist between a principal's leadership authority and leadership practice in particular fostering professional learning communities. Principals face many challenges when working with teachers in professional learning communities that likely influence future leadership action. Challenges include principal

and staff data analysis skills or lack thereof, anti-data cultures that might exist within teacher teams, unaccommodating teaching contracts and schedules, determining when to appropriately collaborate or issue a directive, lack of technical or financial resources, absence of a shared vision, as well as the ability to effectively evaluate teachers engaged in this process as a result of federal and state accountability requirements. All of these challenges likely influence how a principal or district leaders shape leadership practices, rituals or protocols within professional learning community development.

Moreover, one of the major concerns with principals' roles within a school's professional learning community is that granting teachers this time and space to feel empowered to make sense of student achievement and implement "corrective action" does not guarantee school improvement (Leithwood & Jantzi, 1999). Principals' abilities to lead teachers and students to improved student achievement through this process require skill development that is often taken for granted (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). For example, a principal who previously taught middle school mathematics may struggle to help English Language Arts Teachers toward enhanced instructional practices which ultimately lead to improved standardized testing outcomes for students simply by leading in a collaborative manner. It is limiting to assume that because a principal is given the positional authority of instructional leader and facilitator of PLCs in a school, they know how to fulfill this role in an effective manner.

There is limited understanding of the ways principals learn to facilitate and function within this complex collaborative PLC structure many believe is essential to school improvement under the current policy demands. In fact, Leithwood et al. (2004) stated, "research needs to focus on a more fine-grained understanding than we currently have of successful leadership practices; and much richer appreciations of how those practices seep into the fabric of the

education system, improving its overall quality and substantially adding value to students'

learning (p. 14). Leading professional learning communities as a school principal is an integral

leadership practice but an area that is complex to understand. If principals are in a strategic

position to promote or inhibit, help or hinder the development of a teacher learning community

in their schools with implications for continual school improvement then how do principals make

sense of their roles, practices, and leadership styles within this complex structure? How do they

negotiate their position within the current accountability context? I aim to use these queries to

develop a conceptual frame that will best orient this problem.

Conceptual Framework

A frame that proved beneficial in researching how principals negotiate the tension

between supporting professional learning communities and managing high stakes accountability

is based on how they made sense of particular organizational processes. Spillane (2004)

explained how studies that examine sense-making in organizations look at how members

interpret organizational processes. To examine how change occurs, one must study organizing,

or the ongoing assembly of interlocked, interdependent behaviors (Weick 1979) and cultural

scripts. Sensemaking is the process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues

interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible

meanings that rationalize what people are doing (Weick, 1995; Weick et al.,2005)

In schools, this means examining educators' day-to-day interactions about instruction as

well as how staffs view those interactions. Pertinent to my research problem, I aimed to examine

and interpret the "story" behind principals' perceptions of their role within professional learning

communities. Gabriel 2000; Lakoff and Johnson 1980 argue that an organization is not merely a

place or a structure to which people respond. More accurately, it is something that people create.

It emerges, in fact, through individual and collective sense-making. In this case, how principals

perceived their role and interacted with teacher teams was based upon how they negotiated the tension between the principalship, professional learning communities and high stakes accountability. The purpose behind applying sense-making as a framework for this study was to help me best analyze and interpret the narratives the principals shared.

In studying schools as organizations, one must examine how educators interpreted their technical core as well as the social relations that exist around that core. Studies increasingly examined how members of an organization take part in sense-making or interpreting organizational processes (Lin 2000; Spillane 2004; Yanow 1996). Spillane applies Weick's sense-making in a study of how teachers' and policymakers' varying interpretations of language used in policy documents influenced the different actions that they took regarding that policy. Similarly, I aimed to examine principals' interpretations of their role within professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability. In general, I investigated the question, "what's the story here and how do principals' narratives of their roles influence professional learning communities?"

PLCs are like micro-organizations within a larger organization because the work of organizations is increasingly done in small temporary outfits. In the case of professional learning communities, teams of teachers are working to accomplish goals both pertinent to not only their students but the school improvement goals as a whole. Often the demands are high for these micro-organizations to produce positive outcomes and not showing gains or progress toward goals can have serious consequences (Heydebrand, 1989;Ancona and Caldwell, 1992). In the case of current accountability policy within education, this could mean punitive measures taken against schools and school teams who continuously struggle to demonstrate improvement with regard to academic achievement. Westly (1990) defined an organization as "a series of

interlocking routines, habituated action patterns that bring the same people together around the same activities in the same time and places." PLCs embody these characteristics in that grade level or school teams meet frequently and take action based on shared understanding and common goals or outcomes. How leaders influence organizations ultimately impact the culture, climate and outcomes of the larger organization as a whole. Therefore, one could conclude that the case is similar when conceptualizing the principal's influence on PLCs and the impact this may have on schools. In order to investigate this research area, I started by identifying how school leaders made sense of these micro-organizations.

The basic idea of sensemaking is that reality is an ongoing accomplishment that emerges from efforts to create order and make retrospective sense of what occurs. The world of decision making is about strategic rationality. It is built from clear questions and clear answers that attempt to remove ignorance (Daft and Macintosh, 1981). The world of sensemaking is different. Sensemaking is about contextual rationality. It is built out of vague questions, muddy answers, and negotiated agreements that attempt to reduce confusion. Role structures exist in all organizations. Professional learning communities typically have a structure with a leader or facilitator, a team leader, teachers, a note-taker, and sometimes instructional specialists. As in all organizations, a structure exists for roles and responsibilities. Principals typically serve as the leader of this structure with the role of interpreting the contextual rationality created by the team as well as devising, co-constructing, or approving the team's strategy development and strategy implementation to improve learning for students. Sensemaking emphasizes that people try to make things rationally accountable to themselves and others. Thus, in the words of Morgan, Frost, and Pondy (1983: 24), "individuals are not seen as living in, and acting out their lives in relation to, a wider reality, so much as creating and sustaining images of a wider reality, in part

to rationalize what they are doing. They realize their reality, by reading into their situation

patterns of significant meaning." Therefore, principals read into professional learning

communities and attempt to make sense of context of the challenges the teams identifed and hold

teachers accountable to the reality of overcoming that challenge.

CHAPTER III

METHODS

The following chapter describes the methods I employed to research how principals made sense of their role in building and sustaining professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability as well as provided the justification for the research practices chosen. The concept of principals' sense-making within a context of professional learning communities required the researcher to collect individual stories of administrators charged with leading PLCs. These stories drew from personal and professional experiences as well as from the cultural context of particular schools and school reforms. For this reason qualitative research methods were utilized in order to collect and analyze these stories of school leaders in different school contexts within the same district. Below, I discussed how I arrived at my methodological approach, as well as described the methods I used to carry out my study.

Background

My review of the relevant methodological literature and the variety of approaches used to study PLCs helped me narrow my focus. I initially examined professional learning communities in schools as I was intrigued by this reform trend and its collaborative process; however, I knew from my own experiences there were implementation challenges that I witnessed both as a teacher and administrator. There are also a variety of conceptual frameworks used to study professional learning communities, but the most dominant themes in the literature indicate researchers primarily conceptualize PLCs in terms of organizing for instruction or instructional teaming, social influence or social networks within collaborative discourse, as well as conditions that foster organizational learning. These themes provide a number of angles through which to view professional learning communities in schools. By identifying these

themes, I was able to see consistencies among foci and methods utilized in the research on this issue as well as identify potential blind spots that could benefit from being explored in my particular study. The methods commonly used were qualitative where researchers utilized paradigmatic perspectives of interpretive and constructivist approaches where observations of interactions, interviews and/or discourse analysis were common methods. Within this body of research, many of the findings and conclusions had implications for the principal or leadership team who would be working within and/or managing this organizational learning process for the purpose of school improvement.

As I started to shift my focus from the actual reform model of professional learning communities to the principal's role within this context, I found studies that analyzed the interplay of control and learning in professional learning communities and how this was influenced by the principal's interaction with the organizational learning process of PLCs. Qualitative design methods primarily consisting of interviews and observations utilizing case studies or focus groups of principals and teacher teams as subjects of study were heavily favored in helping researchers understand more of what principals' roles in professional learning communities could and even should look like; however, the research on how principals narrate their own experiences leading PLCs and how these narratives provide some insight speak to how they make sense of and enact this particular leadership role is an area requiring further investigation. The reason this requires further investigation is that sensemaking can often serve as a trigger to act or not act (Weick, 1995). Both responses have implications for those involved in the PLC so studying how principals make sense of their role is every bit as important as "what" their role looks like in a PLC.

The process of social construction that occurs when discrepant cues interrupt individuals' ongoing activity, and involves the retrospective development of plausible meanings that rationalize what people are doing is referred to as sense-making (Weick, 1995; Weick et al., 2005). In schools, sense-making means examining educators' day-to-day interactions about instruction as well as how staffs view those interactions. Sense-making is the central construct I will use to focus and situate my research problem. I aim to examine and interpret how principals make sense of and enact their roles within professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability. Weick argues that sense-making involves turning circumstances into a situation that is comprehended explicitly in words and that serves a springboard into action. In this case, school leaders make decisions and take action based upon how they construct what happens within PLC meetings. Sensemaking is central because it is the primary way through which meanings inform and constrain identity and action. The purpose of this study is to explore principal sense-making further by investigating principals' understanding of their role in supporting PLCs while negotiating the tension of the demands of high stakes accountability.

Methodology

Over the last decade increased accountability demands based upon students' performance on standardized tests have increased pressure on teachers and principals. There is a consistent need to demonstrate improved student achievement in order for schools to remain legitimate in eyes of the public and to avoid being penalized. Schools that are categorized as "failing" or "low performing" face the possibility of having budgets reduced, losing students, possibly even receiving state intervention like being a turnaround school where half the staff and leadership is terminated. Arguably, the pressure of high stakes accountability has impacted our urban school districts and leaders the most. In a large metropolitan area where school districts face high

numbers of students coming from poverty well above the state average, school leaders and teachers are charged with a complex task of continuously increasing student achievement to meet the demands of federal and state accountability mandates.   The principals' role within this period has become increasingly dynamic and complex particularly within the area of instructional leadership and teacher evaluation. I designed this study to expand upon the existing research on principal leadership in establishing and sustaining professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability. Taking an interpretivist approach to understanding how principals made sense of their role leading within this context allows for the information shared to be analyzed, interpreted and organized into meaningful data that could inform national and state policy-makers as well as how graduate schools are preparing school leaders for this particular role.

It is also important to consider not only how graduate schools are preparing school leaders for this role, but also how district leadership like superintendents and members of their cabinet influence it as well. In the school district where I focused my research principals have been influenced predominantly by the professional development work of the Dufours and Mike Schmoker. The three principal participants read articles and books involving both of these authors. They have also worked with a quality control consultant hired by the district who manipulated some of the key components of professional learning community development into organized items like agenda formats, questionnaires referred to as error-analysis and spreadsheets for data analysis that principals could make use of in their respective schools. Some of the principals in my study also attended a conference called *The PLC Summit* where consultants, scholars, and educators from across the nation and beyond come to present school improvement strategies that align with the works of professional community development. All

of these factors likely influence the manner by which these principals within this school district made sense of their role in the professional learning community development process by reinforcing that leadership does influence student achievement and holding teachers accountable to processes within professional learning community development is key to reforming or improving school test scores.

Research Design

The research in this interpretivist study was organized around developing an understanding of how principals make sense of their role in building and sustaining professional learning communities. Through interviews, observations, and collection of artifacts I explored, described and analyze the meaning of the lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) of principals as they facilitated, participated, and evaluated this process in their schools. By using in-depth interviews and collecting observation field notes to study this phenomenon, I desired to build on the existing literature by filling in some of the gaps in the research, which emphasizes the roles principals play within professional learning communities without an analysis of the principals' own sensemaking of how and why they engaged in PLCs. The methods of earlier studies provide ample information from a large number of teachers and principals, but have limitations for understanding the narratives principals shared and how they learned or are conditioned to operate and function within this complex collaborative process as a result of their lived experiences.

Focusing on individual principals from the elementary level will bring greater depth of understanding as I attempted to make meaning of this particular phenomenon. The understanding garnered from a qualitative study will provide insight into what an individual says

about a subject with which they have firsthand knowledge along with information that cannot be acquired through a survey (Dilley, 2004).

Research Questions

1. How do principals make sense of their role(s) as an instructional leader in professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability?
   a. How do principals narrate their role in fostering professional learning communities?
   b. What factors influence their sensemaking with regard to their role within professional learning community development?

2. How do principals facilitate, participate, and evaluate professional learning communities from their perspective and from observations?

3. How do principals define leadership success and failure in the context of professional learning community development?

Setting and Participants

This study followed three elementary school principals in one metropolitan school district who are involved in leading professional learning communities within a tightly-defined standard set forth by district leadership. These principals have diverse backgrounds in terms of age, years of experience, and past teaching practices but have consistent understanding of professional learning communities through district training and implementation expectations.

Looking at these three principals provided several advantages. First, interviewing and observing these principals before, during, and after they actively engaged with professional learning communities offered more insight into how school principals come to make decisions based upon their interpretations of the meaning-making that occurs amongst staff utilizing this process. Second, studying three different principals' sensemaking of their role in building and sustaining professional learning communities from one district could shed insight into how a district might consider providing professional development for leaders as successes and

challenges are identified. Finally, examining how principals perceive their role in evaluating

PLCs may potentially change as a result of teacher evaluation reform and this could have

implications for the level or degree of professional community attained. For example, a principal

could share how having to classify teachers as highly effective, effective, needs improvement,

and ineffective contributes negatively or positively to the overall collaborative environment.

In order to select these principals, I requested access to my colleagues via approval from my

immediate supervisor and superintendent. I wanted this research to be meaningful to the

advancement of my profession and help further develop our district's ability to support learning

through professional learning community development; therefore, I worked within the guidelines

my district provided me as I must first fulfill my obligation as a practicing principal.

Data Collection Instrument

As with most qualitative research I, as the researcher, served as the primary data

collection instrument (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).   I conducted a minimum of three interviews

with each principal recording, transcribing, coding, analyzing and interpreting the interviews.

The goal of these interviews was to gain a rich narrative account of how these principals made

sense of their role within professional learning communities as well as how this role was

influenced with the adoption of state accountability policies. The purpose of this study was to

provide schools of education, policy makers and district leaders' insight into each principals'

narrative accounts and the sensemaking they experience as a result. Interview questions were

designed to follow the biographical-interpretative method as described by Holloway and

Jefferson, (1997), using open-ended questions, elicit stories, avoid "why" questions, and follow

up using respondents' ordering/phrasing.

Interview

I conducted an intensive (semi-structured) 45 minute interview with principals before and after observing their interaction with professional learning communities. I asked each principal the same set of questions derived from the five attributes of a PLC—shared leadership, shared values and vision, deprivatized practice, collective creativity, and supportive conditions (Hord, 1997; Louis & Marks, 1998). However, since this study emphasized a narrative account there was variance in the ordering as well as the addition of follow up questions that were determined by the responses of the participants. Throughout the interview it was important to establish a rapport with principals in order to not be seen as an evaluative authority rather a researcher on an equal playing field. The purpose of the interview as the major method for data collection involved my desire to gain a deeper understanding of how principals made sense of the context of PLC development and high stakes accountability by analyzing the stories or lived experiences shared. Interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed with the names withheld on all documents.

Observation

I conducted an observation of each principal and his/her interaction with a grade level teacher team during a professional learning community meeting. Principals were interviewed before and after the observation. Each principal was observed interacting with a grade level team of teachers totaling a minimum of 3 hours. Field notes were used to collect data. Observations were a critical data collection instrument as well because having the opportunity to see these principals enact their roles based on their sense-making as well as how they interpreted certain actions or interaction that occur during a professional learning community meeting opened the door for further questions to ask or areas to pursue with further research. For example, a

principal chose to issue a directive as opposed to allow for teacher autonomy based on certain contexts spoke to additional factors which influenced sense-making not always brought up in interviews.

Data Analysis Procedures

I began analysis of the data collected from the interviews while it was being collected. While I had the audiotape to refer to, analyzing data as it was collected ensured that the information was fresh in my mind and allowed me to be able to recall any non-verbal cues that were important to the analysis of the data. Once the interview had been conducted and transcribed I went through the process of coding, sorting, and integration of data (Weiss, 1994). As the transcripts of the interviews were reviewed codes were used to develop a sorting system for the data. As with most interviews, participants discussed topics in a non-linear fashion; thus, data that deals with the same issue was brought together and organized into a story of that issue (Wiess, 1994, p. 168).

The principal interview transcriptions were analyzed using a constant comparison method (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The process began with a thorough reading through all of the interview responses. The second step included using grounded theory analysis (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) by open coding to compare individual responses to others to determine which phenomena shared sufficient similarities that they could be considered instances of the same construct. This approach to thematic analysis allowed for themes to surface as pertinent to the description of the phenomenon being studied (Boyatzsis, 1998). The process involved the classification of themes through "careful reading and re-reading of the data" (Rice & Ezzy, 1999, p. 258). "It is a form of pattern recognition within the data, where emerging themes become the categories for analysis" (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane, 2006, pp.3-4).

For each principal, I developed a thematic narrative that began with a main idea or a particular theme and progressed toward a fuller elaboration of the idea throughout the narrative (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). I then connected and compared the narrative of each principal as this comparison brought meaning to the larger context of how principals' made sense of their role and how the narratives shared had implications for the quality of professional learning community development in each school.

Limitations to the Study

Qualitative studies can serve as a conduit for others to understand their experiences through a different lens (Eisner, 1998). The thick description of the participants and contexts that comprise this descriptive study, help readers determine how similar they are to the situation of interest to them. For example, this study represented a small sample of urban elementary school leaders. While I identified perceptions of principals as a means to better understand their actions that support the development of a school-wide professional learning community, my findings are not be applicable to all situations. The findings do, however, offer a useful guide for inquiry for leaders not only in urban schools, but also of those working in other school settings.

Trustworthiness

Guba and Lincoln (1985) proposed four criteria for judging the soundness of qualitative research and explicitly offered these as an alternative to more traditional quantitatively oriented criteria. In the case of credibility, the purpose of this research was to describe or understand how principals made sense of their role in developing PLCs in the current context of high stakes accountability from the participant's eyes. The participants are the only ones who can legitimately judge the credibility of the results. Guba and Lincoln (1985) consider member checking to be a critical practice for improving credibility where the researcher provides

feedback to the participants regarding the emerging data or interpretations of the data allowing them the opportunity to react. Member checking has limitations due to the concern that participants may not disagree with the data interpretations either because of the desire to be polite or feeling as if the researcher may be more knowledgeable of the particular phenomena. As a principal in the same district and colleague to the participants studied, my positionality could have influenced the member checking process; however, I was intentional about establishing trust with the participants because of my position. I initiated the process by providing them the studies purpose and all participants had the chance to decline participation. I also regularly utilized member checks and triangulation tools with the data to ensure I was mindful of not filling in gaps in the data where follow-up clarity was needed.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The data collected and analyzed from each principal consisted of one observation and

two interviews. For each principal, I developed a narrative based upon their responses to my

initial interview, the observation as well as the follow-up interview.   Therefore, each narrative

follows a similar format of PLC Leadership, Observation and Reflection. During the initial

interview, principals shared how they viewed their role as an instructional leader relating to PLC

development. They shared information pertaining to their background as well as how they

perceived how accountability policy has influenced their role. The middle portion of each

principals' narrative provides the reader with information as to the context of what occurred

during the observation of the principals' interaction with a PLC team. In the final part of each

principals' narrative, they shared their reflections of the PLC work observed and shed light on

what characteristics make for a successful PLC as well as what makes for a challenging one.

They concluded by reflecting upon their own development and support learning how to lead

PLCs successfully and recommendations they have for further developing principals in this

particular area.

Table 1 lists information regarding the principals' years of experience and some school

characteristics. Each principal narrative spoke to a thematic role of the principal as it related to

one of the key attributes outlined in the framework of PLC development explained by Louis and

Marks (1998). The five attributes of PLC development in schools according to Louis and Marks

(1998) include shared leadership, shared vision and values, deprivatized practice, collective

creativity and supportive conditions. The headings of the three narratives are deprivatied

practice, shared vision and values as well as shared leadership because these three components

were most evident out of the five based on the themes of the lived experiences shared by the principals. Next, I compared the narratives looking for similarities and differences in order to bring meaning to the larger context of how principals make sense of their role facilitating PLC development in an era of high stakes accountability. Finally, while comparing and contrasting the data within the narratives some common themes surfaced. These themes served as categories for re-reading and interpreting the data. The five themes could have implications on future research, principal practices and policy moving forward.

Table 1			
Principal & School Characteristics			
Principal	Yrs. Experience	School Letter Grade	Percent of students receiving Free and/or reduced Lunch
Sue Jackson	5	C	89%
Pam Walker	2	D	83%
Jill Burns	9	A	62%

Deprivatized Practice

Sue Jackson has four years experience leading a large (over 800) elementary school in an urban school district with nearly 87% of her students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Her school experienced an average school letter grade of a C prior to the recent change in curriculum standards and the new ISTEP test. Many schools experienced a significant decline in proficiency percentages since the adoption of these new standards and state accountability test. Deprivatized practice or open sharing of classroom practices best captures the general theme in this first narrative as a result of the principals intent or desire to see teacher teams share and implement instructional practices that they thought would yield higher student achievement outcomes associated with formative and summative assessments. Also due to what appeared to be teacher turn-over concerns for Principal Jackson, she stated how important it was to help novice teachers

best utilize PLCs to prepare them for success in their own classroom. Finally, Principal Jackson recounted a time when she scheduled a follow-up meeting with one of her grade level teams because they did not leave their PLC meeting having shared or deprivatized instructional practices that might lead to improved instruction and learning outcomes.

PLC Leadership

Sue's role as an instructional leader has evolved over her four years. She was initially introduced to the school's professional learning community culture as a teacher in special education where they followed a process of looking at common assessment data, completed a form and turned it into administration. This is was the process she inherited as principal and initially described PLCs as "teachers just going through the motions". Her role shifted over time and she identified herself as more of a facilitator or coach of this process. By facilitator or coach, Mrs. Jackson shared, "I work with my curriculum coaches to align support for teachers based on collaboration coming out of this professional learning community process and follow-up with teachers through the evaluation process". She believed professional learning communities evolved from turning meeting notes into administration to more purposeful planning with regard to student instruction.

Mrs. Jackson's did not think accountability policy influenced her role in any manner. "It does not matter if we earn an A or an F letter grade from the state, we have a PLC process and we have to follow it. It is a matter of supporting our teams where they are and so you might tweak your process a bit depending on the needs of teacher teams." She gets concerned with providing support to teachers new to PLCs especially as turnover is high in the school she leads. More factors in addition to new teachers that influence her role as the instructional leader of PLCs included the size of teams as she noted the larger the teams get (5 or 6 sections at a grade

level) the more challenging they are to support. She shared, "It is challenging to support new teachers during this PLC process while simultaneously engaging and extending the skills of our veteran teachers."

Sue explained, "We added three new teachers to the third grade team last year so we had to do a lot of hand-holding with guiding teachers on how to use this process not for field trip planning, but for moving instruction forward." Finally, student achievement data obviously influenced her role as some teams had higher assessment scores than others; therefore, she may provide more or less support depending on the test data the school used to predict high stakes testing achievement and the collaborative nature of the teams at her school.

Resources and professional development experiences have influenced her role as an instructional leader of PLCs. These include professional development literature and she attended a conference entitled, *PLC Summit*. Nonetheless, she believed leaders have to know their building and the strengths and challenges of teacher teams in it. "Vision is important for knowing how to best support professional learning communities," explained Sue. She knew she was positively influencing the PLCs in her school by how well they ran without her. When she could become more of an observer of this process as opposed to leading them, she felt she was succeeding in her role because she could see instructional change in the classroom afterward. Sue shared, "When I can observe teachers implementing the plan they agreed upon during their time together it is rewarding to see teams with veterans and novice teachers develop a purpose, some action steps and focus instruction on meeting student needs."

Sue recounted a time when a grade level team was meeting as a professional learning community and they did not experience success. She facilitated a follow-up meeting with the school's third grade team regarding their analysis of a high stakes reading practice test called

IREAD. The team followed the steps required by the administration, but failed to produce any action steps toward addressing the challenges identified within the student achievement data.

"Instead of asking questions about what they could do instructionally to help students with their reading challenges, they started to complain about not having extra adults available to push into some of their classrooms to work with these students on the challenges identified in the data." Mrs. Jackson shared that this frustrated her due to the team's lack of perceived ownership of their student achievement data. After they ran out of time and the meeting ended, she reflected upon the effectiveness of the meeting. She decided to reschedule another meeting with the team, half of which were new teachers to the school. While rescheduling the meeting, she gave the team specific directives of what she wanted the team to accomplish. First, she wanted them to identify specific skills children were lacking and work on a plan during small group guided reading instruction for how to target these specific skill deficits. Second, she wanted the team to deprivatize or share out these specific instructional strategies and come to an agreement on how they would collectively address their students' needs understanding they would have no additional help. Finally, she wanted the team to determine a time to reassess. Sue felt that after this additional support and careful facilitation, the team was able to create some more targeted instructional plans for students.

PLC Observation

During my observation Sue and the same third grade team met regarding specific math standards related to problem solving they believed would be on the high stakes math test called ISTEP+. The team determined common errors and plausible explanations as to why students made those errors while following an 8-step error-analysis process. For example, one of the mistakes in the story problems several students made was as a result of a computation error

according to the team's beliefs. Therefore, the team discussed some strategies for addressing

computation. For example, one teacher shared that she was simply going to give her students

more exposure and practice with this particular type of question. Sue asked the team questions

related to how well students checked their work. She also asked teachers to share strategies for

teaching problem solving as she observed some teachers with strong problem solving

achievement results who have students underline key vocabulary in the question.

     Mrs. Jackson asked one veteran teacher who had not contributed any insight what she did

as her student achievement data appeared stronger than her colleagues. She shared that she gives

a similar assessment each Thursday and pulled students back individually to review it with them.

A new teacher asked if she could see that assessment and possibly use it. This transitioned the

team's discussion to how they plan to use this information instructionally. Each teacher shared a

different opinion for how they will use it with not a lot of commonality. Mrs. Jackson called on

a new teacher who had not contributed yet to see how she planned to use it. The teacher shared

her plan to focus on computation. The team agreed they would not prioritize going over this

same assessment again before discussing math instruction plans for the weeks leading up to the

state tests. Mrs. Jackson concluded the meeting with, "What else do you need?"

     A teacher stated, "I guess more time to collaborate and plan, but I don't necessarily

want more time because I feel good with where my students are going with their math skills." It

is not unusual for teachers to desire more time to plan and prepare for students so I found this

response to be informative to the principal and wandered how Mrs. Jackson interpreted itthe

success of the PLC team.

PLC Reflection

While reflecting with Principal Jackson over the PLC observed, she mentioned feeling good about how it went particularly with regard to deprivatizing instructional strategies. "I liked how I was able to get one of our most veteran and successful teachers to share how she was utilizing the information from the assessment to help her class." Principal Jackson was also glad that she was able to help a new teacher who is quiet contribute and share ideas with her guiding questions. "I am glad the team left with a plan, but that the plan was flexible based on how each teachers felt they could use the assessment tool to improve learning within problem solving and not contrived where one teacher is making all the decisions and everyone is simply following his or her lead."

Mrs. Jackson shared how factors such as trust, teacher buy-in, teacher turnover impact her role as an instructional leader of this collaborative process. For example, the third grade team was perceived as having trust issues with each other at first due to several reasons. First, three teachers were brand new and did not have strong relationships with their colleagues yet. Second, the teachers were worried about their data looking inferior to their teammates. One teacher in particular always seemed to have great results but also had a cluster of high achieving students. Mrs. Jackson noted, "Teacher buy-in or value of this process is influenced by years of experience in the classroom. Some teachers who have several years experience did not need the time to support each other with instruction plans and achievement data as much as novice teachers did."

As a result, some of her veteran teachers were disengaged or almost annoyed at the process. As the instructional leader of the school, Principal Jackson chose to hold conversations with these individuals in private working to get them to shift their mindset so they could serve as

more of a support for their team. She felt like one strategy that helped support the process of

improved collaboration was working to increase the value veteran teachers held with regard to

participating in strong professional learning communities. Conversely, she acknowledged that at

time there is tension between school leaders and teacher teams because not everyone is going to

agree with what the expectation for PLC work is all the time. Mrs. Jackson spoke about having

to frequently monitor and utilize her instructional coaches to check in on grade level teams to

make sure teachers are still adhering to the expectation of the process of PLCs. "For example, a

teacher on the fourth grade team planned to do away with small group guided instruction for a

reason that was not evidence-based or really justified. If I had not been privy to that

conversation, then follow-through on instructional expectations could be lacking and teacher

autonomy could lead to problems for student achievement." Autonomy could lead to problems

for student achievement if there is a fear that best practices will not be utilized to improve

learning particularly within math or literacy instruction.

 Mrs. Jackson stated, "I do not feel like accountability policy in the form of high stakes

tests, school grades and increased teacher evaluation influence my role as an instructional

leader." It should be noted that the foci of two professional learning community meetings

involved student preparation for state tests. Nonetheless, she does believe it has both hindered

and helped the culture of collaboration in her school. She believed it helped improve the culture

of collaboration by creating a sense of urgency and stronger justification for the teachers to do

certain things a certain way in order to show continuous improvement collectively. She also

mentioned how it has hindered the culture because of the stress it has created with her staff and

how it has narrowed the focus of student achievement.   However, she returned to sharing how

accountability policy has held her more accountable to holding her teachers more accountable as

a result. Consequently, if she were principal of a school that routinely scored a letter grade of an A she might be concerned about staff buy-in with her current PLC process because there might be a perception of "why do we have to do this?" This could make reform slower and hard to come by if changes needed to be made. Nonetheless, perhaps it could also mean that teachers could value this time to collaborate within this process without the pressure of worrying about high stakes test.

Mrs. Jackson reported her principal preparation program at the Masters level did not really prepare her for the challenges of leading and facilitating professional learning communities. She learned best by inviting others to come over and observe and provide consultation from those who appear to be having success with school improvement. She also reported that she draws upon her experiences as a former special education teacher at the school she currently leads and her experiences of PLCs prior to changes in assessments and high stakes accountability. Those experiences have helped her frame a vision for how collaboration should sound like and look like where teachers are focused on formative assessments, targeting student learning, deprivatizing practices and agreeing on implementation plans. "Principals should be prepared much like student teachers are prepared in that they receive a lot of on the job training for an extended period of time and are exposed to all elements of the profession prior to becoming an actual teacher," concluded Principal Jackson.

Shared Values & Vision

Pam Walker is finishing her second year leading a diverse elementary school of nearly 700 students in an urban school district with nearly 83% of her students qualifying for free and reduced lunch. Her school has experienced some success in recent years jumping from a school accountability letter grade of an F to a C prior to the recent changes to our high stakes state tests. Principal Walker is a former middle school math teacher and spent time teaching in multiple

districts in two different states. She was a math department chair in middle school as well as an assistant principal at the school she currently leads as principal. One of the central themes from this narrative is best described as shared vision and values. Principal Walker stated, "During a PLC we are all learning from each other and all have something to contribute. PLCs are not meetings; they are about culture. Sometimes I have to help our PLCs think about the end result and help make sure everyone understands where we want our students to be." This supports the notion of shared vision and values because Principal Walker believes that when everyone is focused on the same goal, then teacher teams can be more intentional and targeted with their instruction keeping the culture focused on doing what is best for students.

PLC Leadership

Principal Walker described her role as the instructional leader of PLCs in her school as "walking along-side teachers" during this process because she believes PLCs are about learning from one another. She did not think a top-down approach would be appropriate for strong instructional leadership within professional learning communities because different stakeholders provide different areas of expertise to the table. She felt her main role was to provide guiding questions to help teams make sense of their data and help lead teachers toward the creation of plans for improving teaching and learning. Critical components of the PLC process in the school she leads include: review and organizing assessment data before the meeting, setting achievement goals, questioning the data during the meeting, and collectively designing action steps to get students "where we need them to be."

High stakes accountability influenced professional learning community leadership in her school to some extent. She explained,

> Our school was under watch, which basically means the state department of education
> was keeping a close eye on the school's progress. Should the school not make the

necessary gains, it could be taken over by the department of education. Because of this, I had to be transparent with the staff on the implications of this threat. High stakes testing was too broad and we needed to rely upon more local benchmark assessments to help our staff gauge student achievement more frequently. At first, increasing the frequency of these assessments and PLC meetings was met with resistance from teachers even though they were under pressure to show improvement to get off the state watch list. Nonetheless, after teachers started seeing more growth the resistance of teachers subsided.

Other factors that influenced her role include her previous experience from a different district. She was formally trained on this process in a prior district and even visited the school of a leading professional development authority in the field, Richard Dufour. Prior to high stakes accountability that intensified in the state of Indiana even after NCLB came about, this formal training heavily influenced her belief and value in this collaborative process. Similar to Principal Jackson, Principal Walker believed this to be best practice regardless of accountability policy. Principal Walker found the guiding questions Dufour stated as essential for teacher teams to operative effectively in PLCs to be central tenets to success at her school. Those questions are *What do we want students to know? How are we going to know they know it? What are we going to do if they do not know it? What are we going to do if they do?* She believed them to be essential because she experienced success using these questions as a math teacher and math department chairperson.

PLC Observation

Mrs. Walker and one of the grade level teams discussed math fact progress within their second grade students. It was clear there was a shared vision or shared process like Principal Walker mentioned in her interview. The second grade team showed up with their data and worked to create a team goal based upon the team's current baseline related to increasing math fact fluency with respect to subtraction. The team shared ideas regarding how to help students improve this skill and a discussion occurred where Pam and the team leader debated on research

with respect to whether students knew their addition, would impact learning their subtraction, if they understood the facts as number families using fact family cards – a strategy for helping students learn their facts. The team leader stated that she did not necessarily agree that it was that easy for students to simply pick up the inverse operation quickly. The math coach mentioned the fact family strategy as a way to improve this skill and the principal agreed stating that she "was of the camp that agreed that students should know the inverse relationship as easily as they learned their facts". As the team continued to discuss strategies, it was noted that they did not agree to move forward with the fact family cards as a strategy. Mrs. Walker did not interject as the team ran out of time before agreeing on an action plan for the subtraction fact deficits.

PLC Reflection

Principal Walker felt the team spent too much time talking about the results of the math fact subtraction tests as well as too long trying to come up with a S.M.A.R.T (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and timely) goal. She preferred teacher teams spend the majority of their time together sharing instructional strategies and planning to respond to the achievement data of their students. She stated, "There was not enough action; however, I trust the team leader to follow-up with the team in order to ensure a plan is determined." Mrs. Walker also shared that the tension between the teacher leader and her sometimes happens during PLCs; however, if teachers can show her data that justifies the approach then she will extend them the autonomy. "If the student achievement data is not where it needs to be based upon our shared goals then the team needs to come up with a different approach."

Principal Walker felt effective as a PLC facilitator when teacher teams shared focused strategies and could all agree and speak to an implementation plan that ensured the strategy was

implemented. In the case of the subtraction facts, she was looking for the team to talk about intentional strategy instruction as opposed to more drill practices. She was pleased with the follow-up from this meeting as she asked this same team to follow up with her regarding the action they decided upon after the meeting adjourned. Mrs. Walker appeared to trust teachers and teacher teams who have earned it based on their performance and achievement results. She will often allow these teachers and teacher teams more autonomy even if it goes against a practice or strategy the district is pushing based upon her observation and evaluation of their PLC efforts. When working with teachers who she trusts less or appear resistant with incorporating the shared vision and values of PLC work based on performance or professional dialogue, she will heighten her supervision of the educator by increasing her presence in these particular teachers' meetings and in their classroom. Her main objective when it comes to working with these individuals is to help them become more open and less resistant through questioning in order to help her colleague see the need for change. This approach appears to have worked with some but not all. Sometimes Mrs. Walker has to use the current evaluation process to directly impact teacher performance.   This process has involved formal plans of assistance before for the few teachers who are either refusing to change or struggling to understand how which could lead to termination.

Principal Walker felt it was most rewarding in her position to see teacher teams embrace their time together. She shared, "When teams are self-sufficient, motivated and focused on students and require little oversight, we are likely being effective." High stakes accountability polices helped her implement local accountability practices in place with requiring teachers to assess and report data to administration more frequently. She believed this process has helped her teachers see the growth their students are making more routinely. High stakes tests like

ISTEP+ are of little value to Pam because it is a one-time assessment where the results "do not get shared in a timely enough fashion to even do anything about them". Nonetheless, the increase in accountability policy state-wide has helped her school frame their efforts to meet their students needs through increasing the frequency of those accountability measures monthly.

Principal Walker also shared, "I would likely face more resistance in the form of teacher complaints, perhaps even teacher union contention because there would likely be teachers who would ask why do we need this increased local accountability if what we are doing is already working".   Due to her school's current letter grade, she can justify these local accountability practices so that we are making sure we are doing what has to be done for our students.

Principal Walker wished her school district leadership team would invest in educating new and retraining all teachers on the vision and critical aspects of professional learning community efforts as a result of all the staff turn over experienced in the last five years alone. "There is a variety of interpretations regarding the definition of a professional learning community and our teachers are not always prepared to look at data, build a plan from it, and then reassess."

When asked how principal preparation programs at the graduate level could better prepare future school leaders for effectively leading professional learning communities, Mrs. Walker preferred that PLCs be embedded throughout all coursework and not taught as a separate entity because it is about the culture of collaboration being intentionally focused on teaching and learning throughout the school all day every day. "As far as my own principal preparation program, I did not feel I was prepared at all to effectively lead a professional learning community. All my training occurred in a different district as well as my own reading."

Shared Leadership

Jill Burns finished her eighth year as principal of a school with a little over 600 students in the same district as the other two principals. A little over 60% of Jill's students qualify for free and reduced lunch and like the other two schools mentioned in the study, she has the support of Title I funding. This additional funding provides two instructional coaches – one for literacy and one for math. This is a critical piece to one of the key themes in her narrative that relates to shared leadership as these two Title I Instructional Coaches serve as crucial members of the school's leadership team supporting most teachers in the school. Principal Burns shared, "We differentiate for our staff when it comes to providing support much like we do for the kids."

PLC Leadership

Mrs. Burns viewed her role as an instructional support person to the PLCs that occur at her elementary school. Initially, she felt she needed to provide direct support to teachers and heavily model and set the expectations because very few teachers understood or were trained in this capacity. "Early in the process it was stressful implementing this level of collaboration." She brought in an outside consultant hired by the district to help provide clarity and a structure to the PLC process and teachers were really struggling to buy into it. She felt teachers were not seeing the student achievement results that were desired initially and this might have contributed to the lack of buy-in. At the same time, high stakes accountability policy evolved with legislation such as *SEA 1, RTT, A-F School Letter Grades* and this increased the stress levels of teachers according to Jill. Yet, she noted that while stress and anxiety levels of teachers may have increased during this time so did student achievement. Mrs. Burns believed high stakes accountability policy positively influenced this leadership shift in PLC expectation at the school

because of the need to continuously show improvement. Initially the school appeared to have a long way to go as they received a letter grade of a D in 2012.

Three or four years into Principal Burns' leadership, the school began to experience continuous improvement according to the high stakes standardized state test and she contributes that to a shift in her role as the instructional leader and vision of how to support PLCs. She changed her role about three years ago to be more indirect support in that she created a curriculum leadership team consisting of the assistant principal, school psychologist, media specialist/ PYP Coordinator, literacy specialist, math specialist, and two special education resource teachers to serve as grade level PLC leaders who provide more direct facilitation of this process to one particular grade level for an extended period of time to allow for more consistency and continuity of support. This Curriculum Leadership Team also ensures the principal's expectations are carried out from an accountability standpoint. Expectations Principal Burns viewed as essential included common planning for instruction, common assessing for learning and bringing the data to team meetings where it is reviewed and discussed and some form of reteaching plan is created and implemented. Other professional expectations included ensuring teachers are staying on task, showing up on time, and not discussing field trips. The CLT consults and informs her of what professional development or other needs exist among each grade level, which allows them to differentiate support for teachers much like teachers differentiate instruction for their students.

PLC Observation

Members of the curriculum leadership team were observed facilitating two grade levels during my observation of two professional learning communities at Principal Burns' school. I

noticed she did not see it necessary to sit in with either team. Two grade level teams, first grade

and kindergarten, met in the media center. The kindergarten team consisted of 9 teachers, which

is an unusually large team for elementary. The first grade team was meeting with the math

specialist and they were reviewing math data and co-creating instructional plans based off the

data from a formal assessment. Unlike the other two school's PLC observations, there appeared

to be no formal note-taking process or formal agenda. The first grade team did have two

members who were in disagreement for how to score the assessment and continued to agree to

disagree after celebrating student successes and challenges. The team leader decided to change

the subject to move the meeting forward. The math specialist shared with the group the need to

put the particular pattern skill on their team's daily math review practice and to pull some of the

students still struggling during intervention. The team discussed how to share some of this data

with their entire class as a way to possibly motivate them to master the skill. The math specialist

shared her successful reteaching strategy with one student who was struggling with adding zero

on the chart. They continued to share plans and strategies for improving student number sense

and agree to bring standards to their follow-up meeting the next day that they need to plan for

moving forward. The first grade team also agreed to have the math specialists send them math

station activities for the particular skill at focus through email.

The kindergarten team's professional learning community observation appeared completely

different than the first grade team. The kindergarten team had 9 teachers sitting around two

tables with one resource teacher facilitating the meeting while the first grade had four total

including the math coach.   The kindergarten team collaborative foci ranged from a field trip,

grading window, report cards, whole group and small group literacy block, students with

behavior challenges and strategies for these students, and ended with a chaperone and field trip

conversation. Again, there did not appear to be a formalized agenda or notes taken. The Curriculum Leadership Team Member who facilitated the meeting did support a teacher who was struggling with behavior and allow for teachers to share some ideas and strategies for best meeting his needs. I did not observe any specific student achievement data being discussed or instructional planning created as a result which was not consistent with the process the principal shared and how the first grade team functioned with their meeting. Principal Burns did share that due to the size of this team, it is the most difficult team in the school and curriculum leadership team members are hesitant to work with this team because of all the different personalities on it. Principal Burns believed that the current PLC facilitator who is a resource teacher for primary grades does a good job of keeping them focused; however, she will occasionally have to sit in on their meetings to make sure they are being productive even with their current facilitation support.

PLC Reflection

   "Without this direct support from her Curriculum Leadership Team the process could and likely would easily dissolve without holding teachers accountable to the process," claimed Principal Burns. Early in the implementation phase of this process, teachers would show up to meetings unprepared, their student information was not organized or not even assessed. Above all, there was nothing to learn from one another because there was too much variation between what was occurring instructionally among teachers to even tell what was successful and what was not. Teachers who were struggling early on are either no longer employed by this school or have grown to accept this process as a necessary practice for them to be effective educators. As a result of the schools success based on local and state test results, Principal Burns perception is that her staff will do what she tells them because she has leadership credibility due to that

success and this model is ingrained into the culture of the school. As a result, Principal Burns

believed her new staff members acquired skills more quickly because teams are more

collaborative and intentional during their time together.

When thinking about successful teams and struggling teams who make a professional

learning community, Principal Burns easily identified characteristics that separate the two from

her experience. She stated:

> Successful teams require little oversight because teachers believe in this process. These
> teachers come prepared, ask the right questions, seek out and utilize the support they have
> available to them with intentionality and believe their students can and will achieve at high
> levels.

 She mentioned how these teams demonstrate ownership of their profession. Struggling

teams require a lot of oversight. These teams, kindergarten was mentioned as one of them,

struggle to stay on task and are not always organized, cohesive or willing to work together,

utilize their support in a focused manner, and are not always open to the idea of what can I do

differently instructionally to help students accelerate their learning. As a result of this, Mrs.

Burns shared how members of her Curriculum Leadership Team are hesitant to support a team

like that and that she often has to be the one who does it.

Some individual teachers on teams also perceive this level of facilitation or oversight to be

intrusive and evaluative therefore are not open to support for fear of it being evaluative in nature.

These teachers who demonstrate resistance will usually end up either growing to accept this

support and process or might be moved to a different team or grade level to see if they are a

better fit. Eventually though, teachers who remain resistant of receiving coaching support or do

not show the student achievement growth could end up on plans of assistance and possibly lose

their position.

Mrs. Burns did not receive much support in her graduate preparation training in the area of leading a Professional Learning Community and believed that a better method for preparing future school leaders would be to learn by watching those who are doing it and listen to those practicing leaders share strategies and ways to enhance this process for students and staff starting with a vision. Her district's implementation training model included training principals first by sending them to a conference entitled *The PLC World Summit* about several years ago. After that, they assembled teacher leaders from each school together for a two to three hour after school training. From there, schools were expected to implement. In retrospect, Jill wished they would have taken more time to develop a more thorough implementation plan and the school might be further along then they currently are today. She stated, "It has taken our team four or five years to simply develop the best approach to supporting this process for teachers in order to improve learning outcomes for our students."

Common Themes

While reviewing the three narratives I began the process of coding, sorting, and organizing the data while transcribing, reading and re-reading it. I used open coding to compare individual responses to others to determine which phenomena shared sufficient similarities and could be considered instances of the same construct. This approach to thematic analysis allowed for themes to surface as pertinent to the description of how principals were attempting to navigate the tension between high stakes accountability policy and PLC development. The themes are outlined below and are elaborated upon using quotes and observations pulled from the transcriptions and observation data I utilized when applying the methods chosen.

Themes that surfaced are outlined in *Table 2*. Principals acknowledged there was pressure to perform placed upon educators in their schools; principals believed that PLCs should follow a routine process; that process should lead to immediate action implementation; the role they played was that of support and that support looked differently depending on the needs of each team; principals did not feel adequately equipped to facilitate PLC development in their schools based upon their principal preparation programs and district-level leadership.

Table 2	
Common Dimensions of Principal Perspectives of PLC Enactment	
Pressure to Perform	Principals shared common beliefs that accountability policy created pressure on educators to improve instruction and achievement.
Fidelity to a Process	Principals believed that PLCs should follow a process that is repetitive. Autonomy could exist if team was trusted. Trust was earned if results were there to support the autonomy given.
Action-oriented	Principals shared that the PLC process should lead to action and immediate changes to lesson plans sometimes explicitly stated in notes turned into administration.
Role of Supervision	Principals felt their main role was to support PLC efforts but the degree to which they supported teachers depended upon their evaluation of PLC implementation. Supervision, in this study, means having to both support and evaluate PLC development.
Role Inadequacy	Principals received very little to no training in their graduate principal preparation programs in this particular area of PLC development. They also felt as if they have little support from district-level employees.

Pressure to Perform

Principals felt district-led pressure to embed PLC practices a certain way in their schools and accountability policy helped with adherence or compliance to that process. After all, if your student achievement data is not demonstrating continuous improvement according to high stakes tests then it is hard to argue to maintain the status quo. Principal Jackson shared,

>   Accountability has changed the way we do business as we have to be much more laser
>   focused. Before letter grades came out, teachers did what they wanted to do. The emphasis

on collaboration and analyzing data, emphasis on common assessments was not there prior. I think it has evolved over the six years I've been in the district and that is due to the letter grade. We had to find practices to put into place to help us focus on what needed to be focused on to make changes. When you are an F school, you don't get to say we are going to keep doing what we are doing because clearly it is not working.

All three principals shared that if they were leading a school that was already high performing on high stakes tests, their desire to lead PLC development in the manner they currently do would likely be met with resistance from teachers. Nonetheless, they believed the process they have facilitated in their schools align with research-based best practices regardless of what their high stakes test scores indicate. For example, Principal Jackson and Walker both believed that increasing the frequency by which they were using and responding to student achievement based upon local assessments was best for accelerating student achievement regardless of high stakes testing results. Principal Burns believed that implementation of the Curriculum Leadership Team prolonged a sense of urgency and accountability with her teachers even with continued success with high stakes test.

As a result of pressure to perform, principals' perceptions of teachers' reactions to high stakes reforms with evaluation and school letter grades caused anxiety and stress among staff members. Teachers appeared to deal with the stress or pressure by "buying into" the collaborative process and seeking out the resources to support their own professional growth. Other teachers chose to teach in a different district or quit the profession altogether as a result of the increase in expectation with regard to sharing data, sharing practices and receiving coaching support - which to some felt like further evaluative oversight. However, some of the principals reported that the anxiety has eased over time because the actual frequency of checking in on learning due to holding teachers accountable to the PLC process in their schools made teachers feel better about seeing growth in their students.

Fidelity to Process

Principals often used the word *process* when describing professional learning community development in their school. The process based on my observations and interviews included the following: teachers were organized by grade level teams with facilitators that included either administrators or instructional coaches, shared norms, shared understanding of process, graded assessments, disaggregation and organization of the graded assessment data, reporting of data, reflecting on data, sharing ideas and plans for improving the data, agreeing to an instruction plan of implementation and follow-up intention. The principals referred to the process as cycle in that these practices repeat themselves routinely throughout the year. Principals stressed that this process was initially a district level expectation about seven or eight years ago when some of the principals in the district were sent to a training, worked with a consultant, and then trained some teachers in each school.

The process has since evolved, assessment expectations have changed, planning for instruction and curricular expectations have changed, but further direction and expectation at each building with regard to this process is simply that – make sure you have a process. Principals have experienced some autonomy in determining how to best implement and revise the process in their building so that it best meets their staff and students' needs, but that autonomy is supported as long as the data justifies it.

Autonomy was discussed with Principal Walker as she provided teachers autonomy with regard to the PLC process in her school very similar to that of district level leadership. Teachers can have the autonomy to use whatever instructional strategies they see as fit to meet the end goal for that monthly assessment so long as the goal is met. If teachers do not have the data to

support it, then autonomy is not given. Fidelity to the process looks like teachers following the prescription for what assessment to give, when to give it, how to assess it, how to report on it, but autonomy was usually given to teacher teams in how they will respond to it instructionally when it comes to the action piece.

Action-Oriented

This theme was abundantly evident in all interviews, as principals appeared to regard action as one of the most critical aspects of the process. The three principals wanted teachers to find the time in their PLC meaningful and impactful when it came to their instruction. One quote that kept coming to my mind from a former training I attended was "If a teacher leaves a professional learning community meeting the same teacher as they were before the meeting, then it has been a waste of time." This quote best summarizes how these three principals appear to feel when it comes to PLC development in their schools. In fact, in some cases the principals would purposely revisit a team during their lunch or common planning to discuss what action was going to occur if the meeting did not end with some actionable steps for improving instruction and learning. When asked if PLCs can be effective if by the end of the meeting no action is agreed upon Principal Walker responded, "I think it depends on the PLC and on the people. For example, the second grade one - there were not really action steps that came out of that meeting but I feel like the conversation had teachers thinking and I know that they needed and desired to come back around the table to discuss it."

Whereas Principal Jackson responded, "No, I think you have to have evidence so how are you going to follow through and know if what you are doing is working." I gauge from these two responses that leaders want to know that teachers are having quality conversations about

instruction and learning that leads to different approaches or strategies for those students who need it to be different. Action may not come out of every single meeting, but if teacher teams are following the process with fidelity then it should lead to action.

Role of Supervision

Principals' role as instructional leaders with regard to professional learning community development was often one that involved supervision and evaluation. Early in the process of PLC development with a new team of teachers or team comprised of new teachers, principals appeared to supervise and provide direct support to teacher teams who were unclear or unsure of what to do during PLCs. Principal Burns explained, "I set the expectation for PLCs. It is an expectation that they are going to happen and that they happen regularly. I think that my role is to be a support person and not the leader of PLCs. In the beginning, I had to be the leader when we first started doing them because nobody really knew what they were doing and so you had to model it."

Principal Walker shared her perception of her supervisory role,

> I have my expertise, but I also learn from others. I ask guiding questions to other community members to help drive them either to the point that I want them to make or where I want them to go and take the data. I would be engaging in the conversation with them. I would be engaging in identifying supports to use and resources to use. I would be analyzing the data with them and drilling down with that. So these kids performed poorly, why? Are there certain question types? Is it an ENL learner? Having those conversations and not just listening - I am there to analyze this set of data then I am going to sit there and do it. If they need me to pull a resource, then I am going to do it. I always tell my staff if I want you to go shovel snow, I am going to be right there shoveling beside you. I am not going to do anything or ask anything of you that I wouldn't do myself."

Principals' supportive role can also become less direct for those teams where little support is needed based upon the principals' observations and evaluations of team's efforts in this area. The principals all agreed that highly effective PLC Teams required very little oversight and

basically "ran themselves". This usually looked like a team led by a teacher leader or two who took ownership of the process by living up to the expectations, actively seeking resources and support to be utilized in an intentional way, were productive and actionable with their time, and embraced the challenge of meeting their students needs.

Grade level teams who needed more direct support struggled to take ownership of the process possibly due to being new to the profession, new to the team or process or simply resistant to this type of collaboration. For example, Principal Jackson stated this when referencing struggling PLC teams in her school, "I think they want me to come up with solutions and its not going to work because they don't own it."   Struggling PLCs needed administration or instructional coaches to do the "heavy-lifting" in a more direct supporting role. Unsuccessful PLC Teams might struggle to show up prepared to meetings, may have little to no shared direction or purpose, as well as might blame external factors like administration or parents for poor student achievement. However, through more principal support, supervision and evaluation of this process that could lead to changes, principals appeared to be able to accelerate PLC development. Principal Jackson shared:

> Second grade has 6 teachers, 3 new teachers that we added to the team last year so this is their second year as a team with no new staff. Last year we did a lot of handholding, what does this process look like? What do we want it to look like at our school? What is the purpose? What should we have ready to go and be prepared so we have data ready to go, not grading, not guessing, understanding what to bring. Our grade level leaders are our PLC leaders, have they communicated to our teams well what to bring and what the purpose? That first year, we really worked a lot to figure out how to tweak this to make it more meaningful so that we are improving our instruction.

> Now in year two, the team had some continuity and really embraced this process as

evidenced by the principal's observations and evaluation of meetings, instruction as well as some of their student achievement outcomes.

Principal Burns explained the role principals play in supporting PLC development is similar to how teachers work to differentiate instruction for their students. "Certain teachers and teacher teams need more direct support and increased oversight to ensure they are following the process and making necessary instructional changes or plans and other teachers and teams simply need less support in the form of modeling or guiding questions."

Principal Burns believed the strategic placement of teacher leaders on her Curriculum Leadership Team helped support PLC development in a targeted manner based on assessment data and observations. Principal Walker and Burns both stated they do not see this changing regardless of the educational context whether accountability policy changes or curriculum mandates change. Principal Walker shared, "I've always believed in PLCs and the level of collaboration among stakeholders in a variety of areas. I don't believe a PLC is a meeting - it is a culture of a building."

Providing support to teacher teams based on evaluation is an interesting dichotomy within PLCs. On one hand, principals feel they need to participate and support PLC development by working along side teachers; however, through evaluation we are required to rate how well teachers collaborate with their peers according to *SEA1* and determine what – if any – support or oversight is needed for teachers engaged in PLCs. This dichotomy arguably creates tension on PLC development since it can force principals to play a different role than perhaps they played in the past when they were simply trying to help staff instead of trying to do both.

Role Inadequacy

When principals shared the support they received through principal preparation programs and district-level professional development, the responses I received mostly spoke to minimal if

any support at all. Aside from Principal Walker who received PLC training in her previous

district of Chatham County Public Schools in North Carolina, all three shared that they had

received little support and training in their principal preparation training at three different

universities. Principal Burns shared,

> I think they talked about PLCs, but not how to develop a learning community. PLCs
> were talked about and why they should happen. They talked about your role as a
> principal and what this should be. Basically like telling a teacher that you need to be able
> to teach and manage some students, as that doesn't help one bit as you walk through the
> door. There was a lot of research shared, but none of it appeared to be real world
> experience. They should bring principals who are high functioning in this particular area
> and have great information to share regarding successes and challenges.

Principal Jackson did not recall any information being presented on the topic in her

graduate course work and experienced it for the first time as a special education teacher in the

current school she serves as principal. Principal Walker believed that graduate principal

preparation programs should weave PLCs throughout all the content taught to help prospective

leaders see how this process works in building a strong collaborative culture in a school.

From a district-level perspective, principals shared how district leaders could improve

PLC development in all schools by reviewing it again since it really has not been discussed since

first rolled out over 8 years ago. Principal Walker shared,

> We need to try to educate all of our staff members of steps of a PLC process because I feel
> that we've had a huge amount of turnover since we started this practice. I think we all need a
> refresher course. Collaboration and the process of the PLCs seems like learning the ABCs to
> me but others think we are having this collaborative conversation so we are having a PLC,
> but there are other components involved. They are not good at looking at data so how can
> we better help them? How can we cycle through these practices from the district level to
> reinstitute the beliefs and practices of the PLCs and support our educators in taking it to a
> deeper level of analysis, planning and instruction?

> Inadequacy plays a role in how principals feel with regard to leading PLC development in

their schools. When reviewing the data it is not a surprise that principals might feel this way.

They have experienced training on what a professional learning community looks like, sounds like, what the expectation is but very little support for how to facilitate and further develop this collaborative cycle. Principal Jackson explained, "I think I am always looking at things and what is a different way for us to tweak it or how can we work smarter instead of harder or what is a better way to look at it. I am always trying to listen to principals - what are you doing in your building?

Like Principal Jackson, Principal Walker stated, "I am aware of my inadequacies as an instructional leader in certain areas and will lean on internal and external resources like instructional specialists to help me compensate when supporting PLC Teams." Principal Burns relies heavily on her Curriculum Leadership Team to help support not only her staff but also her inadequacies in either being able to observe the areas that need her attention and create solutions to challenges that arise out of PLCs. Being cognizant of your inadequacies and being willing to seek the additional support are ways these principals have compensated. Principal Jackson stated,

> I think having other people observe you and having people come see the process is beneficial. I asked a Title I Teacher to come over and watch our planning sessions that a teacher is doing with the teams and give our teachers some feedback. So, something she's doing there is working (at another school) and I like to learn from that so we are not going through these motions if we can just cut to what is successful. I think for me - it is people giving me feedback on the way things run and having those conversations with my leadership team.

In conclusion, the five themes uncovered in the data contribute to the story of how principals perceive high stakes accountability policy and professional learning community development. From the data collected, principals feel a sense of pressure as a result of accountability policy to enact a particular process that is action-oriented to yield improved student achievement results. Teachers also experience pressure from high stakes accountability policy as their instruction and

results are often under the microscope routinely throughout a school year. Principals support

PLC development in multiple ways depending on their evaluation of the needs of teachers, PLC

teams, and the resources principals have at their disposal. Not unlike leading any group of

people, Principals may also feel inadequate in some areas of PLC development and try to utilize

their supports much like that of teachers who demonstrates ownership of the PLC process. In the

next chapter, I will talk about how these themes uncovered in the research could have

implications on future policy, practice and educational research in the field of school leadership.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

In an era of high stakes accountability where policies like *NCLB, Race to the Top, SEA1* and *A-F School Letter Grades* have intended outcomes of pushing schools to raise student achievement and punish them for continued failure, the principals' role in developing and sustaining professional learning communities is arguably a critical reform practice to school improvement success. Yet, problems arise with how principals perceive their roles as a result of a variety of factors including but not limited to: experience, other responsibilities, familiarity with PLCs, instructional knowledge, principal preparation programs, district support and professional development.

Overview of Study

Schmoker (2006) felt that school leaders desiring improved achievement need to devote more time to ensuring teachers participate in focused collaboration with one another and that what they teach is a strong and viable curriculum. The challenge with this linear focus is that principals are also responsible for everything else when it comes to leading a school community. Therefore, many principals likely are aware of the attributes of schools operating as successful PLCs from the professional literature standpoint (shared vision, shared values, deprivatization, collective creativity and supportive conditions), but may not be implementing or practicing these attributes in a similar manner if practicing or implementing at all.

Purpose of Study

Recent accountability policies appear to focus not only on teachers, but also on principals as instructional leaders. Scribner (2007) stated that it is not entirely clear what instructional leadership supports are needed to help principals succeed within this area in this accountability

environment. Leadership potential may be limited when experiencing very little support. Principals are widely seen as indispensable to innovation as no reform effort, however worthy, survives a principal's indifference or opposition (Evans, 2010). Therefore if building a professional learning community is a type of reform that could lead to higher school improvement in the form of positive trending test scores, then a deeper understanding of principals' current perceptions and practices within this context is necessary in order to inform current and future school as well as district leaders. National and state policy mandates may have implications for the roles principals play as leaders within collaborative processes such as professional learning communities. As a result, it is necessary to research the role of school leaders who appear to be crucial to school improvement in effort to understand how they experience PLCs in a high stakes environment.

Research Questions

The questions I investigated in this study are listed below. As observed in Chapter 4, I placed the data captured from the narratives of each principal in sequential order consistent with *PLC Leadership* for thoughts regarding principals perceptions of their roles, *PLC Observation* for notes regarding my observations as well as principals' reactions to the PLC meetings observed, and *PLC Reflection* which attempted to capture the next steps and further support that might be needed for principals as PLC leaders.

1. How do principals make sense of their role(s) as an instructional leader in professional learning communities in an era of high stakes accountability?

    a. How do principals narrate their role in fostering professional learning communities?
    b. What factors influence their sense-making with regard to their role within professional learning community development?

2. How do principals facilitate, participate, and evaluate professional learning communities from their perspective and from observations?

3. How do principals define leadership success and failure in the context of professional learning community development?

Methods

The research in this interpretivist study was organized around developing an understanding of how principals make sense of their role in building and sustaining professional learning communities. I conducted two interviews with each of the three principals, observed each principal interacting with a team of teachers in a PLC setting, as well as gathered some artifacts. I explored, described and analyzed the meaning of the lived experience (Marshall & Rossman, 2011) of principals as they interacted with this process in their schools. By using the data collected, I aim to build on the existing literature by filling in some of the gaps in the research, which emphasizes the roles principals play within professional learning communities without an analysis of the principals' own sensemaking of how and why they engaged in PLCs the way they do. The methods of earlier studies provide ample information from a large number of teachers and principals, but have limitations for understanding the narratives principals share and how they learn or are conditioned to operate and function within this complex collaborative process as a result of their lived experiences.

Findings

The data analysis process uncovered themes that were routinely evident in the research. First, principals believed their main role in this process was to support teacher growth. They acknowledged there was pressure to perform placed upon educators in their schools as a result of high stakes accountability policy. The principals believed that PLCs should follow a routine process that should lead to immediate action implementation usually demonstrated through lesson planning and observed instructional changes. Finally, principals did not feel adequately

equipped to facilitate PLC development in their schools based upon their principal preparation programs and district-level leadership support.

Role of Supervision

Principals viewed their role as instructional leaders of professional learning community development as a supportive one typically depending on the needs of the teacher teams. Principals appeared to take on more of a direct supportive role after observing teachers or teams struggle to meet the expectations. In these cases, additional supervision was provided either by the principal or by instructional coaches. The instructional leaders would carefully facilitate some PLCs and set clear expectations depending on the agency of the teacher team. Teachers who were new to the profession, new to this process, or on a team that was uncomfortable with collaboration typically received more direct support and supervision. Direct support often looked like the principal or instructional coaches asking questions guiding the conversations or providing ideas or strategies to help teachers make sense of this process. Typically, principals viewed successful PLCs as teams of teachers who required very little supervision. These teams either had strong veteran teachers who were comfortable with the PLC expectations or had teachers who truly valued and desired the time to collaborate in a focused manner regardless of years of experience. This evidence supported Adams and Kirst (1998) notion of principals shifting focus to internal accountability measures that involved establishing and facilitating work-place norms, local decision-making, as well as goals and consequences within schools since PLCs observed in all three schools had elements of norms, local decision-making as well as goal setting.

Principal support and accountability policy appeared to be linked. For example, the expectation that teacher teams review assessment data regularly and respond to student learning long before the high stakes testing occurs implies that with frequent monitoring of progress and targeted instructional responsiveness teacher efforts should yield higher student achievement and growth with high quality collaboration. Principals agreed that accountability policy created pressure on teachers and administrators to work in an environment where working in isolation was no longer going to work. Conversely, collaborating with colleagues in an unfocused, action-less manner was also problematic for principals interviewed. Principals appeared to need to carefully balance supervision of teacher teams and take caution in how support is provided in order to build capacity of teachers and help them take ownership of this part of the work. For example, should a principal determine that additional guidance is needed for a PLC after evaluating their progress, then principals shared how they needed to be careful not to lead the meetings – only offer guidance and share strategies.   This careful yet critical acknowledgement of some of the principals studied supported Huffman and Jacobs (2003) study that claimed principals who are perceived to have a collaborative style most likely best support PLC development.

In some respects this notion of balance between control and support also aligns with the study by Hoffman et al (2003) who suggested that classroom curriculum narrows to tested content at the expense of untested content. For example, teachers instruct specific subject matter and formats used on the test rather than fundamental concepts or principles. Therefore, if principals asked teachers to frequently monitor benchmark assessment results and respond to it with actionable steps then it could be likely that those areas of the assessments take priority instructionally. Nonetheless, if one argued that high stakes accountability policy has reduced

teacher creativity, lessened autonomy, and increased performance pressure then the principals'

supervision and support of teachers in PLCs might look more narrow depending on the

performance of the school on high stakes test.

Role Inadequacy

Inadequacy appeared to be a thread that existed in the data. All three principals experienced

some form of professional training with regard to what a professional learning community looks

like, sounds like, what the expectations are, but very little support for how to facilitate and

further develop this collaborative cycle. It was noted that professional development for principals

as instructional leaders appeared limited at both the graduate school and district level. This study

is clearly limited based on the small sample of principals interviewed, but it could prove to be a

worthwhile study to further investigate principal development programs across our state in this

particular area of leadership. After all, how can we expect teachers to utilize this process to

improve teaching and learning as indicated by high stakes test scores if we are not helping

principals troubleshoot challenges that may arise for teachers engaged in PLC work.

The literature alluded to a potential tension that may exist between a principal's leadership

authority and leadership practice in particular fostering professional learning communities.

Williams (2006) explained that principals face many challenges when working with teachers in

professional learning communities that likely influence future leadership action. Therefore, if our

leaders who are responsible for providing the support necessary for teachers to navigate the PLC

process effectively do not receive quality professional development, then we could have

inadequate leadership practices potentially influencing or not influencing teaching and learning

in schools. The consequences of inadequate leadership could be costly to multiple stakeholders

within a school or district community. Conversely, Cohen's study of Miami-Dade County

Principals (2009) demonstrated that principals best improved educational outcomes by organizing and managing instructional programs as opposed to engaging in PLC collaboration with teachers and offering instructional coaching assistance. This study challenges the notion that investment in professional development for principals with regard to fostering PLC development would yield improved results. Nonetheless, adequate leadership of PLC development likely starts with a vision.

Fidelity to Process

When principals observed a grade level team adhering to the expectations or vision of PLC processes then these grade level teams were viewed as instances of success stories. As mentioned earlier, the PLC process regularly included the following: teachers were organized by grade level teams with facilitators that included either administrators or instructional coaches, shared norms, shared understanding of process, graded assessments, disaggregation and organization of the graded assessment data, reporting of data, reflecting on data, sharing ideas and plans for improving the data, agreeing to an instruction plan of implementation and follow-up intention. The principals referred to the process as a "cycle" in that it repeated routinely throughout the year. The attributes of this cyclical process aligned with some of the research of PLCs. In fact, Louis and Marks (1998) describe attributes of PLCs as utilizing reflective discussion, open sharing of classroom practices, developing a common knowledge base for improvement, collaborating on the design of new materials and curricula, and establishing norms related to pedagogical practice and student performance.

Consequently, when the process had elements missing some principals would speak to a need to follow-up or assign someone to supervise the team's progress. For example, if instructional plans were not created or agreed to prior to the conclusion of the meeting then

principals would be concerned that no action would occur and the collaboration time could be labeled as unproductive. Nonetheless, authorities in the field of educational leadership like Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) caution school leaders to be conscious of "contrived collegiality" where data or performance -driven change, mandated coaching and collaboration have often turned genuine teacher inquiry into an empty, ritualistic practice. They explain how "data-driven improvement within PLCs has stapled teachers to their spreadsheets and kept them calculating and concentrating on tested achievement gains, instead of inspiring animated professional discussion about students and their learning" (p.92).   Therefore, principals with a narrow vision of PLCs as a prescribed process could limit innovation and frustrate culture. Regardless, principals in the study believed a process was to be followed with fidelity if performance of teachers and students had a chance to improve and that is where pressure comes into play.

Pressure to Perform

The manner by which pressure plays out in some of the observations and data collection I analyzed focus on two aspects related to pressure: the need or desire to demonstrate improved student achievement scores on high stakes test and frequency by which teachers were assessing and reflecting on student achievement measures. As mentioned in Chapter 4 all three principals shared that if they were leading a school that was already high performing on high stakes tests, their desire to lead PLC development in the manner they currently do would likely be met with resistance from teachers. I wonder if the resistance principals fear they would encounter has to do with what Fullan (2007) described as an accountability system where teachers are not given the resources or time to develop professionally in this manner. As a result, perhaps teachers would call on the principals' capacities to address the resource and time gap. One could easily argue that this situation would increase pressure demands on school leaders as well.

Second, Principal Jackson and Principal Walker both believed that increasing the frequency by which they were using and responding to student achievement based upon local assessments was best for accelerating student achievement because teachers had more opportunities to address learning gaps throughout the year as opposed to waiting until the results of one high stakes state test. There is pressure on teachers to perform and demonstrate they are addressing the learning gaps where their students' performance data is under review over the course of the school year and tied to their evaluation. This performance data also has implications for additional salary compensation in that every teacher has to meet certain student achievement criteria to qualify for additional compensation per the evaluation process in our state. Additionally, principals felt pressure to not only ensure teachers engaged in this process but were also responsible for evaluating how teachers performed or complied to PLC expectations per the new teacher evaluation system or *SEA 1*. Regardless, as evident in the findings, the principals consistently desired for teachers to leave meetings with a plan of action to improve learning. One could argue there might be pressure with this mindset as well with the principal potentially hindering their school's productivity, achievement and success as Tschannen-Moran (2004) found to be the case if the PLC process was viewed by principals from a rational-technical or surveillance approach.

Action-Oriented

The three principals wanted teachers to find their PLC efforts meaningful and impactful when it came to their instruction. It was clear from the findings that "follow-up" and "evidence" were of value to the principals interviewed. In fact, some of the principals felt it necessary to follow-up or reschedule a meeting with some teacher teams if they felt the meeting was not productive leading to some instructional change. There was also a belief that if this process or

cycle was "ingrained into the culture of the school" then teachers would engage in quality conversations that would lead to action that improved instruction and ultimately yielded higher student achievement outcomes on high stakes tests.

Principal Jackson believed it was difficult for a meeting to conclude without evidence of action and questioned whether teacher teams could really determine if their time spent together was going to lead to anything different for students. Principal Walker felt that teams could still be successful without leaving a meeting with actionable steps so long as they returned or cycled back to the conversation or data point at a later point. She could trust certain teachers to make sure this happened while other grade level teams did not quite have her trust. Trust was often earned through direct observation and collaboration with teachers and teams. Teacher leaders who appeared to value collaboration and made it meaningful and productive for improving or targeting instruction for students typically required minimal oversight. In some cases, it appeared these teacher leaders or strong teams were able to dictate and utilize their support with very little direct support from principals. Two of the three principals also discussed how those teams who were productive or action-oriented also helped with novice teachers. Newer teachers appeared to acquire the pedagogical skills and knowledge quicker according to some of the principals as a result of the strong, cyclical collaboration and targeted instructional planning. Toole and Louis (2002) suggest that research findings indicate that professional learning communities lead to improved school functioning and can be seen as a powerful staff development strategy that aligns with what I uncovered through my research. As a result of the themes reviewed there are implications for policy-makers when it comes to supporting principals and professional learning communities in high stakes accountability educational environments.

Implications for Policy

Policy-makers in education are challenged to ensure crafted legislation serves our students and future leaders well. The challenges with regard to this particular area of research and how it informs policy-making involves principal and teacher turnover, Title I school climates, as well as new teacher and new principal development. For example, there are multiple examples from various empirical research studies that show the positive effects of using PLC elements and their influence on student achievement; however, what does this mean for principals and how they are supported with developing PLCs in their schools.

Principal and Teacher Turnover

Studies demonstrated that schools with strong professional learning communities produced important outcomes for students and school professionals experience less teacher-turnover (Crow et al., 2002; Toole & Louis, 2002). If this is the case, then working to build strong professional learning communities in our schools across the state should be a primary focus for policy-makers when it comes to determining the prerequisite skill-sets school leaders should possess in order to be certified or licensed to serve as principals. A new report from the Alliance for Excellent Education (2014) showed that roughly half a million U.S. teachers move or leave the profession each year. That is a turnover rate of about 20 percent compared to 9 percent in 2009**.** This attrition allegedly costs our state somewhere between 20-45 million dollars according to the same report. Furthermore the turnover or burnout rate with principals is proven to have a negative impact on student achievement according to the School Leaders Network Report (2014). Principals account for about 25 percent of a school's total influence on student academic performance. Unfortunately, the report also suggests that low-income students are likely to

experience the effects of principal turnover at greater rates than others. It also shares that 50% of first year principals are likely to leave the field by their third year.

Our policy-makers need to pay attention to what might be deterring quality candidates from this profession as well as what might be the obstacles that prevent retention. This research alludes to the pressure-filled climate of ensuring or proving your performance is getting results as suggested by high stakes test results. The research findings uncovered that principals were increasing the frequency by which teachers were analyzing student achievement from the beginning of the year through the end of the high stakes state tests. One could argue that this perceived pressure to show student growth from fall to spring may come in conflict with why teachers originally intended to enter the profession or envision their professional career. If strong PLCs have the ability to raise achievement and lower teacher turnover, then perhaps policy-makers need a tighter definition or vision of what strong PLCs look like and sound like in practice in schools. Once more familiar with this vision, then policy can be crafted to ensure proper training and resources are given to this practice particularly in those areas where teacher and principal turnover appear most heavily impacted.

Urgency in Title I Schools

It should be noted that all three school principal participants lead schools with over 50% of students receiving free and/or reduced lunch. The demographics of the three schools studied align with many Title I Schools with diverse student populations and high rates of students living in poverty as well as high rates of teacher and principal turnover. Consequently, two of the three schools studied have been under watch by the Indiana State Department of Education as being potential schools who need "turn-around" support from "specialists" who visit schools, meet with administration and staff, then complete paperwork with action steps regarding what the

school needs to do to improve. This supports the notion mentioned in an earlier study that external accountability pressure has reshaped the role of the principal in some aspects as they are expected to spend more time observing teaching practices, working with teacher teams on instructional improvement plans, and studying student achievement outcomes more frequently (Adams & Kirst, 1999).

Many non-Title I schools have yet to feel the effects of this type of external accountability pressure arguably because they have lower rates of students who come from poverty and have more stabilized student populations who come with more school readiness; however, PLCs are still commonly used in all types of school communities. Though this research is limited in its generalizability because of the nature of the methods used, it would be interesting to further explore how principals perceive their role in establishing and sustaining PLCs in "high performing" schools understanding the urgency within each school environment could be different depending on student performance. The findings of this proposed research could inform policy-makers of the need for different or differentiated accountability demands placed on schools based on student needs. Perhaps this could lead to a more thorough examination of effective usage of state supports as well as federal Title I money that is being utilized to demonstrate effective growth with achievement for schools with high poverty rates. Furthermore, PLC studies that speak to what aspects of this collaborative process are most likely to help retain novice teachers would be of value to policy-makers.

Implications for Practice

Louis and Marks (1998) identified broad characteristics of a school-wide professional community: shared leadership, shared values and vision, deprivatized practice, collective creativity, and supportive conditions. Each of these characteristics can be linked to some of the

findings in my research and can further inform district and school leaders who are working to foster and sustain PLCs from a principal's vantage point.

Shared Leadership

The Indiana Department of Education requires principals to submit school improvement plans annually. School improvement plans are comprised of multiple stakeholders (teachers, parents, counselors, and students) who engage in a process of identifying the schools strengths and challenges as well as building or refining a plan to address the challenges and sustain the practices that are yielding success. This team is often referred to as a leadership team in that it helps guide improvement in schools. Principals as leaders of professional learning community development in schools have to be comfortable facilitating concerted collaboration and co-constructing school improvement goals as well as action plans to help work toward the goals. Principals with minimal experience with this facilitation, collaboration, construction and evaluation of school improvement planning may struggle to foster and sustain PLC development in schools the same.

As the findings in my research demonstrate, Mrs. Burns utilized a curricular leadership team comprised of various teachers to support school improvement efforts because this was a more efficient and supportive model positively impacting achievement compared to her attempting to do it alone as was the case her first few years. This Curriculum Leadership Team consulted and informed Principal Burns which allowed this shared leadership approach to better differentiate support for teachers and teacher teams much like teachers differentiate instruction for their students. Principals' abilities to lead teachers and students to improved student achievement through this process require skill development that is often taken for granted (Louis, Kruse, &

Marks, 1996); therefore, utilizing the skills and resources of multiple educators on a leadership team perhaps made up for Principal Burns instructional skill deficits should they exist. .

Both Principal Jackson and Burns spoke about how veteran teachers who valued this process could help accelerate the success of novice teachers if novice teachers were on such teams. Being a principal who values shared leadership and capitalizing on the leadership skills and expertise of colleagues with the school appear to present the potential to build capacity of those who are either novice or struggling at a quicker rate than perhaps a principal who tries to micro-manage or be the only source of leadership within the school community.

Shared Values & Vision

Principals who work to build a vision and value structure that is widely shared by all those involved in a school community are working to establish a shared vision and values. In the case of Principal Burns and her Curricular Leadership Team a common expectation of PLC practices was shared and upheld. The team helped communicate this vision by modeling and supporting the essentials behind PLCs. These essential practices include common planning for instruction, common assessing for learning and bringing the data to team meetings where it is reviewed and discussed and some form of remediating or enriching plan was created and implemented. Furthermore, Principal Walker shared her vision of her own leadership in carrying out PLCs at her school. She stated how she viewed her role as walking along-side teachers. She has expertise, but she also values learning from her colleagues regardless of her role.

A principal rolling her shirt-sleeves up and working with teachers to follow a PLC process and create solutions does not necessarily equate to solutions to achievement challenges. Challenges mentioned in the literature review included principal and staff data analysis skills or

lack thereof, anti-data cultures that might exist within teacher teams, unaccommodating teaching

contracts and schedules, determining when to appropriately collaborate or issue a directive, lack

of technical or financial resources, as well as an absence of a shared vision. All of these

challenges likely influence how principals or district leaders shape leadership practices, rituals or

protocols within professional learning community development. Therefore, there are

implications for how principals attempt to establish a shared vision for how school stakeholders

will function as a PLC based on clear vision that multiple stakeholders can effectively articulate

and implement. In this study, all principals developed time within the teacher contract for this

type of work to occur. Principal Walker mentioned in her interview the need for her staff to

grow with regard to looking at data and what does it tell me about my students as this appeared

to be an area she desired to help them improve. Principal Walker also spoke about trust from the

perspective of shared values and vision where she concluded that the teacher leader of the PLC

observed would follow-up with the team on any unfinished plan where time fell short. Principal

Walker remarked, " I finally have a teacher leader on that team who understands the importance

of processes. She understands data and the balance between reality of sometimes just what

things are and what they have the time to do."

Deprivatize Practice & Collective Creativity

Louis (1998) stated that when teachers engaged in ongoing professional conversations with

other teachers, their knowledge increased with subject matter and teaching skills, and their

morale increased significantly. In addition, teachers reported feeling energized and renewed.

These problem-based dialogues increased the levels of trust, which provided a necessary

foundation to build student-focused collective action among teachers (Bryk, A. & Schneider, B.,

2002). The findings in the research supports the study of Bryk and Schneider (2002) in that high

functioning PLC teams in the schools studied appeared to build the capacity of novice teachers quicker than working in traditional isolation. It also should be noted that PLCs whose principals stated "ran themselves" appeared to have a teacher leader or two who took ownership of the process by living up to the expectations, actively seeking resources and support to be utilized in an intentional way, were productive and actionable with their time, and embraced the challenge of meeting their students needs. Consequently, one could argue that through deprivatized practices teacher anxiety as well as teacher turnover could be lowered as a result of this high quality collaboration even amidst the high stakes accountability policies at play. For example, Principal Jackson nurtured the conditions for deprivitized practice to occur within the PLC she supported during my observation. One veteran teacher with strong math assessment scores did not share her practices with the team until Principal Jackson mentioned her data and asked what practices the teacher thought best yielded the successful scores. As a result, the veteran teacher ended up not only sharing some practices but also agreed to copy a practice form she used when conferring with students to which some of the novice teachers appeared to appreciate receiving. Therefore, principals should take note of how important quality collaboration is to growing as an educator, how to nurture the conditions for this to occur in the context of PLCs and be mindful of potential pitfalls that could increase anxiety or stifle growth.

As previously mentioned Hargreaves and Shirley (2009) caution school leaders to be conscious of "contrived collegiality" where data or performance -driven change, mandated coaching and collaboration have often turned genuine teacher inquiry into an empty, ritualistic practice. The research findings support how low-functioning teams perhaps are obligated to follow a script or complete a ritualistic practice where growth could be limited. Principals in

practice should be trained to tell the difference between contrived collegiality and quality collaboration in order to be mindful of how to better support teacher development.

Supportive Conditions

Evident in the three observations of PLCs that occurred at all three schools was that principals had provided a time and space for this collaborative process to occur. Because this study was conducted in the same district where all three schools followed the same type of schedule, teachers were given time each week to collaborate as PLCs. Secondly, it was evident that all three principals provided a structure or explicit process expectations for teacher teams to follow when meeting in PLCs. Again, all three schools executed this process in similar manners most likely as a result of shared district-wide expectations. This proved to be a problem for generalizability because as Smith and his coauthors (2004) reported, PLCs are adaptive where teacher teams can shape strategies around specific needs with professional growth embedded into them. Therefore, principals should be mindful of the balance between support and control. More specifically, if principals dictated step by step what teacher teams should do – this could lead to contrived collegiality. Yet, if only time and space is given to support teachers with little or no other direction the shape and form of this process could prove ineffective as it may take on lots of variations none of which positively impact student achievement. After all, this finding is supported by Leithwood & Jantzi (1999) who stated that granting teachers this time and space to feel empowered to make sense of student achievement and implement "corrective action" does not guarantee school improvement.

Principals' abilities to provide supportive conditions for fostering successful PLCs in schools depends on several factors including: data analysis skills, resourcefulness with materials and schedules, establishing a clear and shared vision, communication and evaluation skills.

Therefore, the way we develop aspiring principals has implications for graduate preparation programs and school district leaders.

Principal Preparation & PLC Leadership

Each principal stated they felt inadequate or unprepared to some degree to meet the challenges of PLC Leadership. It was shared that very little coursework or training at the graduate study level involved PLC Leadership according to the research findings. One principal shared that she was made aware of what PLCs were and how they could benefit students and teachers, but not how to develop, facilitate and improve the conditions by which they occur in schools. District leadership should take note as it seems from the findings that principals would like PLC training and further supports. In fact, a suggestion from Principal Burns was to have principals who appear to be exemplary in this area share with colleagues and aspiring colleagues. Principal Jackson stated how she felt as though she routinely desired to learn how others are doing it to figure out how she can "work smarter rather than harder" particularly at a school where there is high teacher turnover and the feeling of having to start over in some instances.

The data from the 2014 report from the School Leadership Network Report indicated that half of new principals will leave the position by their third year. Our schools of education and superintendents have to take that seriously in terms of further examining how to better situate principals in the areas that matter the most for improving student achievement in an era of high stakes accountability. As Fullan (2007) stated, "the principal is key, but we haven't figured out how to position the role to fulfill the promise."

<div align="center">

Future Research

</div>

Though the research findings of this study uncovered several themes there are limitations to this study as well as areas that require further investigation. These areas were

embedded throughout the previous sections in this chapter because of their potential influence on education leadership policy and practices. Though the description of the participants and contexts that comprise this study help readers determine how similar they are to the situation of interest to them, these findings are not applicable to all K-12 educational organizations. While the observations and narratives of the principals provided a means to better understand their role in the development of a school-wide professional learning community, my findings are not applicable to all elementary or secondary principals. The findings do, however, speak to the need to explore further aspects influencing the principal in this capacity.

Differentiated Support

Researchers interested in this field should consider investigating if there are particular components of PLCs that support novice teachers most in addition to what particular components might improve teacher attrition as well as training. More specifically, what do the lived experiences of novice teachers involved in PLCs look like and sound like compared to the lived experiences of veteran teachers? Are there particular components that support novice teachers more than veteran teachers and could that inform the way principals organize the time and differentiate the support for these teachers? In the study findings it was evident that principals' level of support and oversight depended on how well the teacher teams functioned and followed the procedural expectations. Principals shared how they felt novice teachers' abilities accelerated when on strong teacher teams led by veteran teachers who "get it".

PLC Leadership Readiness

Another aspect of the study that would be worth further exploring is surveying graduate students in principal preparation programs to determine which university schools of education are building the strongest skillset of PLC leadership within first year principals. This study could

inform how principal preparation programs and district leaders provide support for novice principals in this particular area of instructional leadership. The data in my research suggested that principals overall felt as if they had received little preparation and support while enacting this role in their schools.

Standardized Vision

Finally, because professional learning communities are adaptable and flexible depending on the need or situational context, does this make crafting a vision for building and sustaining effective PLCs difficult to do? After all, the research reviewed did suggest they could look a number of ways making it difficult to support principal development in the area of PLC leadership. Therefore, a study that investigated the various visions principals and school districts have with regard to defining what a PLC looks like and sounds like in schools could prove beneficial for targeting supports for present and future school leaders.

Conclusions

McLaughlin and Talbert (2006) asserted that principals are in a strategic position to promote or inhibit teacher-learning communities in schools. The principals I studied critically examined the manner by which PLCs operate in their schools as one priority to meeting the accountability demands of the state. Though it could be argued that the principals' roles have not been redefined or reshaped in totality, one could conclude they are influenced by accountability policy and high stakes testing in the manner by which they have established the vision for PLC development in their schools. The principals studied communicated a standard vision; they appeared to routinely supervise teacher teams and evaluate their progress; they participated when necessary; they claim they provided direct modeling support when teams struggled and let strong

teams who appeared to be meeting or exceeding the standard vision do what they need to with greater autonomy.

As is the case with qualitative studies, there are more questions that need further investigation as a result of these findings; however, the principals interviewed and observed appear to value PLCs as a means to improve the culture and climate of teaching and learning in the schools they lead. Nonetheless, how principals negotiate the tensions created by the intersection of accountability polices and PLC reform in an era of high stakes accountability depends on a variety of factors including but not limited to vision, preparation, and ability to help teachers navigate the same intersection.

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APPENDIX A

INITIAL INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTIONS

Interview 1: Principal I	Comments/Themes
S- How would you describe your role as an instructional leader in PLCs? #0:0:17.0#	
P1 - My role is really tweaked as when I came here it was really looking at data, filling a sheet out, turn the sheet in, and kind of walking through this process. So, I felt like that wasn't very productive, so my role has tweaked to facilitator of that. I feel like I provide resources in certain areas being a former SPED teacher but also being familiar with the building so I've tried to be more of a resource and facilitator and it allows me to follow up with conversations with our coaches and what they need to do next or my evaluations with specific teachers - during plc you talked about this. I think we are moving further away from filling a sheet out - as this is an accountability piece as I can't attend all of them, but its really more of a working and planning is involved to and not just green, yellow, red. I think its moved more to a coach and facilitator role. #0:1:37.8#	Before – compliance toward a process

Now – facilitator and resource of this process

My role has moved to more of a coach and facilitator role |
| S- what role does accountability (meaning letter grades, SEA 1) in how you lead plc? How does this play out in how you lead plc? #0:2:4.3# | |
| P1 - it really hasn't done anything different. It doesn't matter if we are an a or f we have a process that we need to follow. If we are an A school, are all of our teams doing this successfully as we would only be looking at grades 3,4 and 5. We have to look at the primary grades to. If you are an F school, then is there a particular grade level not doing what they need to be doing. You might tweak it a little bit, but there is a process you go through and that is what you follow. It is just a matter of supporting your teams where they are. I have new teachers too and this plays a big part in tweaking things every year and this plays a role in how we are priming things in PLCs. #0:2:59.1# | Accountability doesn't matter whether we are A or F – are we following the process.

Support teacher teams where they are – new teachers play a big part and impact this process |
| S - What other factors influence how you lead PLCs? #0:3:6.3# | |
| P1 - New teachers are a big part of it. The make-up of the team. Some teams have six teachers on it and some have four and there are different conversations based on that. You are looking at individual data of teachers and also looking at the grade level data like third grade knowing that they might not be successful based on where they are. My conversation with second grade might look differently as their data may look different. All of these components play a factor in how you lead them. Your coaches drive different conversations too based on their | Size of teams, years of experience, make-up of team, different teams have different data, instructional coaches influence them |

involvement and what you need them to do at times. #0:4:5.3#

S- What if any resources or readings or PD that you've experienced or read shape how you think PLCs should operate? #0:4:17.6#

P1 - I've read through a lot of PLC lit, we went to the PLC Summit, I think that's great, but I think that it is really knowing my staff and students knowing as a leader where I want to take the building where we need to go. We are using *Making Thinking Visible* so we are trying to pull some of these strategies in there so you know when you are looking at data and inquiry and how we are using all of that. So I wouldn't say one particular one is there, *Teach like a Champion* was one that we've used in the past and this has drive some of our conversations, we've got behavior plcs. #0:5:13.8#

PLC Lit and Summit were fine, but leaders have to know their buildings and where they need to go. Two different texts on teaching practices

S - How do you know you are influencing activities in a PLC? #0:5:24.1#

P1 - When it can run itself. When I can reduce my facilitator role and be more of an observer. I think when you can release that responsibility back to the team. #0:5:41.2#

PLCs run themselves, reduce my facilitator role

S - Can you walk me through the steps of an experience you've had where you have been able to release that responsibility - what does that look like? #0:6:0.6#

P1 - Second grade has six teachers, three new teachers that we added to the team last year so this is there second year as a team with no new staff so last year was very hands-on very hand-holding, what does this process look like? what do we want it to look like at our school, what is the purpose? what should we have ready to go and be prepared so we have data ready to go, not grading, not guessing, understanding what to bring, grade level leaders are our PLC leaders, have they communicated to our teams well what to bring and what the purpose. That first year, we really worked a lot to figure out how to tweak this to make it more meaningful so that we are improving our instruction not field trip-based, not whatever we have going on- not generality of assessments, it is very specific to something that can move our instruction. This year, they've been able to tweak and drive their own PLCs with what they need. They had a math plc two weeks ago and looked at math facts. We've got two teachers on that team so it has been a challenge for PLCs this year so we kind of talked and they felt like they could still talk about math facts. Ok this is where our data is and they've been really good about individualizing homework for students and did this last year in stations and so they really came to the table with some more ideas. I really kind of just sat back and listened. Our coach wasn't here, I know what she

New team, lots of support in year 1, explain purpose, establish expectations, now they drive their own as a team, staff turnover makes this a challenge year after year.

can offer and support and what I need to take back to her too so it was really me just being an observer. I was there and if they had questions they would share if I had a couple of ideas but it was their PLC and they were running it and I followed up with a couple of things they wanted me to bring back to our coach. So it is really - our struggle here - is the staff turnover that we have. Having this team together for two years has been good to see them take own this process, but in other areas it has been a challenge with new teachers. #0:8:47.6#

S - Can you try to tell me a story you felt that you effectively facilitated a PLC? #0:9:2.9# Describe what that looked like? #0:9:6.9# What you did and what you didn't do? #0:9:14.9#

P1 - Third grade has been a challenge; we have half the team is brand new and the IREAD test. I moved a teacher off the team as her data every year hasn't been where I felt it needed to be. They just recently gave their IREAD practice test, they brought this data with them to this PLC. By the end, the team had no action steps after looking at the results. They were like ok well we have this many kids who did not do well and we don't get anymore adults who were going to support the students during the focus time (intervention time). So, I said I want you to come to another meeting, look at the data again, drill down and be very specific about what the class needs and be very specific like beginning/ ending sounds/ how many kids and what does look like; how many are sped and how many are ENL. Lets dive into these kids and bring this data and bring what suggestions would you do. So this is your class and you have no more people coming so what are you going to do? I think they want me to come up with solutions and its not going to work because they don't own it. So, we met and we really - they brought some great ideas and so we talked and really refined it down so its not just focus time, but what they can do during small group. They will take a day during the week, they will work on beginning sounds with these three kids and give them what they need. You don't have to assess them all the time, but give them some time. We left with a purpose, some action steps, no personal issues and they took ownership of the process. They walked away with a combination of their collaboration and I needed to get them there. I had to help them get there. #0:11:53.0#

S- What did you see in your teachers during that meeting that led you to believe this was a successful PLC? #0:12:23.7#

P1- I think it what I've seen since them. I just did a recent observation in one of the classrooms and I've seen them implementing the plan. This is a teacher who I wouldn't have thought would jump right on top of that. Another teacher, I have no doubt that is what she is doing in her room

Team left meeting without action steps, principal followed-up and scheduled another meeting and told them to come with suggestions by diving deeper into data so team left with a purpose and action steps. Principal had to help them get there.

Implementation of the plan – what happens after the meeting makes it successful because it is

and I am getting ready to observe her right after break. I really think it is what happens after the meeting - sure there was a plan, teachers left with an individualized plan, but I think this is a continued process and this is what is part of the process. PLCs used to be a one time thing and we are done and now there has to be so much more follow-up. I feel like I've seen the action behind that with this particular team. #0:13:25.4#	observed.
S - Thinking of a time when your facilitation of a plc was ineffective - what did this look like? What were your teachers doing at this point where you thought this isn't working? #0:13:52.1#	
P1 - I think my first grade team is really a team where we struggle with PLCs. Their data is so different than everybody elses and they don't have clear cut things like other grade levels have and their not used to using the data and so we are still really working as a team to figure out how to best make it a useful process as we get off track and continue to come back to personal issues in the classroom or you know its there is not a team effort and never getting to solutions as we are leaving that team. So the last time, we talked about bringing an assessment from their reading curriculum and we were going to talk about the beginning part of the assessment numbers 1-5 and we didn't leave the meeting with much because we kept coming back to my kids took forever and I had to read this out loud and I think if I could do it on this or this kid was ENl - ok, but are we going to do about this data now, how are going to implement in the classroom and when are we going to come back to it and we didn't get really deep with anything and I can't get them to dive deeper and it is just so surface with them. #0:15:35.3#	Ineffective – not real clear data or agreed upon data, personal issues or blaming kids circumstances, just surface conversations, didn't leave with much
S - You feel like teams leaving with action steps is of value to you as a leader to know that teachers are designing pathways if you will that they will implement these plans and when you have a chance you follow up with them in the moment of a meeting like with your first grade team, as you reflect on that, how does that inform what you do the next time? Are you more forceful with questions? I'll stop there - what do you the next time when you know this about this team to try to help support this? #0:16:39.8#	
P1 - I think we that team - it is three brand new teachers who just graduated college and three who've been teaching for 10-30 years. So since their visions are different so do I split the team into two teams since they have different purpose and different needs? Do I keep them together because collaboration is so important? Do I split them so their are two teams with a mixed years experience groups? I am constantly trying to figure out is it personality, is it asking different questions, I feel like this team in the past has been all- talk but I will go back to our room and do what I am going to do. I think I am constantly trying to figure out	Principal questions herself regarding what to do with the team, how do I get them to stop being all – talk and then go back to their rooms and not implement. Hard to have PLC with 6.

what is best for that team. I think it is hard to have a PLC with 6 people - for us it is. #0:17:53.2#

S - How has performance accountability if at all influenced your plc development at this school? #0:18:35.9#

P1 - It has shifted the data we look at sometimes. Our state test is important to look at, but is that really going to change what we are doing in the classroom. I think it gives us a bigger picture in looking at how that grade level is doing but we have to look at past data too. It doesn't really help inform their current teacher based on what they did last year. #0:19:20.7#

> Accountability shifted us to look at other data points as ISTEP doesn't really tell us much.

S - So would you say you are looking at data more or less frequently than in the past prior to increased performance accountability? #0:19:38.6#

P1 - I don't think we look at data more or less than in the past. It is probably be the same other than it is a different layer of data we need to consider with different kids and so yes we are giving reading benchmarks but before we used to have common assessments in math and give a pre and post test and so I think these assessments have changed and we are trying to figure out how to utilize that information within our classrooms. A writing component or our reading curriculum and how do we break it down to something so little and fine one thing you are going to work on with that kid. Before it was just - it felt easier because we are looking at one common assessment. #0:20:55.8#

> Accountability hasn't made us look at data more or less. Still trying to figure how to best utililze the information within our classrooms.

S - Do you think your teachers would answer that question differently than you in terms of whether or not accountability has influenced them? #0:21:8.5#

P1 - There belief might be that we have to do them because of our data and that is not why we do them. For me it is best practice to collaborate and plan and really look at what we can do as a team to work together to help these students and so I think anytime they are going to come back and say we are expected to do these so I think there is a buy-in to them and I don't think that has changed regardless of the accountability from high-stakes testing. #0:21:45.5#

> Teachers may feel we have to meet and collaborate as a result of accountability, but principal believes it is just best practice. Principal doesn't think that is as a result of accountability.

S - Has accountability put anymore or any less pressure on yours a building leader in your facilitation of PLCs? #0:22:2.1#

P1 - I think it pushes me to reflect and look at our process and how are we really running things whether it is a 7:20 or a PLC or how are we utilizing our time when we get teachers together and how are we using the data we have and so I don't know that. It has made me a little bit

> Pushes me to reflect on time spent, how we use data, constantly changing to work smarter, listen to

more reflective over how we use teachers time but I think I just or I am always looking at things and whats a different way for us to tweak it or how can we work smarter instead of harder or what is a better way to look at it. I am always trying to listen to principals - what are you doing in your building? It may not work here, but what can we make happen here because we just have a different population of kids and so um our teachers doing the work but why aren't we getting results in some areas and so what is going to get that to happen. #0:23:46.6#	other principals, results aren't always where they need to be, but how can we make it happen?
S - That's all I have thank you very much.	

Interview 1: Principal II	Comments
S - How would you describe your role as a leader in PLCs? #0:0:11.7# #0:0:59.2#	
P2 - In PLCs, I kinda walk along side teachers. I have my expertise, but I also learn from others. I ask guiding questions to other community members to help drive them either to the point that I want them to make or you know .. um. where I want them to go and take the data. I do feel like I can't have a top down approach as I don't think that is appropriate in a PLC. I think we are all learning from one another. Of course you have different stake holders around the table who have different areas of strengths or expertise that they bring more to the table or different things to the table for us all to consider. #0:1:5.8#	- Learn from others, along side, guiding questions
S - When you say, point I want them to make or take. When you use that phrasing - how do you come up with that - in other words - if you are looking for a certain outcome or actionable step - how does that come about? Do you go into the meeting with that or does it come about organically? #0:1:40.4#	
P2 - I think it is both. I think it comes from reviewing data before hand, before discussion. Making sure that I am attuned to the different trends we are seeing or not seeing as well as through questioning within the plc getting their responses. There in the PLC we design or develop where we are going. The end result has to - I have to make sure - is getting kids where we need them to be and so how do I ensure that teachers aren't throwing excuses out there versus we are having actionable steps to get to grow kids. #0:2:24.7#	- review data before hand, questioning, collective design of action steps to get students "where we need them to be"
S - Can you think of a time when you're been in a PLC when you've had a scenario where teachers who might be using excuses and how have you handled that or what have you've done? #0:2:49.6#	- Ownership of data, trust, and develop a plan, intentional plan

P2- Its happening right now as we've given NWEA tests. We get excuses like I wasn't here at the beginning of the year as I was on maternity leave. well that doesn't matter - lets look at what we have here in front of us and lets develop a plan to make sure we continue to grow them. They might not be at grade level right now or even at the end of the year, but we still have to take ownership, own the data, trust each other, and develop a plan to move forward. We have to know what this is going to look like. We have to be intentional about it. #0:3:27.0#

S - What role does accountability - A-F letter grades, SEA1 (PLC Evaluation), talking about RTT and NCLB. What role does this play in how you lead PLCs at your school? #0:3:58.1#

P2 - Its huge; however, when I think of school letter grades I think it is very broad based on a one day test and that is the reality our state is faced in front of us. I try to take it down a notch or up a notch to make sure we are focused on our common assessments, benchmark assessments throughout the year so I've increased that in our building more frequently. We record reading levels, math fact levels every month. Teacher buck their heads at first about it; however, every month they see that growth in their kids, we can make decisions right then and there as opposed to waiting until the end of the semester to see it. We are using this data to drive our guided reading groups right then and there. We are letting this data drive what we are doing instructionally. I see the big picture to help teachers, though its hard for them to understand what is at stake when you are a failing school. It wasn't transparent before I became principal, so I've tried to explain what this means - we were an f, and now we are a D. It means that our supt. has to share with the state why the principal is fit to the be the principal and why the teachers are fit to be the teachers and that the state could come in in a few years and make us interview or reinterview for our jobs. I try not to dwell on this and we have to remain actionable and upfront and be able to move forward with the work we know needs to be done. #0:5:48.1#

S - You would say accountability does influence what you do - I think I heard you say it is because of the pressure that comes along with it. The pressure to perform as a low performing school that is trying to continually show improvement. What about in terms of your stance on PLCs - do you find yourself thinking previously when maybe we weren't under that accountability - did you see principals or even yourself take a different stance on PLCs as you do now or has it always been the same ? #0:6:34.2#

P2 - I've always believed in PLCs and the level of collaboration among stakeholders in a variety of areas. I don't believe a PLC is a meeting - it is a culture of a building. That - since I became a principal - even as a

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- accountability is huge but broad, focus and increased meetings regarding benchmarks, teachers resistant first, see results more frequently changes resistance, this has informed and improved instruction, being transparent with big picture of being a D school. This wasn't transparent with previous principal. Try not to dwell, but move forward with the work that needs to get done.

- accountability did not change a belief, but leader believed in a culture of

dept. chair - I wanted to develop that culture and right now I don't put PLCs on our morning meeting calendar because it is what we do every day. Yeah, I lead that way I lead through lets talk about collaboration lets talk about who we are talking to and it doesn't have to be we are only looking at CAs and then making decisions on them. There is a multitude of things that make up PLCs. #0:7:27.5#	collaboration even as a teacher from a different state where she was trained in PLCs by Dufour.
S - Do any other factors influence how you lead PLCs (professional reading, authors, pD within your district? #0:7:46.5#	
P2 - a lot of people speak highly of PLCs. I've always been a proponent of Dufour and his work with other leaders. I went to his school system that he used to run and observed the high school and how those were facilitated. Rick Dufour is the one who I continue to fall back on and go back to those five guiding questions. #0:8:22.1#	
S - How do you know you are influencing activity within PLC development? How do you know you are having an impact? #0:8:34.1#	
P2 - I don't think it is necessarily always a tangible thing that comes out of it. I think it is the action that comes out of it. I am sitting there observing or being an active piece to the puzzle, but is it the action I see come out of that time. Then I get to see it in the classroom every single day. When I walk into a Kdg. classroom, they are all teaching the same thing but in different ways and then coming back to the table to evaluate their data. It is observed like this is - a cyclical process that is ongoing and observed in a variety of arenas throughout the building. #0:9:22.1#	- action observed in classrooms post plc meetings; a cyclical process
S - Tell a story about a time when you felt you effectively facilitated a PLC and what did it look like and sounded like? #0:9:32.7#	
P2- When - it is important as there is basics that have to be established form the get- go at the beginning of the year. I set expectations - have you established norms, roles, as a group as we always have these common groups that we meet with. There are other times that we meet or are divided into different segments; however, those role are important to making sure the process moves forward in an efficient manner. Making sure that there is different people and that we hold each other accountable to it. Have somebody come say that so and so is on the phones throughout the meeting. She continues about having an agreed or shared understanding of what we want students to learn; what are we going to do if they didn't learn it, what are we going to do if they did. #0:10:53.8#	- Following the process of norms, roles, shared understanding, and the guiding questions (What do we want students to learn, etc..)
S - Again, when you think about I am right there alongside my teachers and you are thinking about a successful PLC - tell me about your role a	

bit more. What would I see you doing?   #0:11:10.5#

P2 - I would be engaging in the conversation with them. I would be engaging in identifying supports to use and resources to use. I would be analyzing the data with them and drilling down with that. So these kids performed poorly, why? Are there certain question types? Is it an ENL learner. Having those conversations and not just listening - I am there to analyze this set of data then I am going to sit there and do it. IF they need me to pull a resource, then I am going to do it. I always tell my staff if I want you to go shovel snow, I am going to be right there shoveling beside you. I am not going to do anything or ask anything of you that I wouldn't do myself.   #0:12:8.8#

Success as rolling up your shirt sleeve and working alongside teachers and doing the work with them (finding resources for them)

S - If I hear you correctly, a successful PLC is people coming with norms, following a process, and leaving with some actionable outcomes, correct? What about when you shift your focus from you to what teachers are doing during this time? What do you hear or see teachers doing in a successful PLC?   #0:12:42.3#

P2- If we are analyzing data, teachers would come prepared with everything they need with the data organized, whatever they agreed upon as a team so that there time is productive. We are not sitting their grading or doing those things there is work that is front loaded to make sure that time is productive. We evaluate and analyze that based upon certain expectations and criteria thats what I expect my teachers to be engaged in that not just sitting their letting someone else do it for them. I also want them to be engaging in dialogue about the decisions being made - are they ok with them? I think something huge that I do but my teachers have caught on to it - is this what is best for kids? We take the adult out of it - and we ask what is best for the kids to be doing? Sometimes teachers will say that that is too much work and I am not going to do that. Well - if it is what is best for kids - then you need to be doing it.   #0:14:1.7#

- Come prepared with prescribed data, productive time, dialogue, agreement, is this what's best for kids, too much work doesn't matter if it is best for kids

S - Opposite end, tell me a time when the PLC activity or task at hand was not successful or effective or less successful then other meetings. #0:14:17.3#

P2 - Yes, this week we pulled data based on our winter assessments and teachers had to identify 5 different areas where there students fell and then identify if they were a tier 2 or tier 3 kid as now we are going back to see if our students are placed where they need to be. One of our grade levels tore us apart in this meeting. My ap was out and i was with a different grade level. I had another leader lead and the team was complaining as I don't know why we are doing this? A. I should have been more clear behind our purpose so this leader could have articulated

- building capacity of others, complaining, importance of clear purpose, value conflicts

that to the team because their big hang up was that we can print this report from NWEA. Well - we need to look deeper at this. So not having that clearly explained to the other leader allowed the team to not see value in it. I think that is what is the biggest hang ups. #0:15:37.2# #0:15:36.2#

S - So if you would have done it differently - how would you have handled it? #0:16:17.6#

P2 - I think I would have been in the meeting and better explained our purpose as I want to grow leadership in the building; however, it would have been nice to have both groups together so that we were all hearing the same message and then maybe separating into smaller groups to dig deeper and do the work that needed to be done. I think I am always looking to build or advocate for other leaders in the building to step up. I think sometimes teachers if somebody else other than an administrator is saying it - it is like the best word ever, but if I say it then they want to come up with a different approach or not want to do it because admin is saying to do it. #0:17:10.4#

Teachers value listening to their colleagues ideas more than their principals – tension

S - Can you think of a time when you have ever felt inadequate facilitating a plc? Say we've identified our struggles or challenge and we are trying to identify solutions and have you ever felt like I don't know the answer here? If so, what do you do in that scenario? #0:17:39.5#

P2 - I try to be very intentional. I am an elementary license person as I know I have a broad base of instructional understanding in all content areas. I feel much more of an expert in math than I do in reading. My school is aware of this and I hired an asst. principal who is very well versed in reading. I try to surround myself with people who complement my weaknesses if you will. So, if we are talking about reading instruction do I know foundational expertise - yes. But I will try to ensure that I have someone like a literacy specialist who will be with me that I can get guidance from as well. Also, I feel like I have teachers that know literacy instruction so I am learning from them as well. #0:18:43.9#

Expertise, but expert in math, balanced admin team with ap more literacy based, need for support from "so-called experts"

S - Has accountability influenced PLC development in your school in anyway? #0:18:55.7#

P2 - Yeah, it has. When I started at school 2, the first letter grade came out. That was about the time when the district pushed plc. I learned a lot about PLCs in a different state and I felt that we were kind of behind the 8 ball on this. The district latched on to the ideas of opening our doors, working with others, etc.. I find that accountability helped to move this along. Accountability has changed it as we have to be much more lazer

- current district was behind where she was with former district, accountability helped instead of hindered

focused. Before letter grades came out, teachers did what they wanted to do. The emphasis on collaboration and analyzing data, emphasis on common assessments was not there prior. I think it has evolved over the six years I'be been at school 2 and that is due to the letter grade. We had to find practices to put into place to help us focus on what needed to be focused on to make changes. When you are an F school, you don't get to say we are going to keep doing what we are doing because clearly it is not working. #0:20:51.0#

S – Where does teacher autonomy come into play during PLCs? 0:22:21.3#

P2 - I think it comes back to the true meaning of what a PLC is - I don't think it is mandating the teaching aspect of it. I've had to redirect some groups of teachers as they felt a PLC was where they were being told how to teach and leadership had to explain you have the autonomy to figure out how to teach this certain thing. It can look 5 different ways in 5 different classrooms, but the conversation and the power behind that comes when they come back together with their exit ticket or their quick quiz or whatever data they compile to determine success based on well this class 100% of the kids got them right versus this class where nobody got it right. Well then we need to talk about how we taught it and those are the questions that need to drive PLCs in terms of how did you teach that since your kids did so well on that. Then we have to talk about should I go back and reteach the way you did. That is where I feel like their autonomy. Spreadsheets are organizational tools to ensure that we all are looking at the same data as data can tell 500 different stories and we can make it look how we want it to look so we have to set it up and make sure that we all stay organized and agree that this is our purpose up front so there is less autonomy there. There is more autonomy with their teaching in the classrooms with their beliefs and personalities as teachers. #0:24:40.2#

Interview 1: Principal III
S = How would you describe your role as an instructional leader in PLCs? #0:0:10.1#

P3 - My role is - I set the expectation for PLCs. Its an expectation that they are going to happen and that they happen regularly. I think that my role is to be a support person in that and not the leader of PLCs. In the beginning, I had to be the leader when we first started doing them because nobody really knew what they were and so you had to model it. We trained our lit and math specialist and a couple people like that to be in the leaders of the PLCs and it sort of every year has evolved and now the team leaders have to take this on. So I think I am a participant and I set the expectation and I think I maybe am a model, but not even as much

[Right margin annotations:]

because we are more focused, when failing you don't get to say we keep doing what we are doing.

- autonomy in how we teach to address data needs, but whoever is most successful has the best strategy?

- Less autonomy with data collection as we need to all be looking at it organized similarly

Moved from direct leader to indirect support by assigning different building leaders to

anymore. I sort of hang back more in them now. I might ask a question or two but its at the point now in the way we do PLCs here is that special ed person works on the grade level team and one curriculum person. So its myself, our assistant principal, lit or math specialist and our special ed chair and so we all and then my school psych does one and so there is one person - its really kind of - its accountability so there is somebody there to make sure we stay on point and not talking about field trips. And so that everyone needs to be here and on time and just to keep it going. #0:1:57.6#

S - How has accountability then influenced your role in PLCs if at all? #0:2:17.1#

P3 - Um I don't - I have to think about that. I don't know if its really influenced my role. I think that what has happened with letter grades - it has made everyone more hyper aware of everything so while I feel like I still have the - well you know what - I think it just causes more stress. I think that teachers are way more stressed for instance when we have PLCs in the beginning - at first - they were like why are we doing this. Some people got it - and then they started really enjoying looking at assessments and lets see where we are and where my kids really struggles and really talking about things but now I see them - I feel like they feel more pressure because I see it in PLCs or when we do the data meetings which are kind of like a big plc. They get real emotional about it like this child hasn't grown and I have to get them to grow because I don't have the 93% for the end of the year goal at the mid year benchmark. Those are people - they are very anxious around it so I think in some respects its - I mean we've really raised our student achievement here and so I think that the PLC in addition to the other - coaching support model has helped but its also created an enormous amount of anxiety and stress. #0:3:50.2#

#0:3:50.5#
S - How has accountability influenced how you lead PLCs? #0:5:47.4#

P3 - When I meet with the curriculum leadership team we talk a lot about and spend a lot of time trying to support as we've gone to a bit more of a support mind. How can I support or what can we do how can literacy or math support what support do you need - giving them resources. We try to provide more support and not give more work. The teams will divide the resource support up. We've tried to go to more of a support route like thats the mindset we are coming from rather than a punitive like you know why are some of your kids not getting there. So maybe what would happen is - you know you've consistently in the last three PLCs you noticed that in math the quizzes or whatever they've chosen to look at - one teacher has kids routinely just not getting it. SO the math coach will meet and say lets plan and look at this and let me think about how I

Margin notes:

facilitate – nobody but principal knew how to do them due to PD model.

- accountability as she sees it is making sure a curricular leader is there to facilitate.

Its caused more stress and anxiety for teachers but student achievement overtime has been positive.

More support of process not more work on teachers is aim.

might be able to help with this based on what I see when I go into these other two classes. #0:5:20.7#

S - Are there any other - when talking about your role in plcs - you've talked about at first being a model, now being more of a participant - are there any other factors other than accountability that influence your role? #0:5:42.5#

P3 - I differentiate for our staff like we do for the kids. I think about our literacy and math coach providing support based on team needs. 4th grade team needs more support this year because they have 17 sped students which is way disproportionate for the number of kids in that grade level so there are a lot of high needs so teachers need more support but its the same for our teams. We are very strategic about whose working with what grade level. I, this year, I work with kindergarten because nobody else wants to. Because they are so high needs and high maintenance and so many questions and they talk too much and lose focus. They are just like kindergarten kids but I have 9 of them. So my teams are like not it. I'll do anything if you don't give me kdg. They are so bad - even district coaches will be like oh your team is so painful. They are mostly really great teachers - its helpful if I am there because they have strong personalities and they will wear somebody down. Whereas they aren't going to do that or try to wear me down as much even if they are doing it subconsciously. So if its a grade level that we feel like is struggling more in math than our math coach will say I want to work with this grade level. The literacy specialist will always work with third grade now because of IREAD and first year of ISTEP. They were the first team to get on board with the model we are using for improvement and thats what they have - far and above - the highest achievement than any other grade levels. And because they got on board and they really use our specialist and they use the model. So I guess that is what goes into it as it depends on the needs of teachers are. Personalities and depends not he personalities of the coaches and how teams respond to the curriculum leaders. Usually for the whole year, but this year we switched mid-year because of a need that they saw in the grade levels they thought you know literacy really has to get with second grade and math was and so they've flipped. #0:9:14.1#

S- Tell me about resources that you've utilized in the past that have influenced how you lead PLCs and how they are led here #0:9:41.4#

P3 - I've been to the PLC Summit twice led by Dufours. Its interesting as the first time I went was my first year in the district so it was - I knew what they were as I had a little bit of background knowledge but so that was my first year and then two years ago after I have been here for six year so that was great. Then I went to several things in Indy that were

Differentiate leadership support based on needs of teams not unlike differentiating for students.

Literacy always works with third grade due to high stakes test

one day things which was more of a - they had people from different schools who were sharing what they do and that was really great as I like to hear from people who are in it - just like as a teacher I'd rather go watch a teacher teach then attend a workshop where you listen to someone speak. That was beneficial and I did that four years ago. I've done different readings but I think what we've done here is I think every year we look at what we do and decide what could we do differently and I've finally come to the realization that I think everybody clearly understands what is supposed to have in PLCs here as I don't think thats an issue at all as they happen regularly and are scheduled, but the bottom line is that I think unless you and I haven't been able to do it I don't have teachers who do PLCs like the video the Dufours show or anybody does because they're doing it I think they honestly want improvement and things like that but I think if they're able to get rid of something they will get rid of a PLC. It doesn't mean that they aren't looking at student data because they are when they plan on Thursdays when planning with coaches and doing it at other times and I just don't know we will ever be at a place where teachers are just like oh yeah if we don't have PLCs - like its the most critical piece in our lives - I think they think it is definitely critical and knowing that we've had some success in raising student achievement - I don't sell it like you've got to come here and see our PLCs as they are amazing but there are pieces that are affective. #0:12:48.0#

S - If you think about where you were when you first started compared to where you are now - how do you know that you are influencing the activities involved in PLC development? #0:13:8.1#

P3 - Because they are doing what I am asking them to do as I can see it. They are using the model that we've talked about and that we all agreed upon. We've revised it and we talk about it and how it can be better and so I guess because I can see it happening. That's not to say though that if I didn't continually monitor it that they would keep doing it. I know everybody says that when you read all those books that people write about how you want to set something up so that if you are not a piece of it so that it will continue - this could continue but it probably wouldn't because they don't honestly they would rather be planning in their rooms if they could and then talking to each other informally. #0:14:9.0#

S - Tell me about a time in the past when you've effectively facilitated a PLC or any element of a PLC. #0:14:19.6#
 #0:14:41.8#

P3 - Well, I can think about the time when several years ago it was probably three years or four years of doing PLCs that I remember I used to in the beginning we would rotate so I got to see lots of different PLCs each week and we all did that and then we decided we need more of a

Hearing from people who are in it – is most beneficial than reading about it.

PLC process might dissolve without accountability practices and expectations by leadership team.

The model team created is visibly observed but must be visibly observed to stay in tact.

focus of you've got this team assigned so when we used to rotate three or four years into it and I was seeing all of them I remember teams who were getting it , you are sitting in this meeting, they've come with all the data and they've already gone through it. They've done error-analysis and had great conversations and facilitated it themselves and I didn't have to pull teeth or like crickets - you ask a question and it is crickets. I remember when that started to happen and that was when we decided to have each person focus on somebody because of differentiating because I remember second grade was doing great, third grade was doing great, and we thought there were struggling grades like K, 5th grade was just like still crickets and fourth grade was similar and so then we said what if we just picked a focus and that way you were worked with that team all year to model and to help guide them and at this point we had another big jump.   #0:16:42.5#

S - What about the opposite of that - tell me a story of what that looked like/sounded like? #0:17:9.3#

P3 - I remember early on when we were first trying to get this started I remember sitting in plcs and some teachers would not necessarily come late but they'd come flying in and be like what are we looking at today. They would be ruffling through their papers trying to get organized and in some instances scoring common assessments. We are talking not in year one, but in year two. We, our leadership team, would all debrief and we were all so defeated. We were concerned that these people were never going to get it. Every year we would go after revision and revision and try to figure out what should we do. We brought Jim Frakes, a quality assurance coordinator, in to talk about plcs with these people. So it was very - at the beginning - i remember it being very very stressful. People were not buying into it.   #0:18:25.3#

S - What does not buying into it look like?   #0:18:29.7#

P3 - They weren't really understanding the effectiveness of it. That looking at this is going to raise our student achievement and it is going to drive your instruction. It is going to up the skill mastery of the kids in your class by leaps and bounds and so until they started seeing that happen; it didn't make sense to them. Now they will do anything I ask them to because they believe me because our achievement has grown. They believe whatever we say and not like I am coming up with new and great ideas but if we tweak something nobody even balks at it. A whole bunch of other stuff happened in that time too as we got rid of some staff members who are dead weight as you are bringing down the plc. So as you got those people out as they didn't have the level of professionalism needed to work here and got new people in and moved some people around to different grade levels in order to have leaders on each team that

[Margin notes:]

Revised their support for the teams so include more sustained consistency of support and they saw a jump in achievement switching to this model.

Failure looked like unprepared, lacking in organization, not buying in, brought in outside help.

Value was not there at first because teachers did not see improvement in student achievement initially.

helped as well. #0:19:50.5#

S - Looking back on that experience, with that particular grade when they weren't prepared which caused them to not have dialogue, they didn't understand the purpose, if you could go back and relive that is there anything you would have done differently? #0:20:9.2#

P3 - Yes, I think I would have way more training because our district decided we were going to do this and then we just started doing it. They started with training principals only. After one year, they provided a training for team leaders - like a two or three hour planning after school one day - I can't really remember. I think this was before you came. And then there was nothing ever again. So nobody else on the staff has had training hardly so I would have knowing what was going to happen trained at least my team leaders and my curriculum leadership team on an ongoing basis and we would have maybe done more practice with it not just because it was sort of like here is the training tell your teams now do it. Tell me when your teams are so there was no like if we could have had like a six month jump on it and so here is our prof development we are going to do during this time - we are going to do a mock plc and look at videos at how other people do this - I think we would have probably been years ahead instead of just trying to fix it for several years as it was torture. I think thats how a lot of things get done and I was younger. and we were doing a lot of things at the time and not making excuses but reflecting back thought I really would do it so differently if there were an initiative like that now I know what to do. #0:22:10.1#

S - Talk to me about how your experience has influenced how you approach PLCs. #0:22:29.6# Compared to being a year one or two type principals versus year 8. #0:22:41.6#

P3 - Now its culture just like team planning and planning with specialists and data mtgs and knowing that you are going to meet twice per year with the whole curriculum team so now I don't even - like I talk about it when I interview people and when meeting with new teachers and we talk about plcs but after that it doesn't ever come up again because I already know that them coming into a PLC as their team is going to bring them along they are just going to have to fit into it. They are going to tell you what to do and you are going to bring it and start having conversations as you are going to see them do it. #0:23:55.7#

S- Tell me about culture now and how has accountability policy influenced it? #0:24:20.7#

P3 - When I first came here, teams planned together. Most of them not all of them on a regular basis and they all have common planning time

	Leadership has credibility due to school success.
	Get rid of those who aren't at the level of professionalism as needed
	Would like to have had more time to prepare her leadership team regarding the PLC process – known the roll out or schedule of plcs and the implementation timeline/expectation
	Ingrained into the cultural mindset of school – teams will bring new staff along

with the exception of kindergarten but they meet in the morning. There was some high functioning teams and some not-so functioning teams as like fourth grade team planned when the moon was right. As I started here, I talked about the importance of team planning and when was it going to be because they had to be accountable for it and I think that people still didn't really take it that seriously and I remember having to do all the work. This is just like talking to students about how the teacher is doing all the work. I was doing all the work as I was setting the expectations and boundaries and guiding conversations and then there just wasn't the level of professionalism and there wasn't the focus on it and I don't think they looked at it as an important and critical part of what they did and then as we started having more accountability then people got very anxious and nervous and stressed and we put in more support (literacy and math specialist and interventionist). We put those things in place but the vast majority of teachers now because the thing is if you couldn't hack it you had to leave. The people couldn't handle it - they had to go so now you've got most the vast majority of people who are professional and they understand what has to happen. Are they going to complain about it to our teacher union yes, but it still has to happen and they know that it matters so now because of accountability even thought it is stressful and causes a lot of anxiety it sure made my job a lot easier in having teachers do what I knew was best for them to do. I think without that accountability, I might still be fighting that battle with them because when I first came here the thing was we have good student achievement well it is still good but if you look at the trends for the last five years yours has been declining because 78% is not ok for the population you serve here.   #0:27:32.7#

S -Now that you are principal in year 8, you've had 8 years here to influence the culture here - what further support do you feel you need or do you feel like you would benefit from to continue the improvements particularly as it pertains to the culture thats been created here within PLCs? #0:28:8.5#

P3 - Time is the only thing we need. We have everything else we need. We need time for more pd. We need time for teachers to - to be honest - the biggest stressor about the plcs for teachers is that we are trying to throw them into a 7:20 morning meeting that people are already stressed out trying to get here early and trying to get the kids to daycare. So time is the issue I guess because teachers want time to plan and I get that, but we want them to spend their time collaborating and there is just not enough time for all of it without everyone feeling stressed and pressure and I don't know how to fix it.   #0:29:13.5#

S - If you could go back into your graduate school process - getting your admin license - how would you - if anything - wish you would have been

Side margin annotations:

PLCs before accountability policy influenced the urgency to show improvement was just another tension between admin expectation and teacher duties – accountability policy gave leadership more influence over this process because of the need to routinely show growth and this being a way to do that. Without it, she might not be as far along as she thinks her team/student achievement is.

Desire for more time to ease stress of expectations for teachers.

developed either more in a certain area pertaining to PLCs or how did you feel about that experience in general? Did you feel like your grad program prepared you? yes or no and why or why not? #0:29:52.5#

P3- I don't think so. I think they talked about PLCs quite a bit, but no development. PLCs were talked about and why they should happen and this and that. They talked about your role as a principal and what this should be, but nothing in well that's easy - yeah its just like telling a teacher that you need to be able to teach and manage some kids as this doesn't help one bit as you walk through the door. There was not a lot of - I think about in those principal prep programs - they just like a lot of research and they share that and it is great because I didn't have to read the book so you get a lot of information, but none of it is real world experience so if you are going to talk about PLCs then talk about the research that surrounds it and that kind of thing, but bring somebody in to talk about here is what I did as a principal. Here are the challenges I faced as they talk about real world experiences. People who are high functioning in this particular area and have great information to share. This would have been really helpful. #0:31:17.8#

S - What about in terms of support from district level leadership? #0:31:22.5#

P3- We had no support. Zero. In addition to the fact that you provided one pd on plcs to team leaders for a couple hours after school after the first year. We had already struggled through the first year and it was atrocious. We sent our principals to go to Phoenix for how many thousand dollars to the PLC summit but you still didn't know how to come back and get it started as it was all trial and error so. #0:32:26.6#

S - Just to get clarity, we talked about a successful plc you told me a time about one that was successful that you were involved with - and I failed to ask you - how did you know it was effective? What were signs or symbols? #0:32:49.2#

P3 - Signs that it was effective was that all of the teachers who were there were having conversations - they all knew where their students were - it was a common formative asset for math. They knew where their kids were and had already plotted them. They knew where the kids fell within the different standards on the CFA and they were having conversations about - well lets look and see where the common weaknesses you know these two classes were really weak in problem-solving - these two whatever it is. So they were having those conversations. It didn't feel forced and they were natural conversations and then they talked about - ok - so what can we do when we leave here what is our plan going to be then for the students who didn't get it and

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Grad school informed but did not prepare – bring in people who can speak to the challenges but also who are high-flyers in this area to train principals.

Minimal district support

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then we've already taught it so then what is going to be… this was like the post CFA. So what we are going to do for those who didn't get it and then they talked about for the next time we will check back. They followed the cycle and it was just easy as it wasn't like pulling teeth or forced. I didn't have to interject - ok so lets talk about what you are going to do. #0:34:17.3# S - So would the opposite of that be going back to of not so successful plc - didn't come prepared, not ready to have dialogue, can I assume that they didn't leave there with a plan. #0:34:35.4# ? #0:34:36.3# P3 - Also in those it would be myself or one of the curriculum leadership people as we would have to keep interjecting and facilitating the meeting about ok so lets talk about some strategies ok and honestly you wouldn't even get to the point because you've taken so long to do these other painful steps you didn't even get to the last couple steps of the process because your time was up. so	Follow of cycle – no need to interject or micro-manage – need for a plan when leaving the meeting. Incomplete process or cycle, having to interject frequently as the plc leader.

APPENDIX B

OBSERVATIONS

Principal Jackson @ School 1
Feb. 17 2016
Grade 3 Math PLC Mtg.

Observer Record	Observer Comments
The third grade team begins with determining errors on the third grade quick check on critical standards for march problem solving (test prep).	• PLC leader asks questions from the error analysis form.
Principal asks did they check their work as a team determines it is a computation error. Principal asked if these were read aloud for sped or enl? Some gave accommodations and others did not. Principal asked how long they gave them to complete this. Team said as long as they needed.	• One veteran and four younger more novice teachers. Vet doesn't hardly speak.
One teacher – every student showed growth in my class. Teacher asks groups what are the causes of the error for the first question. Teachers discuss thinking about logical answers. Does it make sense? Team discusses strategies so it is organized.	• Common assessment wasn't given in a common manner. Not sure if this would have influenced PLC in anyway.
Principal asked is there one box that everybody struggled with the most? Teachers agree that it is box 4. Teachers share why they missed the question. Principal shares in some classes I've seen students underline the question or strategies.	Principal didn't seem to think so or didn't necessarily stress this.
Leader – how will you know when your students have mastered the skills, which she reads from the error analysis form? Principal – if you just gave your students this back to correct it – how do you think they would do? I wonder if they can go back to it and self-correct without it being a whole group ordeal. Principal shared going over it with them individually – how do you think that might go? Teachers look around and the leader shakes her head yes as she is writing notes. Teacher shared how she makes notes on them. Principal shares how to make notes on DMR (blanket) so you have the data to make changes.	• Teacher states how she would love to see this teacher-created assmt from vet teacher.
Is there a certain day you want to reassess this. Team discusses what they should do for math for the next few weeks	• Team appears to have their own ideas for how to

leading up to ISTEP. Principal asks will kids only practice the ones they've missed. Teacher talks about enrichment for those who got them alright.

Principal asks veteran teacher what she is going to do. Vet shares every Thursday she gives an assmt. One teacher shares that she would love to see it. Vet teacher shares how she goes over it based on probing question from principal.

Any other notes or comments regarding this? Stated by team leader. Team leader states that I am not sure going over all of this again is a good use of this time. Principal calls on a teacher who has not spoken. This teacher shares we should do again after honing in on computation aspect of it. More strategies are shared regarding helping out with computation.
Principal asks what else do you guys need? Teacher responds more time, but I don't want more time. Overall, I felt good about this and I didn't think we are that far off.

Team shares some laughs regarding some student work. Principal – for your kids who have tier 2 interventions how often are you checking to see the progress they are making in NWEA? I've never been handed it before, an IA shares how they are doing, but nobody on the team is seeing the data. Principal shares what she did with this data over the weekend and how she plans to share out the data she and the math coach examined.

- utilize this data and inform their instruction.
- Meeting went from 7:25 – 7:45. Outcomes were unclear with where team was going from here other than to move forward in whatever manner they felt necessary.

Principal Walker @ School 2
Jan. 6, 2016
PLC Mtg.

Observer Record	Observer Comments
• Started meeting with a question regarding the data from math fact. 9 teachers are present including principal, two coaches, and a student teacher • Start by reading norms. Everyone has an agenda. • They need to create a smart goal for the third nine weeks. • They start with ENL Addition mastery for percentage. The team adds up their number passing out of total to figure the second quarter average percent. They are pleased with the percentage of 87%. They determine what is the smart goal for third quarter for this group. Teacher states she could be 100% another student thinks all but 1 students could get there. • Principal simply is listening and looking over a teacher's spreadsheet. Principal helps prompt a percentage of 90 to 95%. Principal prompts for clarity over smart goal targets. • Team wrote three different goals for a subgroup. Principal asks if their overall goal should be addition or subtraction. Team feels they are ahead of the game of subtraction compared to this time next year. • Teacher recommends they set a basic addition goal and chunk out your subgroups in subtraction as that is stronger. Team agrees to this. • PLC Leader asks – what do we think about that? DO we need to chunk out subtraction? • Math coach agrees with principal that they should key in on subtraction. Team agrees to 95% by end of year, but thinks they should reconvene by end of third quarter. • They configure their ENL subtraction percentage is not strong 30/67. They configure their percentages for everybody else. They share the concern that many are not getting it. 35% • They discuss delivery of the assessment for SPED (0%) and giving unlimited time. • Tension at 7:36 regarding camp of inverse thinking and slow processing going backwards – math coach encourages memorizing the triangle cards. Coach encourages students seeing numbers in a relationship which is why the fact family triangle cards are beneficial. • Principal brings them back to lets agree on a goal and lets	• "This is the best year we've ever had". • Principal is looking at a spreadsheet • I am in a camp that believes Fact Families are key /teacher conflict with different camp that processing going backwards takes more time. • Teacher questions, moves meeting forward, and celebrates teams growth. • Principal closes it out with when the team is going to reassess • Mtg. ends over there time.

determine what we are going to do.
- Literacy coach talks about oasis tutoring or volunteers can help with this too.
- Team leader creates a goal of 79% for the end of the year based on what each teammate shares. Team creates another goal for SPED. Team leader asks if it is ok for them to create a smart goal based on increasing fluency in fact for sped and looks at principal for permission. She nods her head.
- Team creates goal for general ed kids who are currently at 27% passing for their math facts. Teacher shares that she recently got two newer kids who are not into it yet. They agree to a goal of 75% by end of year.
- Principal is important to have the data, but she wants action steps. Leader shares with team to have one teacher share what she is doing. As her scores were a bit better. She shares what she does. Send home tests with the students, additional practice.
- Principal wants to know how are we teaching these kids strategies? Leader shares counting back when numbers are close, doubles, making tens, adding up.
- Principal asks is that whole group or small group. T- shares both. Another teacher shares about games she's using a number line.
- They then discuss strategies for test-taking. Coach shares the book they each have that has corresponding subtraction lessons with the addition. Teacher asks for help in how to improve fluency. Coach shares the different phases and just feels the triangle cards are beneficial. Team leader shares they can recognize the strategy until it comes time to take the timed test.
- Principal is asked what does she think in terms of how to improve their fluency – she responds that she thinks you have to look at their assessment and give them.
- They agree to call kids up one at a time after regiving the assessment and reviewing what they missed and individualizing strategy lesson. Principal asks what do you use to motivate students. Team Lead states we used pizza before break. Principal also shares constant reminder on their desk as a reminder what they are working on like -9s or -5s. Then maybe if they get it you put a smiley face on it.
- Coach asks if they use the fact data sheet?
- Principal also shares that they are also beating the district in addition facts.
- Lit. Coach shares some IREAD info regarding practice tests. This will help teachers identify what areas students are

struggling in and the team can start working for preparing them a year in advance.
• Lit. Coach shares more strategies.
• Principal has leader reread smart goals for end of the year.

Principal Burns @ School 3
March 9, 2016
Kdg & First Grade PLC

Observer Record	Observer Comments
2 PLCS going on at one time. It appears as a Kdg. Team and a first grade team. Kdg. Team is going over field trip and grading window report cards. They discuss having a whole group and small group time during literacy block. Team discusses some troubled behavioral students and strategies for meeting their needs. Back to Field Trip and chaperones. _____ The first grade team is meeting with the math coach and reviewing their math data. They are celebrating some of their scores. Teacher stated she had more kids than she thought work well. The shape has larger equal parts. They are talking about errors and why they think those errors occur. Students have hard copies of the common assessment and are pulling certain ones. Coach asks if certain student is able to identify a certain shape first before trying this problem. They are talking about an individual child's strengths conceptually, but challenges putting those thoughts down on paper. He appears to be a child with special needs. Team reviews how they gave the test. Team discusses issues with scoring the assessment. Teacher and teacher are disagreeing about how to assess a skill. Teacher talks about in their last meeting they drew a line in the sand as yes or no and they are still not in agreement on how to score it. Coach tries to provide clarity on how ISTEP scores them. Teacher talks about taking a brain break. She talks about how an acquaintance can come in and visit the classroom to observe a literacy block. Team then talks about another topic – bringing certain curriculum resources into their poetry unit.	• Principal did not see it necessary to attend meeting. • Tension between how to score assessment within first grade team. Tension promotes a needed change in topic from coach. • No visible notes taken. • Teams are meeting in the media center (K & 1) • Lit. Specialist is meeting with two other teachers. • Instructional foci switch from what can teacher do to a child's issue. • The team discusses plan to follow up with team the next day and will email resources to them.

Team talks about math strategies for reteaching skills instead of just putting them on DMR. Coach talks about a concept of same size/same shape and congruency. Coach wants them to think about DMR and pull some of these students still struggling and pull them into a small group during intervention. Teacher states what about the students who are missing nearly all of them. Teacher shares a strategy for morning meeting to review a particular skill. Coach states that it is important to let kids know how the class did on this skill. Teacher talked about how sharing reading data helped.

They discuss their disappointment with a sub. They transition to talking about patterns with charts working with students on adding one, zero, and two. Coach talks about her teaching with a student who was struggling with adding zero on the chart. Coach tells a teacher to hold off on the next activity (bridges) and how to prompt and support our low students who struggled with this skill. One teacher walks through the lesson flow she is planning to do with her class. Coach talks about how the errors appear common. She asks if you want these resources/ math station activities sent to them in email or copies. Teacher says email is fine.

Teacher shares how her class is struggling with a certain skill (adding ten using base ten blocks) like 42 plus 30. This conversation changes from instructional to an individual child's issue. Coach asks them to bring their standards tomorrow that they marked as check or check pluses for which are most important.

APPENDIX C

FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEWS

Follow up Interview – Principal Jackson Transcription	Comments/Themes
ME: Tell me your thoughts about how the plc I observed went. #0:0:29.6#	
P1: I believe it went better than I thought. We have new three new staff and we are still trying to figure that out a bit. But teacher leader led well and took good leadership of it, we got some feedback from our veteran teacher, Kathy to talk and share some things and that is a challenge sometimes. We got our new teacher, Erica, to talk as she is pretty quiet and a brand new teacher. They shared some great ideas. I think they narrowed down you know specific skills that they wanted to work on. I liked how they kind of took it back after that like "well in my room I want to give the whole thing again or in my room I only want to look at this one". So I appreciate that there is still some flexibility there. They came prepared and they shared their data. It was one of their better plcs to be honest with you. #0:1:29.7#	Success equates to coming prepared, meaningful discussion, flexibility in action steps moving forward as a result of collaboration.
ME: Tell me about a time when trust was an issue during a PLC either between you and a teacher or a teacher and team. Talk to me a little bit about what that looked like/sounded like and how you handled it. #0:1:48.3#	
P1: This third grade team is kind of one because at the beginning of the year with three new teachers and they didn't really know or get this process as they didn't feel comfortable as when they brought data were they going to be evaluated based on their data or judged by their peers. I think they saw Kathy's data brought in and it is always 25/25 and mine is 2/25. So we had to talk about her kids and high ability and you don't. I feel like with that team they had to figure out how to build relationships with each other and be honest about the data and how to drive it instead of comparing kids from other kids. #0:3:7.0#	Trusting of each other took time with new teachers and understanding the data and why you look at it improves that trust.
Me: So when observing this, what do you do to help? #0:3:11.6#	
P1: I am just trying to support new teachers so we have a lot of individual conversations whether it is an informal pop-in and talk about how things are going and following up with the team leads. For	Informal conversations and relationship-buiding, closer facilitation and guiding

example, these are some concerns with their team and so I have been doing more informal conversations this year with this team because of the three new teachers and the location of the building and so I've been trying to individualize what do you need, what are you getting from it, when I am observing that I am seeing that you are just sitting there or quiet and are you really getting anything from these plcs or planning sessions or are we just wasting your time. I feel like its just been - I've really just had to have open conversations with all of them and try to pull them back together and share those reflections with the team lead - how can she turn this around. #0:4:9.5#	questions.
Me: Tell me how veteran teachers sound during plcs compared to how novice teachers look like/sound like in your. #0:4:28.2#	
P1: It varies. I have a first grade team with three new teachers and then I have dixie whose been here forever and Jill whose been forever. So my three new teachers desire the plc and need the support and planning time with coaches. My veteran teachers like Jill sits at the back table. She'll share some things she does and takes no notes and I don't know that she is changing her instruction at all based on data. Dixie sits in the middle which is weird but she will alter some things and she has kind of her map of what she is going to do for the year and some things she makes sure she puts in but she uses those conversations to drive some of her instruction or to get feedback or to make sure new staff hear things that work well or maybe they want to try so she is in between the two perspectives. The other teacher is one who just got her admin license and it is like I mean she has no buy-in to plcs or planning um or anything its like just something she has to check off her list and sit in. #0:5:55.9#	
Me: So how do you handle that when you see a teacher who is not buying into the process what do you do? #0:6:9.0#	
P1: I had to go individualized to those teachers. So I went to Dixie and stated ok and she is one that we always have the ongoing dialogue back and forth like what do you notice about this vs. what is not what do you think your team needs and what do you need from me? I had an honest conversation with Asia and said as an up and coming administrator it is difficult to see that and you bring nothing so I know you are not going to alter anything next week based data or suggestions discussed so are you simply planning day 3 of Journeys and so we've had to have some honest conversations. I've stated as a future administrator what would you do when you see what I am seeing with regard to a teacher who shows up and is clearly not prepared, on her phone, twirling your hair and so I've just had to put that back in her face and say what do you think. She's tweaked a little bit. The plcs have been a different culture here - planning is what we are working on and I don't have 100% buy-in as that	Address it in private

is simply what we are doing here at GB so I think until I can get there these conversations are just going to have to happen which is going to be uncomfortable for some people. #0:7:42.5#

ME: You mentioned in your first interview that school letter grades didn't really matter that teachers following this plc process does - what is problematic about your process? What worries about your process or what do you think the weaknesses are of your process. #0:8:9.1#

P1: I don't think we monitor our kids in the right way so when we have tier 3 meetings and we say give me their current data, they are giving me FNPs from December (a few months prior). I don't require them to turn in anything like a running record frequently enough and I've already met with my leadership team and stated that this is going to happen in August. This has been my focus as in the last two years, tier 3 has been so huge I honestly have not had somebody who can take on tier 2 for me so I am trying to do both and it is not working so I feel like tier 2 is an area I feel like we need to grow in because we aren't monitoring the right work with that. Your Journeys test is on Friday or their DMR in math is not telling them where the kids are and are you moving those kids and we are waiting for those three benchmark or we are saying they are going somewhere with tier 2. They are not accessing the data and so it is difficult to do anything with it anyways. So I feel like that is where we need to do a better job at knowing where our students are more frequently. #0:9:41.9#

ME: So, opposite - what are you feeling good about with regard to the culture of collaboration and the plc process? #0:9:53.9#

P1: I think I have teams who are successful like second grade is a team whose been together a bit longer and is having great conversations. They follow-up with coming back to the data about it and I don't ask for that. I don't require that and so I can just see this process and lets look at what we said we would have. They've talked about goals so I've asked them to work through some things that I want to do next year and so that I can take it to the staff in August and get teacher buy-in and feedback. They are a team who will talk to their goals each 9 weeks and what specifically do you want kids to achieve and percentages we want them to meet. I feel like I have some teams that are really using that data the right way. I think my struggle is just the turn-over in staff. And so, I don't I lean on my leaders to do some of that training and so and I do it to and I am tired of having to redo it every August. I want to be able to train the core team and they can roll that out instead of having to retrain people. #0:11:24.6#

ME: In the first interview you mentioned how your role has shifted from

Are we monitoring our students the right way and looking at the right data

the beginning when you were an AP here and you thought the process or the collaboration here was more of an act of compliance and now your role has shifted from enforcer to facilitator or coach. What factors do you think have influenced that shift? #0:11:57.5#

P1: Staff turnover, the PD I am trying to do with my leadership team or me, just like looking at agendas and early on we talked a lot about the PLC process and difficult because I wasn't here and I've tried to set a review at the beginning of the year to reexamine our process and our agenda and ask what do teachers need as their team leaders. Lets share ways your team has been successful and I am trying to coach the coaches so that they can go out and do that work for me so I don't have to sit in on all the meetings. Before it was like teams that I had to attend their meetings or the plc wouldn't happen. First grade is still one of them but I think it is because of turn-over in front of staff. #0:13:19.0#

ME: Can a plc meeting be effective if their are no action steps or observed implementation changes afterwards? #0:13:27.0#

P1: No, I think you have to have evidence so how are you going to follow through and know if what you are doing is working. What is your evidence behind that? To me or for me, we need to work through a process by looking at a specific piece of data, change instruction to make growth with your classroom or team and so if you do not come back to it then I think you miss the opportunity for celebration. Also, we look at what do we need to tweak for next time or what do these kids need to get now as there is still this group of kids who don't have so what does intervention time look like for them. #0:14:18.7#

ME: How do you handle a situation where a team or some members are challenged by like a value conflict? For example, they disagree on a certain instructional practice that they think will yield the highest results. How have you as a plc leader handled that situation? #0:14:49.2#

P1: I think its posing specific questions like this really wants a philosophy but in our fourth grade plc the other day they were talking about fluency and so um one teacher said well we aren't really working on that this year we don't need to. What are you using to decide that because to me you don't have aims web that you are responsible for so that is why you are not doing it. We now have FNP and DRAs instead so I think we have to have guided questions there but I think it is the follow-up with individual teachers and saying this is the expectation or talk with teams that this is the follow-up expectation. One teacher shared that she wasn't really going to do small group and felt like switching it up. It actually happened to be during an observation of her so that went in the notes as something to follow-up on. It is not always a disagreement but I

No, action leads to evidence as to did that action lead to the desired results.

just think the building isn't always going the direction it needs to go and my coaches are relied on a lot to have conversations with them to and share this is not working - can you follow-up unless it is an admin thing. So they have to know where I want to go too. #0:16:31.8#

ME: I am wondering if you think that this current accountability policy helps or hinders the culture of collaboration at your school? #0:17:4.5#

P1: I think a bit of both. Its helped because its given me some reasons behind things I am asking us to do. I think its hindered us to because sometimes we just look at three, four and five because of ISTEP or IREAD so does that mean we abandon what we are doing in our primary grades. It provides stress just because you know all of that is weighing down on you and I think for me because grades are hard - sure we are an A school. I had a teacher say the other day that we aren't really an A school. Ok - like - that just kind of took me back and I mean our data was there so what does that mean? Does that mean we aren't really doing what we should be doing in classrooms and so I don't know so I think um when I saw our grade come out as a D and I thought that is unacceptable even with all of the barriers I still think we can do better than that so I think it does a bit of both. I think its holding me accountable and I have to hold teachers accountable. You have to have the buy-in there. #0:18:51.5#

ME: IF you were principal of an F school for multiple years, would your role look the same in how you currently are interacting with plcs or do you think it would look different? #0:19:9.7#

P1: I think it depends on the school and the climate and culture they have. If they have a successful plc process then why isn't it working. If they don't have a system in place then what are they doing to look at data to drive their instruction more frequently than three times per year so I think it depends on you coming in if you are at a school for a couple of years then something isn't working so I think you have to look at the plc process and you have to look at the classroom. I was just sharing some news regarding summer school and I said you know those kids didn't what they needed from that teacher 180 days for whatever reason so do I want that same teacher teaching those kids again - do I want third grade teachers who have really low IREAD 3 scores teaching in our summer schoolers? #0:20:30.2#

ME: As a principal with 10 or 15 years experience, do you think your role is going to be the same or different? #0:20:41.6#

P1: It depends on my staff. If I were to have consistency and not having ten or twelve teachers every year we could get on a roll but having to

restart it every year just provides another layer of difficulty. The expectations are still there - what it needs to look like and what needs to happen during that time. I think the data has changed too and so we had to move away from our quarterly assessments with math which was easy to pull that data in to now what are we using as we move to a new adoption series. With reading we had aims web and acuity and now NWEA and so every year the data has been different so um whats really relevant data to bring to a plc that may change. #0:21:56.6#

ME: what further support if any or training do you think you would benefit from as a plc leader in your school? #0:22:10.9#

P1: I think having other people observe like you and having people come see the process. I asked a title i teacher come over and watch our planning sessions that Susan is doing with the teams and give our teachers some feedback. So, something she's doing there is working (at another school) and I like to learn from that so we are not having a three year going through these motions if we can just cut to what is successful. I think for me - it is people giving me feedback on the way things run and its conversations with my leadership team. If you have effective plcs why isn't your data moving? #0:23:1.2#

ME: How might principal prep programs prepare future school leaders with improving the plc culture and climate of schools they may lead? What advice do you have for them? How was your training through your program? #0:23:14.7#

P1: I really didn't have plc leadership prep in my principal program. My first experience was when i came here and taught special ed. At the time, they really used that data and changed groups up but that focus time was so intentional and flexible and fluid and before that we just - when I was in a different district - we really didn't have plcs. We had GEIs but that was our only conversation with data so I think it is just how do you use data to drive your instruction. I did an internship with my principal so but going outside to see successful schools or seeing that - it just needs to be like what you do with student teachers in exposing them to everything I just didn't have it.

Follow up Interview: Principal Walker	Comments/Themes
Me: Going back to the PLC I observed, tell me your thoughts about how that went? #0:0:14.6#	
P2: I finally have a teacher leader on that team who understands the importance of processes. She understands data and the balance between	Teacher leader who requires little support – gets it.

reality of sometimes just what things are and what they have the time to do. Um, where as some of the other teachers get wrapped up in excuses she can shut that down well this is what this shows and this is what we need to do so how are we going to get them there. This has been helpful as this team has never had that before. They did get off track as it was more talking and not as much action-oriented as I would like to see. There wasn't a real direct plan that came from that that i would have liked to see. #0:1:7.5#

Me: Tell me about a time when you saw what you wanted to see - what did that look like. #0:1:19.1#

P2: I came back to that team after that PLC because I, at nora, we update our math facts monthly. So after that meeting we came back and I said ok we talked about the data - we were presented the data but what was the action on that. What did that look like and when did you reassess to see if that action worked. So just having those conversations with them not necessarily planned all the time, I come in and sit with the team on lunch and on their prep and say what are we doing. They can lay out for me exactly what they are doing and strategically talk to that and the one thing I am pushing them to do is actual strategy lessons for subtraction because that intentional teaching and intentional facts that they know is not happening - it is more of a skill and drill. #0:2:11.8#

Me: going back to that observation, there was a little bit of tension around a particular strategy. The comment was something to the fact that I am not of the belief that adding and subtracting as an inverse operation - you know - should just be easily switched and learned that way. You said something to the fact of well I am of the company that says that. So, when you have a value conflict how do you go about handling that? #0:3:7.2#

P2: It does happen and if the data can show otherwise then I give them the autonomy to do that and I think that is what we are as professionals. I don't know all the best practices, but if their data can't show that what they are doing is working then we come back to other ways to get the kids to master those skills that we need and she is a teacher that can so I don't question it as she can get the results. Her students are performing and so I really want her to share her ideas even though it doesn't align with some of the strategies being pushed by the district. #0:3:47.8#

#0:3:48.1#

Me: Tell me about a time when trust was an issue between you and a teacher or teacher teammates - how do you go about supporting trust issues? #0:4:0.4#

Little to no plan of action

Follow-up with team was a priority

Teacher autonomy given if justified through student achievement

P2: I've had it at first grade um there is a teacher there that her colleagues on her grade level do not trust or do not feel like she knows what she is doing or how she is doing it. They often come and want to talk about it with me and I try to take it back to the team and I don't really want to talk about personnel with other people so I will make myself more visible in those meetings so that I can see first hand vs. what they are sharing so I can have individual conversations about how a teacher isn't teaching how they should be or not meeting a kids needs or planning appropriately then I can speak first hand to that go address that issue with the teacher. In regards to trust among the team and their trust level with her really encouraging them to model and lead by example for that person versus just writing them off and so really having those conversations versus just saying I am not going to trust them so I won't work with them. #0:5:21.3#

Teacher team doesn't trust a veteran and come to her for advice.

ME: What does a resistant teacher look like or sound like in a plc? What do you do or what have you done to help with this? #0:5:33.2#

Resistant means closed to trying anything new unless it is her idea.

P2: I would probably say the same team - that a teacher who is very experienced and runs an efficient classroom with great practices but is never willing to try anything outside of the box or anything new like IB doesn't support it and vocal about it. She will say I am not doing that or I am not trying that so you know if I observe that then obviously we have conversations about why can you explain that to me, but again, it comes back to the autonomy of is she doing what is best for children? Is she getting the results that we need? And she is - in this instance - yes. In some instances no - in those areas where they are not getting the results, then I just continue to heighten my accountability for them and make myself more present as I don't want to tell them what to do but want them to get there through questioning. I have one right now that I am going through the evaluation and doesn't want to change but her classroom management will result in low achievement and low growth and so when you lay all those things out on the table and you present that to them and they don't see it there is other avenues that we have to take. I guess both situations where they are resistant but in the end they are getting kids where we need them to get whereas I have a teacher who is not getting kids where they need to be, resisting everything I am trying to lay out in front of them I need to see happening and so the conversations are going places that I really don't want to see them go because I think this teacher can grow and put these things into place if she really wanted to. #0:7:51.3#

ME: Talk to me about a time when you were really proud of yourself with regard to your leadership within PLCs. #0:8:1.4#

P2: I don't know that I am ever proud of myself. I am proud of a team. I feel like I've been apart of it. or helped form it, but they are the ones that have got the results. I am more proud of the team and I feel - thinking of a specific grade level. In working with a team successfully, I've engaged in questioning and set the expectation and they've risen to the occasion. So they are self motivated, but what I enjoy is that all of this team - their members bring something to the table. They are efficient and focused on kids. They utilize specialist and other people in the building because they know they do not have all the answers. I think that affording teams times to do that and b - the results they are getting through intentional practices and assessing students more frequently with common assessments - when I say common assessments like an exit ticket (two problems not a 4 page doc.), but I think setting that forum for them is where my success comes in, but then again it is all due to their work and their dedication to it. I guess I was walking around the building today thinking what do I do all day long really - as I feel like I am just putting fires out, but I guess if we are doing our jobs correctly then the building will run itself while we are dealing with the issues.

ME: IF you sense that your teachers value hearing from their colleagues more than administration or more than coaches, how do you facilitate whose voices get heard?   #0:10:36.9#

P2: I work really hard to do just that. As a principal for only two years now, I've learned that often anything I say it could be giving somebody a million dollars they will find something wrong with it or that I have a negative intention and so anything that I want to be heard or carried out I have the specialist or an ENL teacher share the message and I can follow up with some capacity. Any PD that is given I really rely on my coaches and my resource team to deliver that PD because I feel like they hear them because they are more connected in the classroom with them. Again, if I stand up their in front and deliver PD - they will listen but I think they always feel like there is an underlying intent behind it versus I am just here to help you grow. That has been hard - that's um I can't figure it out as that is never my intent and I think it is a few people who think that and can spread that word.   #0:11:46.8#

ME: Has the increase in accountability that's been put into practice at the state and local level with regard being a targeted action plan school - has this helped or hindered the culture of collaboration at your school? #0:12:10.8#

P2: I think it has helped as we've experienced some success as we've put local accountability in place at our school and that has helped teacher realize that their work is having meaning because kids are growing and they are seeing it more often. Do I think ISTEP and the state tests are

Proud of a team because they've taken ownership. Work yourself out of a job.

Work really hard to make sure the right voices get heard.

Helped put more local accountability in place. Teacher see and feel success more often.

informing what we are doing - no because its once per year. You don't get the results until after the fact. We have immediate data that helps drive our instruction and our teachers - its been a hard two years getting these practices put in place. But they enjoy sharing the data with us and that sense of accomplishment and wow these kids grew and the back door to that is that they had something to do with that. I do think its helped and its helped us as a building frame our efforts in how to meet our students needs by having those accountability measures each month. #0:13:10.9#

ME: What does or should a leader do when hearing that "this is the best year we've had in terms of our math fact results"? #0:13:23.9#

P2: I want to know what did we do differently? How did we get here? How do we maintain it? What practices are in place and can we speak to those practices? Was it a clear plan or each step of the way or which month we are recording the data have we identified what we did so the following year when we come back to redo it - can we reinstate the same things or do we need to change things up - did this work or not? We are dealing with apples and oranges sometimes dealing with different students so this is obviously a consideration but we have to look at the practices and we have to reflect because some things work and some things didn't work. We have amazing math fact data but we still have teachers not teaching strategy lessons to specific kids and so we have to continue to grow them that way as it is a continuous growth process. #0:14:29.1#

ME: When looking 8-10 years down the road, you are still principal at this school - do you foresee your role as PLC leader looking any different? #0:14:44.4#

P2: I do because things will have changed. Education will drastically have changed by then I am certain of it because look where we've been compared to where we are now. The focus of the district will most likely be different so we've got to take a different approach. DO I believe that the process of a PLC and that on going analyzing, planning, and reflecting and creating assessments as a cycle - I think that will stay the same. #0:15:18.2#

#0:15:18.5# ME: If you were principal of an A school, do you think your role would look any different as a PLC Leader? #0:15:31.1#

P2: I don't think so because as a leader it is what I believe is best in deciding what is best for kids - what has to be taught in the classroom - what has to be facilitated by teachers and a team of people. I worry that in an A school because I ask myself this often would it be different if I

Ask questions critically about success much like you would if you were experiencing failure.

Process of PLC will and should stay the same regardless of different curricular and district expectations.

Teacher resistance in high performing school

was our two or three A schools in the district is that you would have more teacher resistance because they could say why do we have to do these things as what we are doing is working. Now I can say something is not working so we have to maintain these processes to make sure we are doing what has to be done. #0:16:16.0#

ME: Can a PLC meeting be considered successful if teachers leave the meeting without any action steps to implement? Why or why not? #0:16:28.0#

P2: I think it depends on the PLC and on the people. For example, the second grade one - there were not really action steps that came out of that meeting but I feel like the conversation had teachers thinking and I know that coming back around the table with them I knew that they needed and desired to come back to it. I do think if action isn't necessarily ended because I think there are different cycles and you can't get through every step of everything in one setting because it is ongoing. A Teacher is reflecting in their head almost with every sentence they say throughout the day and I think that is a big part of the teaching and learning process and in turn is a big part of collaborating with others. Again, it comes back to the level of understanding and the mastery of the actual teachers on the collaborative teams to see where they are so that is a really hard question I think. I would say I have a couple teams in my building if they didn't have something to go put into place - it would not happen. There would be no follow through - the team you observed that day - I know it was an ongoing conversation because I know two teachers specifically on that team who will not let it end. They are always asking each other and saying what are we doing now and what is our next step. A few other teams I have - they would leave the meeting and that would be the last thought they had regarding the matter. #0:18:11.0#

Depends – it is an ongoing process and so it may result in further discussion before action.

ME: What further support training do you think would help you improve the PLC culture and climate at your school? #0:18:18.9#

P2: I wish our district would come back to or cycle back to educating all of our staff members of steps of a plc process because I feel that we've had a huge amount of turn-over more than not. I think we all need a refresher course. Collaboration and the process of the PLCs seems I don't know like learning the abcs to me and it seems very simple to me but some people can't some don't and you know some people think we are having this collaborative conversation so we are having a plc but there are other components that play a part of that. They are not good at looking at data so how do we cycle through this to reinstitute the beliefs and practices of the PLC. Then venture out to make sure we are looking at data how can you look at data how do you analyze and build a plan based on it - how do you come back to it to see ok I've taught something

Cycle back and retrain as we have new admin and teaching staff to refresh and review the process.

lets reassess so that cycle. #0:19:32.6#	
ME: How might principal prep programs best prepare future school leaders with plc culture and climate in schools? What suggestions would you have if any? #0:19:44.4#	
P2: Embedding this into all their course work. I don't think it is a separate entity. I don't put plc meetings on my morning meeting calendar because I feel that a PLC is all day every day. Kind of like what they say about IB - it is all day every day. Wherever you are talking with others about data and instruction is crucial so embedding it in all curriculum and how do you know they've learned it, what are you going to use to assess it - and the big questions of the four - how are these placed in all of the course work so it becomes a habit versus a separate learning experience. #0:20:35.4#	Embed in all coursework – it is what we do all day.
ME: With regard to your personal experience with your prep program, how well prepared were you to facilitate and lead PLCs? #0:20:54.7#	
P2: I don't feel at all that I was prepared. I feel the knowledge I have was all prior to or self-initiated. I don't feel like it was something that was taught to me during my admin classes. #0:21:12.0#	Not prepared – but would be of great value
ME: Do you think it would be of value? #0:21:14.8#	
P2: I think it would be of great value to sit and to have somebody coach us on how to facilitate that or to talk about the kind of questions you've asked here today. What about that group that is resistant or that teacher that is not trustworthy - how do you get through that? Those scenarios, etc… but I think in our job everyday and every minute is different as you don't really know what to expect. You never know what is going to fly either way. #0:22:3.6#	

Follow up Interview: Principal Burns	Comments/Themes
Me: The follow up to the PLC that I observed - you had k, 1 meeting in the media center doing plc work, you had first grade working with the math coach and kdg was working as a team with the special ed resource person who works with K, 1 and 2. She's in on the PLC. You did not see it necessary to be in there to facilitate, talk to me about that. #0:1:0.6#	

P3: Here's what we've done and I do - I am on the fourth grade pLC and I am assigned to a team, but I am not the only person from the leadership team assigned to that one because what I found is that if I am in there, they want me to be in charge. A few years ago, I started - just I can't be on everyone of them anyway so sometimes I will sit it on the kdg plc but nobody else really wants to frankly. I will at the beginning of the year I will sit in on k's pretty regularly, but then there is still another person from our curr. leadership team who is in there helping them facilitate and stuff like that to keep them on track so that is really why I didn't really have anybody to sit with. I am usually in on the third, fourth and fifth grade one. We have another special ed person who facilitates a grade level. I've found that if I am in there they expect me to lead it and they are not as honest. I don't think they have as good as a discussion. At the beginning we would support and monitor and ask probing question to model for them, but I do have someone from the CLT on every grade level so that we are making sure that we are staying on track. #0:2:45.0#

Me: You leadership team meets when? #0:2:48.5#

P3: We meet once a month as a team. #0:2:51.5#

Me: Tell me how that agenda gets created for the CLT. #0:2:59.3#

P3:; The people on their will send me stuff that we want to talk about because we have to look a month ahead. Sometimes we will have impromptu meetings son Monday at 2:30 so the team knows if they need to meet with me they know they can access me during this time. They will send me things they want to talk about and I will add things to it - like this month we were talking about end of year data and NWEA. They will talk about things like that come out of PLCs or out of their team planning too because then all those people also do some sort of team planning whether it is IB, Literacy or math or SPED people. So everybody brings items for the agenda out of meetings with the teams like here comes the things we are seeing or the questions I got or people do not understand this. #0:4:8.1#

Me: What do you think about your collaborative process that you have established? What is most critical about your process that you think impacts student achievement the most? #0:4:37.5#

P3: I think the cycle that happens that is constant cycle every single month of the same thing that happens so all the people on the CLT are planning with people so they are helping them think through what is important and looking through pacing guides and standards. So planning and then pushing into classrooms and seeing it come to fruition and play

Curriculum Leadership Team facilitates or oversees grade level teams and reports back to principal monthly – sometimes more. Principal also serves as a facilitator or oversees the fourth grade.

PLCs involve lots of coaching support and intentional lesson planning in math and

out. Have PLCs with them next or planning with them again and then talking about what happened in giving feedback or they will give individual teachers feedback. Using that feedback again when it comes to planning. So same thing with PLCs so you watch the planning of what was going to happen, then in the PLC you talked about assessments for where kids were and so we use that for planning again so it is that cycle that continues. It is having FaceTime and giving instructional support and feedback from instructional coaches including our SPED folks that is differentiation for special needs. #0:6:16.5#

Me: Tell me about a time when a team was really successful with this cycle that immediately comes to mind. A time that you wanted to replicate with other teams. #0:6:48.9#

P3: I can't name one specific meeting or planning session, but when meeting with my CLT and having them talk about third grade. It is a high functioning team and they have taken ownership of that planning like here is what we need to do they. They are having a discussion and the coaches are in their for support - not to really facilitate as sometimes the team doesn't even need the support of the CLT. They also have a really targeted use of the support they have so when the literacy and math support comes in as well as SPED they are utilizing it at a high level. Then we see the results of it because they consistently have our highest achievement on any assessment you give. #0:7:56.6#

Me: What do you attribute to this team's success - how did they become high functioning? #0:8:5.2#

P3: Its about having the right people on the team. They have high functioning people on the team but I will say that two of the people actually only one of the people would I have told you was a rock star so they have a great leader who is strong and who is committed and who is extremely professional and highly respected by their colleagues. The other teammates aren't as great as teachers but they have a strong will to be great and do care about kids and this process. They get results because they function well together. They listen and take feedback from their support. They use it and so they are getting amazing results year after year. #0:9:4.7#

Me: Tell me about the opposite of that what about the resistant teacher - tell me about this teacher or what does this teacher sound like during a PLC and then what do you do about that? #0:9:24.0#

P3: The resistant teacher came from another school and she is in fourth grade and I say resistant honestly she's a good teacher and she wants to do well but she's negative and she's not reflective. She takes everything

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reading. Coaches support targeted teachers for six weeks at a time and sometimes more. This is based on data sometimes and others it is based on observation data.

A highly successful team is comprised of highly functioning professionals who are open, receptive, risk-takers, use support for specific purpose and focused on student achievement. Coaches nor admin need to do much other than offer occasional questioning or support.

A resistant teacher looks at this direct coaching support in an evaluative

personally so she is difficult to co-teach as she is not very coachable. I do not have anyone who is resistant as I used to but they are no longer here. I do have people who are or appear to be not coachable and they don't take the support for what its intended to be and takes it personally that why are you coming? This teacher shared concerns with not wanting this support and it makes her nervous and anxious and will not teach as well with you in there. She and one other teacher might think that the coaches will tell the boss on them. I think most of our teachers if not 99% trust our coaches and are used to them being in their room. So that is the struggle that we have. We can't have average achievement here because our goal is 90% and she is not reaching that goal. #0:11:25.2#

Me: What do you do about that? #0:11:27.4#

P3: I will probably consider moving her to second grade to see if the younger grades will be better for her. Although I am not sure if she doesn't understand what she should be teaching and how but she is not getting the results for whatever reason. The only thing that we can think of is that her expectations are not as high as they need to be. She does too much hand holding with kids. I do think kids are learning in her room or she wouldn't be getting decent evaluations and so we are going to try her in second grade and think that maybe because she's been in a higher grade that maybe she will come in with higher expectations. So we are going to try this to see and maybe she will feel more successful there and not feel so threatened. #0:12:22.4#

Me: That answers our second questions -How do you use your plc process to support a teacher who is struggling? #0:13:1.5#

P3: So the PLC process which I will call the PLC process which includes planning with coaches so because they are talking about strategies so we use that process to help with more commonality and decreases variation. I don't see teachers doing different things in classes as it is very similar. Teams and our coaches do share strategies and these teachers are able to use these plans. Teachers struggling with instruction always have Kim or Kelli in their room (coaches) on a six week rotation. Sometimes they will stay longer or shorter based on how well the teacher is responding to the gradual release of support. I will typically have these people on my evaluation so I can spend more time in their room and give them more feedback as well particularly about using the support they have. #0:15:17.8#

Me: What advice would you give to a novice principal with regards to accountability policy in its current state and PLC development? #0:15:35.3#

manner and is not open or trusting of the process. These teachers sometimes get moved to different grade levels or to different teams to figure out if a change might help them.

P3: My advice is that you have to get everybody on board. You have to have a system in place and it has to be a value in your school so you have to get everybody on board to understand that this is what we value and this is what has to happen in order to maintain or increase student achievement that we have going on. If you just send a team out to plan on their own - they'll plan and they'll do some decent work and other teams will think - well we planned and we have some lessons and activities and nobody is growing though unless you have some rock stars on a team who are like a coach but that is pretty unusual. I think you have to have a system in place where everyone is on board so that there is a clear understanding of what is valued and what makes it work for us because if you don't then it is a problem. It takes years - it took me five years to get where we needed to be just to even start making growth and I am in year 8 now and we are still - it is still a constant challenge.

Have a vision and a system to support it. Make sure the right people are on board and the expectations are communicated with clarity and support is given to assist with "getting on board". It takes time and is always a challenge even with 8 years experience. It took her 5 just to get to where they could start driving home the system.

Sean G. Taylor

Education:

Doctorate in Educational Leadership, Indiana University, Bloomington, IN, August 2017
Major: Ed.D Executive in Educational Leadership

Master in School Administration, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, Chapel Hill, NC, May 2008
Major: Educational Leadership
Licensure: Proficient Practitioner, K-12 Administration

Bachelor of Science, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 2003
Major: Elementary Education
Concentration Area: Language Arts
Licensure: Proficient Practitioner, K-6, 6-9 English/Language Arts

School Leadership Experience:

Principal, Eastwood Middle School, MSD of Washington Township, 2016-
- ✓ Co-facilitated quarterly community service efforts where over 800 students logged nearly 2,000 hours of volunteer hours to better support our community.
- ✓ Executed a targeted core instructional audit and data team review process focusing on practices that align with our school improvement plan leading to increased proficiency in Math and English Language Arts.

Principal, Fox Hill Elementary School, MSD of Washington Township, 2011-2016
- ✓ School Letter Grade Growth from D to B from 2011 to 2013 in school consisting of approximately 800 students K-5; approx. 80% of students qualify for free and reduced lunch and breakfast with over 175 non-native English-speaking students.
- ✓ Co-facilitated the implementation of the International Baccalaureate Framework and achieved full authorization as an *IB World School* in 2013.
- ✓ Executed a targeted core instructional audit and responsive professional development process built into our school improvement plan.
- ✓ Created FH Behavior Plan aligned with RTI to reduce suspensions from 111 to 44 within three years with an increase in pro-social skills training and establishing brain-based strategy instruction.
- ✓ Cultivated multiple community partnerships including Playworks and St. Lukes United Methodist Church that provided additional academic and social-emotional mentoring support for students. School was featured on PBS Newshour for our partnership with Playworks.

Assistant Principal, Allisonville Elementary School, MSD of Washington Township, 2009 – 2011, **National Title I Distinguished School in 2011**

- ✓ Co-created and implemented a Response to Intervention System designed to meet the growing needs of a Title I School consisting of 730 students
- ✓ Served as school's instructional coordinator responsible for guiding unit planning using Backward Design and developing Inquiry-based learning environments.

Assistant Principal, Cherry Tree Elementary School, Carmel-Clay Schools, 2008-2009
- ✓ Assisted in creating and leading the CTE staff through a series of professional developments charged with transforming our dual-model school into a unified single-model infrastructure by reestablishing our mission, vision, core beliefs, and examining best practices per request of our superintendent.

School Improvement Committee, Guy B. Phillips Middle School, Chapel Hill, NC   2005-2006
- ✓ Researched and examined site-based systems and surveyed stakeholders concerning administrative policies and practices for the purposes of designing a more effective School Improvement Plan

Team Leader, Neal Middle School, Durham Public Schools, Durham, NC Grade 6,   2003-2004
- ✓ Designed and facilitated collaboration amongst grade-level team in order to improve student performance through creation of common, interdisciplinary formative assessments.

District Leadership Experience:

District Facilities Review Committee, MSD of Washington Township, 2015-
- ✓ Served with various community stakeholders who conducted a thorough needs-assessment of district facility and staffing needs in creation of our district strategic plan and preparation for a referendum.

District Wellness and Insurance Review Committee, MSD of Washington Township, 2014 –
- ✓ Reviewed, revised and co-created wellness initiatives to improve the climate and health of the workforce in Washington Township

District Safety Committee, MSD of Washington Township, 2014-
- ✓ Collaborated with District Security Coordinator and IMPD to establish common school emergency plan template and relocation processes.

District RTI Committee, MSD of Washington Township, 2009 –
- ✓ Designed and implemented a district-wide plan to ensure the learning progress of all students in collaboration with directors, principals, Title I coordinators and school psychologists.

Teaching Experience:

Mathematics and Writing Teacher, Cherry Tree Elementary School, Carmel-Clay Schools, Carmel, IN, Grade 5, 2008- 2009

✓ In fulfillment of my .5 Administrator and .5 Teacher Contract with Carmel-Clay Schools, I designed and delivered mathematics and writing instruction.

Language Arts Teacher, Guy B. Phillips Middle School, Chapel Hill-Carrboro City Schools, Chapel Hill, NC, Grade 8, 2004-2006
  ✓ Asked to teach Language Arts and Social Studies for the district's L.E.A.P. program consisting of highly gifted eighth grade students of Chapel Hill

Language Arts Teacher, Neal Middle School, Durham Public Schools, Durham, NC, Grade 6, 2003-2004
  ✓ Created effective management and instructional strategies to enable high population of at-risk students a positive, safe learning environment

Professional Development:

-Co-Planned & Presented-	-Attended-
Classroom Ecology &Brain-based Instruction by Dr. Lori Desautels and Mr. Michael Mcknight (2015)	*IB Americas* Conference (2015)
7 *Habits of Highly Effective Team*s by Dufour & Eaker, PLC Summit (2014)	*Responsive Classroom* (2013)
Positive Behavior Implementation Support System (2009-11)	*What Really Matters in Writing b*y Pat Cunningham (2010)
A Framework for School Improvement by Charlotte Danielson (2008-2009)	*Reaching All Learners – Making Differentiation Work* by Bertie Kingore (2009)
Judicious Review of Multi-Tier Early Intervening Service Model (RTI) at the Elementary Level by Mark R. Shinn (2009)	*High Poverty Schooling in America: Lessons in Second-Class Citizenship* (2007)
Facilitative Leadership: Tapping the Power of Participation by Interaction Associates (2007)	Willow Creek Leadership Summit (2006 & 2007)

~References Available Upon Request