

ABSTRACT OF CAPSTONE

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The Graduate School
Morehead State University

June 28, 2014

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOL CULTURE ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT

Abstract of capstone

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the
College of Education
At Morehead State University

By

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Morehead, Kentucky

Committee Chair: Dr. Sam Wright, Associate Professor

Morehead, Kentucky

June 28, 2014

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This Capstone project was conducted in the Montgomery County School District located in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. The educators that participated in this study taught in grades primary through the eighth grade. The major focus of the study is to determine the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those who participated in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) initiative within three elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school in a rural district. Following this question are three guiding questions that help to answer the major research question: In what ways did participating in a Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment? Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and improving school culture? Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

The participants in this study were from five of the schools located within the Montgomery School District. Those schools involved were Camargo Elementary (N=37), Mapleton Elementary (N=44), Mount Sterling Elementary (43), Montgomery County Intermediate School (N=37), and McNabb Middle School (N=35) for a total number of 196 participants.

KEYWORDS: Professional Learning Communities, Culture, Achievement, Empowerment, Constructs

Candidate Signature

Date

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CAPSTONE

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this to my two amazing parents, Vernon and Freda Gross. I cannot express to them enough the love and appreciation that I have for them. From an early age they instilled strong Christian values and what it means to be a part of a loving home. Being married for almost 40 years is a milestone that is seldom heard of today. I want to thank you for such an amazing childhood and I hope that one day I can be half the parents to my kid(s) that you were to me. Thank you for everything and I love you.

I would also like to dedicate this my beautiful and loving wife, Kirsten Gross. With your love and support I was able to complete this research project. Often times I wondered if I would ever be able to complete this project, but with your patience and encouragement you help give me the strength that I needed to complete. I am so fortunate to be able to call you my wife and the love and admiration that I have for you is endless.

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I would like to thank Dr. Joshua E. Powell, Superintendent of the Montgomery County School System. Before I met him my only experience was at one middle school. With his guidance and belief in me to succeed he gave me the confidence to step out of my comfort zone and take the role of a principal. I would also like to thank Dr. Powell for allowing me the opportunity to do research in the Montgomery County School District.

I would like to thank Allison Hubbard, District Assessment Coordinator, for the Montgomery County School System, for helping me with the distribution and calculations of the data collected during my research.

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Chapter 1: Introduction/Executive Summary

The vision statement of the Montgomery County School District is to lead all of Kentucky's children by achieving Top 10 in everything that they do. Their district mission statement is to serve as a model by creating and sustaining a top-notch comprehensive, educational program that serves to promote public schools as the best option for our children and future (J. Powell, www.montgomery.kyschools.us, 2012).

Dr. Joshua E. Powell, Superintendent of The Montgomery County School District believes that the school system's commitment to education is mitigated by innovation, recognizing educators as professionals, and the belief that all kids can learn at high levels (J. Powell, www.montgomery.kyschools.us , 2012).

Since the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act also known as KERA, implemented in the late 1980's and the early 1990's, Kentucky's public school systems have been held more accountable for student achievement. Student achievement by some individuals or educators might be considered in the form of wins or losses in extra-curricular activities, how many students participated in the performing arts, how many students made the honor roll, community involvement, or the overall positive school culture. While the activities or feelings mentioned above are considered by some a measure of success, the Commonwealth of Kentucky places a lot of value on the end of the year KPREP assessment. Once these tests have been administered and graded, each school district along with the individual school, is given a classification of Needs Improvement, Proficient, or Distinguished. These classifications gauge the process or lack thereof to the school districts and individual

schools. Not only are the classifications given, but the districts and schools are rated and compared to the others across the Commonwealth of Kentucky.

The focus of the Montgomery County administration, school councils, and professional staff is on establishing a climate conducive to effective teaching and learning. Multiple strategies, designed to create “order” have been implemented. Strategies range from providing constant supervision to implementing school-wide expectations for behavior. Montgomery County students are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that will result in success for both themselves and their peers. Instructionally, teachers focus on effective, core content related instructional and assessment strategies while efficiently using all available instructional time (J. Powell, www.montgomery.kyschools.us, 2012).

Try to imagine knowing every student and trying to meet the needs of each one. Many students go through grades K-12 sliding by and being passed on the next grade and teacher without ever fundamentally grasping the academic and social concepts of what is needed to prepare them to be successful. A definition of being successful for this case would mean that each child, at every grade level, is mastering the concepts needed to prepare him or her to move on to the next level academically while also preparing him or her to function in society with the appropriate social qualities needed to be a productive citizen.

In the Montgomery County School District, Professional Learning Communities have become an essential component of school reform and improvement. Professional Learning Communities are comprised of teachers and

administrators who come together to compile and analyze data to monitor student progress and achievement. The purpose of this study is to analyze the progress of Professional Learning Communities at three elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school within the Montgomery County School District, located in Mount Sterling, Kentucky. Educators of these five schools who participated in Professional Learning Communities have been working to establish schedules, data tools, and implementation policies to accelerate professional growth and student achievement for two years. The study examines information provided by core content level teachers and administrators through a survey. The information analyzed in this study was essential in establishing the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities in professional growth and student achievement. The study concluded by analyzing data on whether the implementation of Professional Learning Communities improved student achievement and teacher empowerment within the Montgomery County School District. The data were collected in the form of a survey that measured three different constructs with the implementation of Professional Learning Communities.

The five schools in this study implemented Professional Learning Communities for the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 school years. The data for this study were made available by educators who completed surveys which were generated on non-specific grade level information. The constructs that were analyzed using the Professional Learning Communities survey were divided into three sections: 1.0- Critical Elements, 2.0- Human Resources, and 3.0 Structural. Certified educators

who taught either core or elective classes were asked to participate. The core content classes included various reading/language arts, math, science, and social studies classes. Educators who taught elective classes included, but were not limited to music, art, physical education, health, drama, and business classes. Professional growth, which can vary by individual teachers and student achievement, can be calculated by analyzing KPREP test data. Possible sources of error in the study include various levels of implementation of Professional Learning Communities throughout the Montgomery County School District. In addition, the administration at various levels will alter the impact of the Professional Learning Communities.

The ultimate purpose of school districts should be to meet the needs of all its students. This is a tremendous task since a majority of school districts have thousands of students. As mentioned previously, a school system is established to meet the needs of its students. How are the needs of each student being met? What factors play a role in meeting the needs of the individual students? Schools have been established for hundreds of years. While there have been many changes structurally with the buildings, transportation, and books, what changes have been made internally? It has been said that if you took a teacher from the 18th century and placed them in a school classroom today they would see little disparity (Dufour & Eaker, 1998). The process of educating students has been around hundreds of years, but what changes have been implemented to reach all students? Ongoing assessments of student data including state tests, dropout rates, successful entrance into colleges, technical schools, or job placement have continually shown that while the public

school systems are having some successes, they are still not meeting the needs of all their students.

In order to meet the needs of all students, there is a need for continuous improvement. Even the schools that are considered “good” need to improve so that they can become “great.” The philosophical focus of a PLC is on continuous improvement, which can be established by improving teacher well-being and student achievement. The main focus of PLC’s is to increase professional knowledge with staff along with enhancing and improving student learning. Furthermore, PLC’s help embed the concept of continuous improvement within the school culture in an effort to ensure that all students succeed.

Professional Learning Communities allow for teachers to become empowered. Teacher empowerment is defined here as a teacher’s ability to assume control of different situations encountered or initiated individually throughout a school year or individual teaching career. Teacher empowerment plays a vital role in determining how teachers feel about themselves and how they fit in with their surroundings. Their impact on student achievement is a reflection of their self-efficacy in addition to their working conditions, job satisfaction, professional knowledge, acceptance and collaboration with co-workers.

The education system has the responsibility of educating all of the students who enter its respective system. In order for this process to be effective, the educator and the instruction have to be at their best. If one part doesn’t work effectively then the true function and purpose of the system is broken. Every decision that is made

within the system has an impact on the outcome of a student's learning possibility, regardless of whether or not that impact is positive or negative. The role of a school should be an inviting environment in which the educators are driven to see that every student succeeds. The true art form of the education process is a selfless act in which educators put their wants and desires aside and act upon the decisions that will best benefit all students. This act of selflessness is a determinant in the ability to ensure that we meet the needs of all students. What happens when our desires and needs are brought to the forefront and we let the decisions that are best for students be put aside? Professional Learning Communities set forth the structure that allows for educators across the different curriculums to come together for a common purpose. When educators come together to discuss their instructional practices and to discuss the needs of their individual students, it is then that the process of educating every student to the fullest extent becomes a reality. By coming together, new ideas are formulated on how to improve instruction. It also incorporates a sense of community that enables the educators to have a belief that they are not alone and by working together they can accomplish their main goal: to educate every student.

The Montgomery County School District is located in Montgomery County, Kentucky. The district is centrally located within the Commonwealth of Kentucky. The district serves roughly 5000 students, has 800 employees, is comprised of seven schools, and has an operating budget of nearly sixty million dollars, and is considered a medium to small sized school district. For the Montgomery County School District to meet the challenge of serving each individual student, the district has implemented

PLC's as a number one priority to help meet the need of educating every student within the district. Depending on whom you ask, the literature on PLC's can have many different meanings. As an example, Felner (2007) explains what is essential to the label of PLC's is that PLC's make clear that the central focus across efforts is the creation of conditions that engage and support student support learning.

The goal of the Professional Learning Community initiative within the Montgomery County School District is to ensure that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills necessary to make successful transitions to college or other professional careers. The seven schools within the Montgomery County School District have developed their own individual plans and strategies united under these district goals:

- **Rigor:** Improve student achievement and graduation rates.
- **Relevance:** Equip students with the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in post-secondary education and careers.
- **Relationships:** Provide all students with an environment in which teachers and other adults know the needs, interest, and aspirations of each student.
- **Capacity-Building:** Develop district and school level faculty and staff capacity to increase rigor, relevance, and relationships, and to design instruction based on student data.

Professional Learning Communities serve as a model for aiding school districts and schools to reach their ultimate goal and that goal is to ensure that every student

receives the best education. The implementation of PLC's allows for a wide array of input from stakeholders to share the common vision of the school district. The input from stakeholders not only includes classroom educators, but it also includes school administrators, and Central Office personnel.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

Professional Learning Communities have been researched within schools throughout the nation. A summary of research supports the vital impact of professional growth and student achievement by successful implementation of Professional Learning Communities in schools. The communities must implement rules, procedures, and processes in their community groups to ensure that they stay focused on their central purpose. This study includes an analysis of the implementation of a Professional Learning Community in five schools within the Montgomery County School District. The two year implementation process included problems with scheduling, data gathering, and review of data at three elementary schools, one intermediate school and one middle school. The study examined the information needed to evaluate the five schools' effectiveness on how they were meeting the needs of all of their respective students.

Professional Learning Communities (PLC's) are comprised of teachers and administrators who come together to compile and analyze data to monitor student progress and achievement. With the student data, the educators are then able to make the appropriate decisions needed to ensure that every student is reaching his or her fullest potential. School systems across the nation are preparing for major changes and Kentucky is no exception.

One of those changes is the evolution of staff communication concerning students and instruction through the use of Professional Learning Communities or PLCs. Research has been completed and

methods of inclusion have been and are being developed to implement this new wave that is sweeping across the world of education. A Professional Learning Community is an infrastructure that supports and nurtures continuous instructional effectiveness. It is not an endeavor separate from the total improvement effort, but rather a means to achieve high levels of student learning. (Cowen, 2009, p.1)

Furthermore, DuFour (2003) states, “Professional Learning Communities are on the brink of engaging into a new phenomenon for education, not only for student achievement but for teachers in the area of professional growth” (p. 6).

Educators are intelligent individuals with a vast knowledge of their content. What sometimes hinders their effectiveness is the lack of reflection and dialogue as a community, rather than on an individual scope. It is always either to confront issues and obstacles as group than it is as one separate entity. Thus, Professional Learning Communities enables educators to encounter the hurdles that exist at the forefront as a team rather than as one separate individual. “These community meetings, however, do not totally eliminate problems and obstacles, but they are an effort to build shared knowledge and to arrive at consensus in an effort to guide coalition for the initiative” (DuFour, 1998, p. 38).

Whether we are talking about learning organizations or professional learning communities, we are discussing structures, tools, and methods to improve schools in an ever increasing complex world. Dufour, Eaker (1998) and Senge et al (2012) maintain that schools are both still trapped within the shortcomings of the industrial

age beliefs about learning and also having to cope with the tremendous amount of change in today's society. They further assert that schools can meet the changing needs of society and improve by becoming learning organizations.

Senge et al. (2012) stated that Professional Learning Communities are an instrument for facilitating enhanced learning, teaching, and leadership capacity at all levels of the education system. When educational leaders become determined and purposeful about improving student learning, they seek first to agree on the means to this end. The means or pathway as the literature suggests is Professional Learning Communities.

In particular, Professional Learning Communities had an enduring focus on student learning (Hord, 1997). The very essence of a learning community was a focus on and a commitment to the learning of each student. DuFour et al. (2003) stated, "When a school or district functions as a PLC, educators within the organization embrace high levels of learning for all students as both the reason the organization exists and the fundamental responsibility of those who work within it" (DuFour, p. 3). Members of a PLC worked together to determine how each member of the community would help the organization reach its goal.

We live in a time of profound, swift, and continuing change- demographic, economic, technological, and global. Demographically America is aging, facing a tidal wave of retirements, changing color, taking on new immigrants from abroad, and moving from cities to suburbs and from the north and east to the Sunbelt, with an attendant

movement from blue to red politics. Economically, the country is shifting from an industrial to a knowledge based economy. In the transition, low-education jobs and entire industries are changing.

(DuFour, 1998, p. 46)

Our society as a whole is currently and constantly changing. It used to be that students could graduate from high school with the promise that once they graduated that they would have the skills and tools necessary to land a well-paying job in which they would be able to provide for their families and after 30 to 35 years of service be able to retire and enjoy their remaining lives that they would have along with a comfortable retirement plan. What is even more astonishing is that a high school student that dropped out at an early age could pretty much leave school early with the promise of finding a job that would last them an entire career. By no means is this the real world of today.

In today's society we have an ever changing economy and the demands for these career paths are at an all-time high. The work force of today requires bright, well educated, and highly skilled workers for the individual positions or job openings. What is even more pressing is that the competition for these jobs has expanded globally. This is a major paradigm shift. No longer is the competition for jobs just within the boundaries of a state or the United States, but the competition for the individual jobs has expanded globally to different countries to individuals that are now competing with the locals for that coveted position. The thought once was about who would get the job, me or my neighbor, but that train of thought has long fallen by

the wayside. It is now individuals from different countries fighting for that covenant position. With the major paradigm shift, what are the public education systems doing to help refine the students that walk through and graduate each year? It is still hard to believe that we are one of the only countries that allow students to drop out of school early before they graduate. Why do we even allow this to be an option? As educators we know that in order for a student to have success they have to have an education, but why do we continue to fail our students by allowing them to drop out of school once they reach a certain age?

These are the new realities operating in our schools. In an information economy in which low-level manufacturing jobs are moving abroad, there is no longer a place for high school dropouts, traditionally regarded as a cost of doing business (Lieberman, 1999). The currency of schooling is shifting from teaching to learning (Lieberman, 1999). This statement is so powerful. No longer is it effective for a teacher to stand in front of a classroom and spill out facts. In today's school, the shift has to be on student centered learning. Students today learn different than students that were in the classrooms twenty to thirty years ago. There are so many tools for students to use to gather information. We as educators have to find the means necessary to implement these tools so that our students stay engaged and we provide them with the proper technology resources so they are prepared for what the ever-changing workforce needs. For the most part, we are somewhat behind on this reform with educating students. Not only is the workforce ever changing, but the advances in technology are constantly changing and the funding needed for these

resources is sometimes astronomical. As educators, we do need to adapt to the ways that students are learning so that they do have the skills and the know how to have a competitive advantage. The “old school” ways of teaching are no longer providing justice to the students.

The teachers in a professional learning community collaboratively clarify intended learning outcomes of curricular units, monitor each student’s learning on a regular and timely basis, provide a school wide system of interventions that ensure student’s receive additional time and support for learning when they struggle, and extend and enrich learning when students have already mastered the intended outcomes.

There is no ambiguity or hedging regarding this commitment to learning.

Whereas many schools operate as if their primary purpose is to ensure that children are taught, PLC’s are dedicated to the idea that their organization exists to ensure that all students learn. (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 3)

Both Fullan (1993) and Senge et al. (2000) report that the creation and implementation of Professional Learning Communities is crucial to the future success of organizations facing the problem of change. DuFour and Eaker (1998) describes the characteristics of a professional learning community to be: 1) shared mission, vision, and values, 2) collective inquiry, 3) collaborative teams, 4) action orientation and experimentation, 5) continuous improvement, and 6) results orientation. DuFour sees schools as needing continuous rejuvenation to meet the needs of a changing

society through building an evolutionary school. Their evolutionary school philosophy is built upon the principles of collective inquiry.

As a practicing superintendent of schools, Richard DuFour provides a view from a real-world working model of a Professional Learning Community. Fullan (2001) relates to professional learning communities in terms of change problems. Furthermore, the scholar advocates that just the establishment of a professional learning community is not enough. A professional learning community must also be productive and in alignment with a moral purpose to build knowledge and coherence.

Senge et al. (2000) provides an in-depth review of learning organizations. The scholar examines learning organizations through the lenses of five disciplines: personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, team learning, and systems thinking. Lieberman (1999, p.47) writes, “ the concept of professional community is one of the most powerful ideas affecting research and practice in staff development in the last decade.” Lieberman relates to professional learning communities in terms of networks. Joyce and Showers (2002) address professional learning communities as related to staff development and school improvement. In particular, establishing a self-renewing environment is of great importance.

According to Dufour (2009) research and study concerning Professional Learning Communities began approximately twenty years ago. At that point in time, the term “Professional Learning Communities” had not been coined but it viewed as creating communities of continuous inquiry and improvement. Field based research has been conducted in order to assess its necessity and validity concerning improved

student achievement. Partners in the education field identified eighteen proficiencies they thought would be required to undertake this work and created modules to support the proficiencies' development.

With the implementation of Professional Learning Communities their uniqueness and structure have changed over time. What is more captivating is that they continue to change. To have a one-size-fit all model would do the implementation of Professional Learning Communities a disservice. While the whole notion is to ensure that every student is successful, PLC's have to be designed around the individuality of each school. The way that PLC's are implemented in one school might not be suitable to how they are implemented in another. The members could vary, the time of the day, and how often.

Professional Learning Communities are to be a tool that helps drive what should be the main focus of each school and district and that is to increase student achievement. When the main focus of the schools within the district is to increase student achievement, it has to be a continuous effort from all stakeholders. The stakeholders include school administrators, teachers, and Central Office personnel. By combining efforts and ideas on a common goal then the main goal of student achievement is more likely to be accomplished. The stakeholders involved come together as one to help create a learning environment that is conducive to learning. Together they look at the needs of their respective students and begin to develop a plan of action that will help take the students that they serve to greater heights.

Most of the literature written about professional learning communities focuses and centers on characteristics or dimensions of a Professional Learning Community and its implementation. However, when you look at it, becoming a Professional Learning Community is not something a faculty engages in for a year or two, only to abandon before moving on to a new initiative. Principals recognize that becoming a Professional Learning Community cannot be reduced to a recipe or a prescriptive set of activities. As Andy Hargreaves observed, “Becoming a Professional Learning Community creates an ethos that permeates a school. Simply put, becoming a Professional Learning Community is not something you do; it is something you are” (p. 47).

There is much knowledge to be learned concerning professional learning communities, and as the new wave of reform rolls over not only in Kentucky but our nation, it is definitely a technique that is a hot topic. Our information base and knowledge of Professional Learning Communities should increase as these become implemented within each of our own districts and schools. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities will impact teachers and administrators and make a positive progression toward school improvement, professional growth and student achievement.

Dufour (2009) states,

Building Professional Learning Communities should not be limited to just individual schools; it should also encompass the district school system.

Those conditions should include: each school demonstrating high levels of

learning for all students; teachers must be organized into teams and given time to collaborate; teams providing students with guaranteed and viable curriculum for every course and grade level, must develop frequent and varied common assessments, and use the evidence of students learning to fuel the continuous improvement of both the team and each of its members. The school must create a system of intervention that provide students with additional time and support when they experience difficulty in their learning; and they must have a plan for extending and enriching the learning of students who are proficient, a plan that gives more students greater access to more challenging curriculum and the support to ensure their success in that curriculum (p.65).

Thompson, Gregg, and Niska (2004) believe, “The concept of a PLC is based on a premise from the business sector regarding the capacity of organizations to learn. Modified to fit the world of education, the concept of a learning organization became that of a learning community that would strive to develop collaborative work cultures for teachers” (p. 7). The evolution of Professional Learning Communities is based on two assumptions. First, “it is assumed that knowledge is situated in the day-to-day lived experiences of teachers and best understood through critical reflection with others who share the same experience” (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003, p.15). Thus, teachers have their own individual experiences and time to reflect. Professional Learning Communities push teachers to engage in reflection that extends beyond their own individual experiences and instead enters a higher level of reflection by

including the unique thoughts and experiences of their peers. Second, “it is assumed that actively engaging teachers in PLCs will increase their professional knowledge and enhance student learning” (Buysse, Sparkman, & Wesley, 2003). From experience, we all know that learning is an ongoing and collaborative process. Essentially, we can only learn more from a group than we can from our own individual self.

Professional Learning Communities have been viewed as desirable and valuable for those working in schools in regards to optimizing teacher effectiveness and student outcomes. Additionally, “collaborative learning that arises from the sharing of professional experiences appears to enhance critical inquiry and reflective analysis” (Minnett p. 28). Basile, Olson, and Nathenson-Majia (2003) agree that new insights, knowledge, perspectives and viewpoints could be acquired through participation in such communities (Basile, Olson, and Nathenson-Majia, 2003). This is exactly why I have elsewhere assumed that collaborative learning “could be beneficial to all teachers involved, but if time is specifically allotted to the creation of such learning communities, the level and quality of learning could be increased” (Attard, 2006, p. 209). It is this held-assumption that prompted me to embark on such a project, where the aim is to better understand how teacher learning and reflective awareness can be promoted through PLCs while identifying the situations that best promote professional development within PLCs. This resonates with Calderwood’s (2003) statement that, “ If the presence of community is a positive force, it may seem tempting to invent a way to inoculate schools with a sense of community – and to

inject them with the conditions within which community might be sustained”

(Calderwood, 2003, p. 1).

Individual teacher implementation levels and personal perceptions of Professional Learning Communities could vary. In addition, administrators may interpret various levels of implementation by individual teachers and the level of success among the students could also be left to subjectivity. The schools mentioned earlier will be essential to the data collection needed for this study.

Professional Learning Communities foster a sense of family within an organization. All stakeholders within the organization hold a belief that together the common goals set within the structure of the organization can and will be achieved. Professional Learning Communities tear down the walls of self-seclusion. Some say that the walls of separation are torn down to force once separate organizations to come together as one. With the walls of separation being torn down, it is believed that a much stronger force can come together to accomplish the goals within the organization.

From the beginning of early education from the one room school house to the current position of education teaching has been a lonely career. Individual teachers enter their rooms, shut the doors, and are alone in solitude to teach the students who entered their respective classrooms. The way that children were taught thrived on a method supported by one way of thinking. With the implementation of Professional Learning Communities, teachers now open their once-closed doors to new innovative ideas on how to ensure that all of their students are being reached with new ideas and

innovating strategies. Teaching becomes alive. Effective school restructuring requires teacher motivation and action to transform knowledge about change into reality (Hord, 2004).

Professional Learning Communities implemented correctly produce positive results for both staff and students. For staff, being part of a Professional Learning Community reduces teacher isolation, increases commitment to the mission and goals of the school, creates shared responsibility for the total development of students, creates powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice, and enhances understanding of course content and teacher roles (Hord, 2004). Students also benefit from Professional Learning Communities by having teachers collaborate to improve instructional strategies and techniques that help engage the students into the daily lesson (Hord, 2004). Teaching is an art and a science; it can never be perfected because it is ever changing and always can be improved. In order to improve collaboration and reflection must coexist within the educational structure. For without collaboration and reflection we would be relying on our own understanding rather than the collective understanding within the professional community.

Professional Learning Communities are only as strong as the individuals within the organization. Professional Learning Communities require that all stakeholders have to be on board and buy in to the notion that all of the professionals within the group are meeting to focus on the goals of the school or organization. The trouble lies with teachers being humans. With this being said, it is sometimes

difficult to get all members on the same page. If there is a rift between group members, it causes a demise of the purpose of the group. Today we are far more technically advanced, have more freedoms than ever before, but yet we cannot perceive that we are all created equal. For a company to succeed and get the outcomes expected then the individuals working within the organization need to feel equal and be treated as equals. Organizational Justice is a team concept in which everyone has a vital role to play. Within the organization members desire to be treated fairly, with respect, and they want their voice to be heard. No matter what role the employee plays within the daily process of the organization it is important that they are respected and treated fairly.

The culture of an organization often has a direct impact on the organization's success or lack of success. A toxic culture can and does have a devastating impact on an organization. According to Webster, "the definition of culture is the customary beliefs, social forms, and material traits of a racial, religious, or social group; also the characteristic features of everyday existence" (as diversions or a way of life that are shared by people in a place or time). The one area of leadership that is lacking across the board in our culture is leadership with a vision for the organization.

Culture, within an organization, is the accumulation of the leaders' decisions that have been implemented. It might seem as though it is unfair to place blame on one individual for the decline or fall of an organization, but the leader usually has the power and authority to implement decisions that need to be made. Leaders that lack a vision for the organization allow for individuals and ideas to become stagnant,

therefore, causing the organization to eventually fall. Visionary leaders set forth the path for the organization to follow. They implement the changes necessary along with providing the tools and resources to help the people within the organization succeed.

Building this equality culture within the organization will come from the top of the organization and trickle its way down throughout the organization. This concept has to be established and followed through by the organizations highest ranking members so that precedence is set to ensure all employees are treated as equals. Professional Learning Communities have to be structured and the individuals have to be nurtured so that they see the big picture of reaching the organization's goals.

Some schools are failing students. Even the schools that are considered "good" need to improve so that they can become "great". The philosophical focus of a PLC is on continuous improvement, which can be established by improving teacher well-being and student achievement. The implementation of PLCs aims to increase professional knowledge and enhance student learning. Furthermore, PLCs help embed the concept of continuous improvement within the school culture in an effort to ensure that all students succeed.

The education system has the charge of educating all of the students that enter its respective system. In order for this process to be effective, all of the working parts have to be working properly. If one part doesn't work effectively then the true function and purpose of the system is broken. When reflecting on the education

process, it is sometimes overwhelming to recognize the responsibility of educating every student. Every decision that is made within the system has an impact on the outcome of a student's learning possibility, regardless of whether or not that impact is positive or negative. The role of a school should be an inviting environment in which the adults are driven to see that every student succeeds.

The true art form of the education process is a selfless act in which we should put our wants and desires aside and act upon the decisions that will best benefit all students. This act of selflessness is a determinant in the ability to ensure that we meet the needs of all students. What happens when our desires and needs are brought to the forefront and we let the decisions that are best for students be put aside?

The dynamics that go into meeting the needs of the students should flow smoothly, but when you have just one part that is not working properly then the machine is no longer able to function as designed. When a machine is broken you can still be fooled by the outside appearance, but it is when you take a look inside that you begin to notice the broken components. It doesn't take long to notice that the machine is incapable of performing its task for which it was designed. This is the same in regards to the culture of an organization. One can be fooled by the outside appearance, but it doesn't take too long to notice if there is a discrepancy by the inside performance.

Education is an ongoing and continual process. In order for education to reach its commitment to higher learning, change is inevitable. This philosophy of change applies to all levels of education. In Fullan's, *Eight Elements of*

Sustainability, number two of Fullan's eight elements discusses "Commitment to Changing Context At All Levels". David Hargraves (2003) reminds us of Donald Schon's observation, more than thirty years ago, "We must... become adept to learning. We must be able not only to transform our institutions in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invest and develop institutions which are "learning systems," that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation" (Fullan, 2005, pg. 16).

Change cannot just happen at one-level. Change in education for the advancement of students, staff, and the local community needs to start at the top (Superintendent-Central Office) and spread throughout the entire system. More than likely if you look at the school districts where change initiatives are taking place, mandates are being started at the top and working their way throughout the entire school system. Changing whole systems means changing the entire context within which people work. Researchers are fond of observing that "Context is everything," usually in reference to why a particular innovation succeeded in one situation but not another. Well, if context is everything, we must directly focus on how it can be changed for the better. It is not as impossible as it sounds although it will take time and cumulative effort. "Contexts are the structure and cultures within which one work" (Fullan, 2001).

For change to happen and be sustainable there needs to be intelligent accountability and vertical relations; this is number four of *Fullan's Eight Elements of Sustainability*. "Sustainable societies must solve (hold in dynamic "tension") the

perennial change problem of how to get both local ownership (including capacity) and external accountability and get this in the entire system” (Fullan, 2001, pg. 19). In other words, it is essential that intelligent dialogue exists among teachers within their PLC in addition to the existence of intelligent dialogue between teachers and students. Teachers must work as a team with other teachers, but just as importantly, teachers must work as a team with their students. “Networks and other professional learning communities (lateral capacity building) do build in strong but not complete measure of accountability. As such communities interact around given problems they generate practices, shared commitment, and accountability to peers” (Fullan, 2001, pg. 20).

Fullan (2001) also states that “vertical relationships (state/district, district/school, etc.) must also be strengthened. One aspect of vertical relationships involves support and resources” (pg. 20). Whether a district is small or large, all parts of the district must be coherent and working together to achieve the same goal. In order for effective and systematic change to occur, all parts must act in accordance with one another. “Another critical reason why the whole system must be engaged and why vertical integration must harness horizontal creativity concerns the problem of over load, multiple innovations, and fragmentation or lack of coherence” (Fullan, 2001, pg. 20).

When a system is to change its current practices, there needs to be a driving force in the form of a competent leader. Archimedes said, “Give me a lever long enough and I can change the world” (Fullan, 2001, pg. 27). No matter what the

circumstances there has to be someone in the driver's seat giving direction to the changes that need to be implemented. Fullan (2001) stated,

For sustainability, that lever is leadership, leadership that operates very differently than is the case in the present, that is valued differently by societies seeking greater sustainability, and that helps produce other similar leaders to create a critical mass as mentioned earlier. The critical mass is the long lever of leadership. If a system is to be mobilized in the direction of sustainability, leadership at all levels must be the primary engine. (pg. 27).

Once a change agent has been implemented, it is critical to the success of the organization and the change process being implemented that it be evaluated to see if goals and expectations are being met. In the evolution of teaching and learning, we are still at the early stages. With development in cognitive science and related fields, we are beginning to see what this new work entails. One of the most high-yield strategies that has come on the scene is "assessment for learning" (Fullan, 2001, pg. 55). Assessment for learning refers to "any assessment for which the first priority is to serve the purpose of promoting students' learning" (Fullan, 2001, pg. 54). For schools to see growth in student performance assessment of the material being taught is vital to the school if it is going to improve.

Expecting different results by continuing the same practices is a recipe for failure. Initiating the change process sometimes is not the most difficult part; getting the individuals within the organization to follow often is the most daunting and challenging task. Fullan (1993) states that leaders need to step out of the norms going

on within the organization if change is to be expected. All of this would be impossible if a leader arrived at the doorstep and was expected to do so from scratch. It will work only if school leaders can find and interact with peers working to address the same adaptive problems; if school districts are “providing developmental experiences and ongoing support for principals and others and if large systems are designing strategies and investing resources intended to give leaders opportunities to develop their capacities to practice and consolidate system thinking in action” (pg. 62). Fullan (1993) also recognizes that opportunities for lateral and vertical capacity building through networks and partnerships must abound if we are to get and keep the critical mass of leaders to do this kind of work and to do so in a way that continually regenerates leadership for the future.

Human beings are creatures of habit and not change. Anytime that someone is forced to change, opposition to this initiative will happen. That is why as a leader it is important to be thorough in communicating the design process and its implications for following and not following. Roger’s Diffusion Model is one of the most frequently cited models concerning the innovation and development process. Rogers see this process as consisting of “all the decisions and activities and their impacts that occur from recognition of a need or a problem, through research, development, and commercialization of an innovation, through diffusion and adoption of the innovation by users to its consequences” (Fullan, 1993, pg. 23).

According to the Rogers’ Model, the process of innovation commences when a problem or need is identified. Problems and needs may be based on an examination

of current conditions, laboratory work, or the anticipation of future developments. Once a problem or need has been isolated, researchers begin to investigate its nature and how it can be addressed. This phase may involve considerable experimentation and invention. Development begins when attention shifts from understanding the problem or need to put a new idea [to address a problem or need] in a form that is expected to meet the needs of an audience of potential adopters (Hord, 2004). The result of the development phase is an innovation. Commercialization entails the production, marketing, and distribution of the innovation. Developers hope that their efforts to spread the word about the innovation (diffusion) will result in its adoption by enough users to make continued production economically viable (Fullan, 1993).

Throughout the change process there are four common elements that are usually associated with successful implementation:

1. Discovery- It is the initial phase of the change process during which a need for change is identified.
2. Design- The phase during which a new or improved way to address the need is created and chosen.
3. Development- The phase during which planning related to implementing change is undertaken and support is secured.
4. Implmentation- The phase when change is introduced and adapted to a particular setting. (Duke, pg. 29) .

For a change to happen within an organization and it be considered successful by proper evaluation methods, it will not happen overnight. Implementation of a change that is sustainable within an organization is a methodical process that must co-exist between leader and follower. To be successful with change both sides will have to work together to see what the necessary steps are needed to gain the desired outcomes.

Being a leader demands confidence, intellect, and integrity. Being an educational leader requires each of those, and moreover one must possess qualities of selflessness and intuitiveness. To be an educational leader you must project this unexplainable ambience when you enter a room. Your presence and personality must render an attitude towards children that establishes trust and is altruistic in nature. To be a successful educational leader you must remain grounded, welcome humor, and have an incredible relationship with yourself. You must depend on yourself to be your own leader.

Achieving effective educational leadership is not something that everyone is capable of doing. You must be a positive person, an intelligent person, a communicative person, and a person who plays by the rules. In order to exhibit effective educational leadership, one must have a vision of success. There are many different types of people who choose to put themselves in a leadership position. There are also those who end up in a leadership position because other people chose to put them there. Thus, there are many different types of leaders. There are those leaders who do it for money, some who do it for the extrinsic rewards such as

recognition and power, and others who do it because it is their calling. To be an effective educational leader you must have an optimistic attitude. Simply put, you must see the glass half full, not half empty. Situations that occur in schools are unpredictable. A person who can be handed any situation and is willing to confront the issue with a response that is in the best interest of the school in its entirety is an educational leader. What is perceived effective educational leadership is having someone who will do exactly that, but it is also the person who would have been chosen by others to handle the situation. Being known as a person who envisions success in all aspects of life makes you admirable. You must exert buoyancy. Are you confident? Can you look at the good in every situation, and when something doesn't go as planned or there is no "good" can you remain afloat? Is there something you can look to in order to see the situation in a positive light? You must have a strong head on your shoulders.

Instructional change agents believe that in order to be an effective leader you must have a focus on learning and teaching. Clearly, one who becomes a teacher does so because they love to teach and help others. Many people also become teachers because they love to learn and view it as being a life-long process. The belief of an effective educational leader is that they should be someone whose focus is on the educational system. Whether or not the situation that someone deals with during the school day is directly related to academics, there is still a teaching and learning process that is occurring; it's just whether or not the person chooses to see it that way. An effective educational leader is one who, even if removed the classroom,

understands that they are not always the teacher. And, even when they are the adult or the person in charge, they are open to being the learner and are willing to listen.

Initiating change when done correctly can be a time consuming process. The actual process can take anywhere from a few weeks to a couple of months to implement. When changes were made to the schedule to allow time for a reading class, it was almost like robbing from the rich to give to the poor. Fullan stated, “As I have mentioned earlier that in the evolution of teaching and learning we are in still in the early stages” (Fullan, 1993, pg. 54). This statement, even though simplistic it still has meaning. Education is a process where all stakeholders have to be held accountable and be willing to change. What we do know is that if we are not willing to change the results needed for student achievement will never be reached. Change is more than quick fixes. Change is process that needs to be well designed and implemented for the long term. Professional Learning Communities are on the brink of engaging into a new phenomenon for education, not only for student achievement but for teachers in the area of professional growth. PLC’s meetings however, do not totally eliminate problems and obstacles, but they are an effort to build shared knowledge and to arrive at consensus in an effort to guide coalition for the initiative.

Most of the literature written about professional learning communities focuses and centers on characteristics or dimensions of a Professional Learning Community and its implementation. However, when you look at it, becoming a Professional Learning Community is not something a faculty engages in for a year or two, only to abandon before moving on to a new initiative. Principals recognize that becoming a

Professional Learning Community cannot be reduced to a recipe or a prescriptive set of activities. As Hargreaves (2003) observed, “Becoming a Professional Learning Community creates an ethos that permeates a school” (p. 43). Simply put, becoming a Professional Learning Community is not something you do; it is something you are.

The public education system within the United States has the responsibility of educating every student up through grade twelve and sometimes until a student with special needs reaches the age of twenty-one. The public schools system takes all students regardless of race, color, origin, or socioeconomic status (SES) and we do our best to ensure that every child has a free and appropriate education. With that being said every classroom within a school is not the same. You can take two classrooms within a school that are the same subject areas along with two highly qualified effective teachers leading the instruction and the outcomes from within the two classrooms will be different because of the type of levels of students that each classroom contains. Two classes with an average of thirty students between the two can have a totally different outcome on the end of the year state assessment. In order to meet the needs of these students, collaborative efforts for different educators must coincide in order for the students to get the appropriate education that they need in order to be successful adults.

Before the concept of Professional Learning Community was formulated the idea of education was that of a lonely endeavor. Educators would walk into their place or room of solitude and try to develop a world of learning on their own. Their respective single ideas and approach to teaching and learning for their students was

solely based on what they knew as an individual. There was no sharing of ideas or instructional approaches that were taking place. The teachers would simply shut their doors and be closed off from the rest of their surroundings. No new knowledge was being gathered on certain students regarding what could be done to help the students, and the content that was being taught was that of single minded individuals.

Working in solitude creates an unhealthy environment for educators in general. They feel as though as there is no help or support for them within their respective profession. The cards are stacked against them when working in solitude, because the students of the 21st century are vastly changing in how they approach their education. The way that students think and process information is ever changing. They have so much access to technology that the information they are now getting is light years ahead of the material they can receive in a textbook.

The whole concept of Professional Learning Communities has vastly changed the approach and ideologies that teachers now consider quality teaching and instruction. Teachers, school administrators, and Central Office Personnel now understand the importance of what working together as one can do to help accomplish their goals. The thought of a school or district being single entities is now a concept of the past. However, to say this old way of thinking does not still exist would be a lie, but the districts and schools that value working and planning together to achieve their goals are much more inclined to see the results that they are intending to accomplish.

In conclusion, there is much knowledge to be learned concerning professional learning communities, and as this the new wave of reform rolls over not only Kentucky but our nation, it is definitely a technique that is a hot topic, new “buzz” word and a direction we are all headed in. Our information base and knowledge of Professional Learning Communities should increase as these become implemented within each of our own districts and schools. The implementation of Professional Learning Communities will impact teachers and administrators and make a positive progression toward school improvement, professional growth, and student achievement.

Chapter 3: Methodology/Procedures

Montgomery County School District has initiated a Professional Learning Community (PLC) in its schools through funding from Central Office. The intent of the PLC initiative was to help foster the needs of all the students that are attending the schools. Having the support through Central Office to make the educational changes possible, the participating schools started establishing goals that would begin to improve the overall academic achievement, feelings of self-worth, develop positive school climate, as well as improve retention, graduation rates, increase community involvement, and the local workforce involvement in schools.

In January of 2014, a School Culture Triage was administered in the Montgomery County School District. The schools that I focused on within the district are the schools that I will be addressing throughout my study. The total participants in the study were as follows by the respective schools: Camargo Elementary-45, Mapleton Elementary-47, Mt. Sterling Elementary-47, Montgomery County Intermediate-38, and McNabb Middle School-50 for a total of 227 participants. The School Culture Triage Scoring Guide consisted of scores falling between 17 being the lowest though 85 being the highest score possible.

By looking at the overall difference in scores during the 2012 – 2013 school year compared to the 2013 – 2014 school year all schools had an increase in School Culture Triage scores. This increase in scores across the five schools indicated that the overall culture in the school district was improving. The district overall score increased from the 2012-2013 school year from 61.5 to 65.5 for the 2013 -2014

school year. With the increase in overall culture in the schools, this could have a major impact on the student achievement scores.

Does school culture have an impact on student achievement? When matching Kentucky's Unbridled state testing results in comparison to the scores on the Montgomery County School Triage survey, one could find significant conclusions in the comparison of the two. When looking at the overall scores from the School Culture Triage, each school had a significant increase in school culture. In comparing this to the Unbridled test results, each school had an increase in test scores with the exception of Mapleton Elementary.

This study was a quantitative study that will be implemented through the use of a survey titled, Professional Learning Communities survey. The survey was a fifteen question survey that was divided into three sections: Critical Elements, Human Resources, and Structural Conditions. Each certified staff within the five schools being studied had the opportunity to complete the survey.

The study examined information provided by core content and elective teachers through surveys. In addition, data information is reviewed from samples of Professional Learning Community meetings. The information analyzed in this study was essential in establishing the effectiveness of Professional Learning Communities in professional growth and student achievement.

For the purpose of this survey the method that was implemented was done by using a fifteen question survey based on the three guiding questions mentioned in the previous section. The questions listed on the survey will be close ended.

Respondents were given a predetermined group of answers in which to choose for each question. A careful approach was taken when providing answers to ensure that they don't overlap and confuse or frustrate the individual respondent.

This study was designed to address the overarching question, What are the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those who participated in a professional learning (PLC) initiative within three elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school in a rural district?

Within this primary research question there are three guiding questions.

- A. In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment?
- B. Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and to improve school culture?
- C. Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

The survey was distributed to three elementary schools, one intermediate, and middle school. This survey will be designed to measure specific outcomes of the overarching question and the three guiding questions that are specifically being asked for this Research Study. The overarching question for this study is: What are the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those that participated and those that did not participate in a professional learning community's initiative within three elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school in a rural

district. The construct that was being measured or requiring further knowledge is individual teacher empowerment perceptions. Did participation make a difference in perceptions of empowerment or was it another in-vain initiative? This question begins to formulate specific constructs that will be followed up by others to be measured. For the purpose of this study, each of the guiding questions was attached to a specific construct within the survey.

In the survey, Construct 1.0 Critical Elements, will be attached to the first guiding question, In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment?

The second question that needed to be answered was assigned to Construct 2 Human Resources: Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and to improve school culture?

The third guiding question that needed to be answered through the findings of this research was assigned to Construct 3 Structural Conditions: Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

Chapter 4: Findings/Identified Strategies and Products

For the purpose of this survey the data was collected during spring of 2014. Five schools within the Montgomery County School District grades primary through eight were selected to take this anonymous survey. The survey was distributed by paper and pencil. The five schools that participated in this Professional Learning Communities survey were Camargo Elementary (N=37), Mapleton Elementary (N=44), Mount Sterling Elementary (N=43), Montgomery County Intermediate School (N=37), and McNabb Middle School (N=35) for a total participation of 196 educators.

This survey consisted of a total of fifteen questions under three separate constructs. The scale for the responses was on a Likert Scale that answered in the following: 1-Not at all, 2-Somewhat, 3-50% or half, 4-To a Large Degree, and 5-To a Great Extent. Within the survey there were three major constructs. The constructs each had five questions each that were to be answered. Table 1 provides a summary of the results.

Construct one was titled 1.0 Critical Elements. Construct one consisted of five different components in relation to Professional Learning Communities. They are listed as the following along with the question to be answered: 1.1. Reflective Dialogue: (Faculty/staff members talk with each other about their situations and the specific challenges they face), 1.2. De-Privatization of Practice: (Teachers share, observe, and discuss each other's teaching methods and philosophies), 1.3. Collective Focus on Student Learning: (Teachers assume that all students can learn at reasonable

high levels and that teachers can help them), 1.4. Collaboration: (teachers not only work together to develop shared understandings of students, curriculum and instructional policy, but also produce materials and activities that improve instruction, curriculum, and assessment.) and 1.5. Shared Norms and Values: (through word and actions teachers affirm their common values concerning critical educational issues and in support of their collective focus on student learning).

Construct two was titled 2.0 Human Resources. This construct also consisted of five sub questions that were answered on a Likert Scale as mentioned previously. The following topics and questions that were to be answered are as follows: 2.1. Openness to Improvement: (Teachers take risks in trying new techniques and ideas and make efforts to learn more about their profession), 2.2. Trust and Respect: (Teachers feel honored for their expertise within the school as well as within the district, the parent community and other significant groups), 2.3. Cognitive and Skill Base: (within the school there are formal methods for sharing expertise among faculty members so that marginal and ineffective teachers can improve), 2.4. Supportive Leadership: (The school leadership keep the school focused on shared purpose, continuous improvement, and collaboration), 2.5. Socialization: (The staff imparts a sense that new teachers are an important and productive part of a meaningful school community).

The third and final construct of the Professional Learning Communities Survey consists of a major focus topic, 3.0 Structural Conditions along with five sub questions that are to be answered using the Likert Scale. The questions that were to be answered include the following; 3.1 Time to Meet and Talk: (There is a formal

process that provides substantial and regularly scheduled block of time for educators to conduct on-going self-examination and self-renewal), 3.2. Physical Proximity: (Teachers have common spaces, rooms, or areas for discussion of educational practices, 3.3. Interdependent Teaching Roles: (There are recurring formal situations in which teacher work together, team teaching, and integrated lessons), 3.4. Communication Structures: (There are structures and opportunities for an exchange of ideas both within and across such organizational units as teams, grade levels, and subject departments), 3.5. Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy: (Teachers have autonomy to make decisions regarding their work guide by the norms and beliefs of the professional community). When analyzing each of the three major constructs of the survey: 1.0-Critical Elements, 2.0-Human Resources, and 3.0 Structural Conditions and the results of their individual sub questions, it was noted the results differ for each school along with the district scores.

Table 1

Overall Score Construct

	Overall Score	Construct 1 Critical Elements Mean score	Construct 2 Human Resources Mean Score	Construct 3 Structural Mean Score
District (P-8)	62.0	4.3	4.1	4.0
Camargo	63.4	4.4	4.3	4.0
Mapleton	63.1	4.3	4.1	4.2
Mt. Sterling	61.9	4.4	4.0	4.0
MCIS	63.0	4.3	4.2	4.1
McNabb	58.7	4.1	3.8	3.9

The overall score for the Montgomery County School District in grades primary through eighth was a 62.0. When this score was divided individually into the three constructs of the survey the district had the following scores: Construct 1 (Critical Elements- 4.1), Construct 2 (Human Resources-4.0) and Construct 3 (Structural-4.0). These scores indicate that for the overall score of the Montgomery County School District that they fall within the 4 to 5 Likert scale range. The respective ranges are 4-to a large degree and 5- to a great extent.

Camargo Elementary had an overall score of 63.4. When this score was deconstructed into the three constructs, they averaged a mean score of a 4.2 across all three constructs. Mapleton Elementary had an overall mean score of 63.1. Across the three constructs their scores were: Construct 1 (Critical Elements-4.3), Construct 2 (Human Resources- 4.1) and Construct 3 (Structural-4.2). With these respective scores they fell between the four to five range on the Likert scale of 4-to a large degree and 5-to a great extent.

The following three schools Mt. Sterling Elementary, MCIS, and McNabb had the overall scores respectively of 61.9, 63.0, and 58.7. Mt. Sterling Elementary had an average mean score of 4.1. MCIS had an average mean score of 4.2. McNabb had an average mean score of 3.9. With Mt. Sterling Elementary and MCIS having their overall mean scores being an average of 4, they believed according to the Likert scale, that to a large degree that the tools and resources necessary were being provided for a successful Professional Learning Community within each of the

respective schools. McNabb had a mean score of 3.9 placing them in the range of only 50% believe they are supported with the tools necessary to be successful.

In analyzing the results of the data from the Montgomery County School District as a whole and then looking at the five respective schools on each of three constructs: 1.0 Critical Elements, 2.0 Human Resources, and 3.0 Structural Conditions the scores did differ, but the findings were in .1 to .3 of a point from each other. The findings or Mean scores are as follows for Construct 1.0 Critical Elements: District (N=196) 4.1, Camargo (N=37) 4, Mapleton (N=44) 4.3, MSE (N=43) 4, MCIS (N=37) 4, and McNabb (N=4). When comparing each of the schools and the district we find that four of the schools scored a 4.1 (to a large degree), Mapleton scored a 4.3 and the Montgomery County District average was a 4.3.

Once the average mean scores from each of the three constructs were analyzed, a further in-depth analysis indicated that there were three sub topics that scored in the high range and sub topic that was considerably lower than the other sub topics. In Construct 1-Critical Elements, sub section 1.1 Reflective Dialog, Camargo Elementary had a high score of 4.7 out of 5. In Construct 1-Critical Elements, sub section 1.4 Collaboration, Mapleton Elementary and MCIS had a high score of 4.6 out of 5. There was a question in Construct 2- Human Resources, sub section 2.2 Trust and Respect, McNabb Middle School scored the lowest on this with a 3.3 out 5. This score indicates that when asked to answer the following statement, “Teachers feel honored for their expertise within the school as well as within the district, the

parent community and other significant groups” of the participants that answered this the respondents median score was a 3.3. The participants feel as though only about half the time they are treated with trust and respect.

Another significant finding within the five questions for each of the three major constructs is that out of the fifteen questions when asked the population surveyed at McNabb Middle School scored the lowest responses on 12 out of the 15 questions. The three questions that they did not score the lowest on were Construct 1-Critical Elements, sub section 1.2 De-Privatization of Practice, Construct 2-Human Resources, sub section 2.4 Supportive Leadership, and Construct 3-Structural Conditions, sub section 3.2 Physical Proximity.

To determine if there was a significant difference in how the teachers from each school responded to the survey an ANOVA and Tukey tests were run as shown in Table 2. It was found that there was a significant difference in the ANOVA between the groups and the responses on the survey, $F(4, 186) = 2.622, p = 0.036$. Post Hoc (Tukey) indicated that the significant difference existed between the responses from McNabb and Camargo. McNabb reported statistically lower scores ($M = 58.9706, SD = 7.6613$) on the survey statements than reported by staff at Camargo ($M = 63.6111, SD = 6.8087$) based on the Tukey post hoc test at the 0.039 alpha level. See Table 3.

On the second subset of the survey, the ANOVA for the BTOTAL was significant. Post hoc: McNabb was significant different than Camargo and McNabb was significant different from MCIS.

Table 2

Tukey HSD

Dependent Variable: Total

(I) SCODE	(J) SCODE	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Camargo	Mapleton	.4018	1.555	.999	-3.8405	4.6441
	Mt Sterling	1.7778	1.564	.787	-2.4875	6.0430
	MCIS	.6389	1.623	.995	-3.7874	5.0652
	McNabb	4.6405*	1.646	.039	.1496	9.1314
Mapleton	Camargo	-.4018	1.555	.999	-4.6441	3.8405
	Mt Sterling	1.3760	1.494	.889	-2.6981	5.4500
	MCIS	.2371	1.555	1.000	-4.0052	4.4794
	McNabb	4.2387	1.580	.056	-7.0981E-	8.5484
Mt Sterling	Camargo	-1.7778	1.564	.787	-6.0430	2.4875
	Mapleton	-1.3760	1.494	.889	-5.4500	2.6981
	MCIS	-1.1389	1.564	.950	-5.4042	3.1264
	McNabb	2.8627	1.588	.372	-1.4695	7.1950
MCIS	Camargo	-.6389	1.623	.995	-5.0652	3.7874
	Mapleton	-.2371	1.555	1.000	-4.4794	4.0052
	Mt Sterling	1.1389	1.564	.950	-3.1264	5.4042
	McNabb	4.0016	1.646	.107	-.4893	8.4925
McNabb	Camargo	-4.6405*	1.646	.039	-9.1314	-.1496
	Mapleton	-4.2387	1.580	.056	-8.5484	7.098E-
	Mt Sterling	-2.8627	1.588	.372	-7.1950	1.4695
	MCIS	-4.0016	1.646	.107	-8.4925	.4893

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Table 3

Dependent Variable: Construct Totals

Tukey HSD

		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound
CONSTRUCT A TOTAL						
Camargo	Mapleton	0.5575	0.489	0.786	-0.7777	1.8926
	Mt Sterling	0.2579	0.492	0.985	-1.0844	1.6003
	MCIS	0.5278	0.511	0.840	-0.8653	1.9208
	McNabb	1.4624*	0.518	0.038	4.90E-02	2.8758
Mapleton	Camargo	-0.5575	0.489	0.786	-1.8926	0.7777
	Mt Sterling	-0.2996	0.470	0.969	-1.5817	0.9826
	MCIS	-2.97E-02	0.489	1.000	-1.3649	1.3054
	McNabb	0.9049	0.497	0.362	-0.4514	2.2613
Mt Sterling	Camargo	-0.2579	0.492	0.985	-1.6003	1.0844
	Mapleton	0.2996	0.470	0.969	-0.9826	1.5817
	MCIS	0.2698	0.492	0.982	-1.0725	1.6122
	McNabb	1.2045	0.500	0.113	-0.1590	2.5680
MCIS	Camargo	-0.5278	0.511	0.840	-1.9208	0.8653
	Mapleton	2.97E-02	0.489	1.000	-1.3054	1.3649
	Mt Sterling	-0.2698	0.492	0.982	-1.6122	1.0725
	McNabb	0.9346	0.518	0.371	-0.4787	2.3480
McNabb	Camargo	-1.4624*	0.518	0.038	-2.8758	-4.90E-02
	Mapleton	-0.9049	0.497	0.362	-2.2613	0.4514
	Mt Sterling	-1.2045	0.500	0.113	-2.5680	0.1590
	MCIS	-0.9346	0.518	0.371	-2.3480	0.4787
CONSTRUCT B TOTAL						
Camargo	Mapleton	0.7565	0.649	0.771	-1.0138	2.5267
	Mt Sterling	1.3135	0.652	0.260	-0.4664	3.0934
	MCIS	0.2222	0.677	0.998	-1.6248	2.0693
	McNabb	2.5082*	0.687	0.002	0.6342	4.3822
Mapleton	Camargo	-0.7565	0.649	0.771	-2.5267	1.0138
	Mt Sterling	0.5570	0.623	0.899	-1.1430	2.2571
	MCIS	-0.5342	0.649	0.924	-2.3045	1.2360
	McNabb	1.7517	0.659	0.061	-4.67E-02	3.5501

Mt Sterling	Camargo	-1.3135	0.652	0.260	-3.0934	0.4664
	Mapleton	-0.5570	0.623	0.899	-2.2571	1.1430
	MCIS	-1.0913	0.652	0.451	-2.8711	0.6886
	McNabb	1.1947	0.663	0.372	-0.6132	3.0025
MCIS	Camargo	-0.2222	0.677	0.998	-2.0693	1.6248
	Mapleton	0.5342	0.649	0.924	-1.2360	2.3045
	Mt Sterling	1.0913	0.652	0.451	-0.6886	2.8711
	McNabb	2.2859*	0.687	0.008	0.4119	4.1600
McNabb	Camargo	-2.5082*	0.687	0.002	-4.3822	-0.6342
	Mapleton	-1.7517	0.659	0.061	-3.5501	4.67E-02
	Mt Sterling	-1.1947	0.663	0.372	-3.0025	0.6132
	MCIS	-2.2859*	0.687	0.008	-4.1600	-0.4119
<hr/>						
CONSTRUCT C TOTAL						
Camargo	Mapleton	-0.9121	0.687	0.674	-2.7854	0.9611
	Mt Sterling	0.2063	0.690	0.998	-1.6770	2.0897
	MCIS	-0.1111	0.716	1.000	-2.0656	1.8433
	McNabb	0.6699	0.727	0.889	-1.3130	2.6529
Mapleton	Camargo	0.9121	0.687	0.674	-0.9611	2.7854
	Mt Sterling	1.1185	0.659	0.436	-0.6804	2.9174
	MCIS	0.8010	0.687	0.771	-1.0722	2.6742
	McNabb	1.5821	0.698	0.155	-0.3209	3.4850
Mt Sterling	Mapleton	-0.2063	0.690	0.998	-2.0897	1.6770
	Mt Sterling	-1.1185	0.659	0.436	-2.9174	0.6804
	MCIS	-0.3175	0.690	0.991	-2.2008	1.5659
	McNabb	0.4636	0.701	0.965	-1.4494	2.3765
MCIS	Camargo	0.1111	0.716	1.000	-1.8433	2.0656
	Mt Sterling	-0.8010	0.687	0.771	-2.6742	1.0722
	MCIS	0.3175	0.690	0.991	-1.5659	2.2008
	McNabb	0.7810	0.727	0.820	-1.2019	2.7640
McNabb	Camargo	-0.6699	0.727	0.889	-2.6529	1.3130
	Mt Sterling	-1.5821	0.698	0.155	-3.4850	0.3209
	MCIS	-0.4636	0.701	0.965	-2.3765	1.4494
	McNabb	-0.7810	0.727	0.820	-2.7640	1.2019

* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

Chapter 5: Conclusions, Actions, and Implications

Statement of the Problem

This study was implemented to address a major question along with three guiding questions. The major focus of this question or overarching question that needed to be answered was to determine the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those who participated and those who did not participate in a professional learning community initiative within three elementary schools, one middle school, and one intermediate school within a rural district. To help guide this major research question there were three guiding questions that helped support this research:

- A) In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment?
- B) Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and improve school culture?
- C) Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

Since the early 1990's with the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA), there has been an increase in pressure for school districts across the Commonwealth of Kentucky to perform at a high level. The measure of performance that these individual districts were judged on was the end of the year state assessment. With high stakes accountability, districts are trying to find ways to implement programs and strategies that will allow for them to be successful. When

looking at success, these districts are focusing on raising student achievement scores for the end of the year state assessment. While there have been numerous changes structurally with the buildings, transportation, and books, what changes have been made internally? It has been said that if you took a teacher from the 18th century and placed them in a school classroom they would see little disparity (Dufour, Eaker). Change is inevitable. What comes next is the process of fostering student achievement in an environment that is conducive to learning.

Review of Methodology

For the purpose of this study, there were five schools that were surveyed within the Montgomery County School District. The five schools consisted of three elementary, one middle, and one intermediate school. The number of participants totaled 196. The breakdown of respondents was as follows: Camargo Elementary (N=37), Mapleton Elementary (N=44), Mount Sterling Elementary (N=43), Montgomery County Intermediate School (N=37), and McNabb Middle School (N=35).

This study was conducted using a pencil and paper Professional Learning Communities survey that was passed out to each of the respective schools. The survey was completed anonymously by each participant. The surveys were collected and categorized by individual schools with no individual persons being recognized. This survey was broken down into three major constructs: 1.0- Critical Elements, 2.0- Human Resources, and 3.0- Structural Conditions. Per each of the three constructs, there were five questions that were each within each of the three before mentioned

constructs. The five questions within each of the three constructs were proved with a Likert Scale with the following rating system: 1-Not at all, 2-Somewhat, 3-50% or half, 4- To a large degree, and 5-To a Great Extent. The data collected was then averaged to find the mean score for each of the five questions that were within each of the three major constructs.

Summary of Results

The results of this study were from the data that was collected from the 196 individual participants that took the Professional Learning Communities survey. The 196 participants were from five schools within the Montgomery County School District. Data was collected from each of the five schools and the mean score was calculated for each of the five questions within the three major constructs.

When reviewing the major overarching question for this study, to determine the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those who participated and those who did not participate in a professional learning community initiative within three elementary, one middle, and one intermediate school within a rural district, the findings support that for the five schools designated to take this study there was evidence to prove that teachers felt empowerment when participating in Professional Learning Communities.

The breakdown of the data supports the sense of empowerment once the mean scores were averaged for each of the five questions within the major three constructs. The scale range was on a Likert Scale with scores that were designated for each of the five questions within three constructs ranging from 1-Not at all, 2-

Somewhat, 3-50%, 4-To a large degree, and 5-To a great extent. When analyzing the mean scores for the Montgomery County School District as a whole, the scores were as follows for each of the three major constructs: Construct 1-Critical Elements- 4.1, Construct 2-Human Resources- 4.0, and Construct 3- Structural Conditions – 4.0. For each of the three constructs, the mean scores were between four and five on the Likert rating scale. Camargo Elementary, Mount Sterling Elementary, MCIS, and McNabb Middle School each averaged a mean score of a four on the Likert rating scale for each of the three major constructs. Mapleton Elementary per the average of the three major constructs did show a higher average mean score than the other scores mentioned. Mapleton Elementary’s average mean scores were as follows: Construct 1- Critical Elements- (4.3), Construct 2- Human Resources-(4.1), Construct 3- Structural Conditions- (4.2). These results, even though only being .1 to .3 of a point higher are higher than the other schools that were studied. These scores indicate that of the three major constructs the mean scores of the individuals that participated in this study were between a scale score of a four and five. These findings show that of the questions answered the average mean for their respective responses were in the category of, “to a large degree and to a great extent.”

Measures Used

The survey used for this study was titled, Professional Learning Communities Survey. This survey consisted of three major Constructs: 1.0-Critical Elements, 2.0-Human Resources, and 3.0- Structural Conditions. The three constructs had five sub questions respectively that captured the essence of each of the three major

constructs. For this survey there were a total of fifteen questions that had to be answered with five sub questions for each of the previously mentioned constructs. The questions were designed to be answered using a Likert Scale rating system that ranged from one through five with 1 being, “Not at all” and 5 being ”To a great extent”.

For each of the three major constructs, the average mean scores were calculated for the five sub questions that were within each of three major constructs. Each of the three major constructs within this survey was designed to help answer one of the three guiding questions within this study. By correlating each of the guiding questions to represent one of three constructs, the responses from the survey allowed for these three questions to be answered. The correlation for the survey and the guiding questions are as follows:

Construct	Guiding Question
1.0 – Critical Elements	1. In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment?
2.0- Human Resources	2. Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and improving school culture?
3.0—Structural Conditions	3. Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

Research Question One: In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment? Findings:

For the analysis of research question one it correlates with Construct 1 Critical Elements of the survey. In the analysis of this construct, there were five questions that were asked within this section of the survey. The scores from each of the schools were calculated to find the mean score. The responses for each of the schools varied in the findings. Camargo Elementary for Construct 1 had the following findings: 1.1-(4.7), 1.2-(4), 1.3-(4.5), 1.4-(4.5) and 1.5-(4.5) for an overall average of 4.4. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mapleton Elementary had the following scores in Construct 1: 1.1-(4.3), 1.2-(3.7), 1.3-(4.4), 1.4, (4.6), and 1.5-(4.5) giving them an overall mean score of 4.3 on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mount Sterling Elementary had the following mean scores for Construct 1: 1.1-(4.5), 1.2-(4.2), 1.3-(4.5), 1.4-(4.5), and 1.5-(4.3) giving them an overall mean score of 4.4 on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. MCIS had the following scores for Construct 1: 1.1-(4.4), 1.2-(4.1), 1.3-(4.3), 1.4-(4.6), and 1.5-(4.3) giving them an overall mean score of 4.3 on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. McNabb Middle School had the following scores for Construct 1: 1.2-(4.2), 1.2-(3.8), 1.3-(4.1), 1.4-(4.4), and 1.5-(4.1) giving them an overall mean score of 4.1 on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. The district's overall mean score for Construct

1 was a 4.1 on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent.

Research Question Two: Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and improve school culture? Findings:

For the analysis of research question two it correlates with Construct 2 Human Resources of the survey. In the analysis of this construct there were five questions that were asked within this section of the survey. The scores from each of the schools were calculated to find the mean score. The responses for each of the schools varied in the findings. Camargo Elementary for Construct 2 had the following findings: 2.1-(4.2), 2.2-(4), 2.3-(4.2), 2.4-(4.7), and 2.5- (4.3) for an overall average of 4.3. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mapleton Elementary had the following mean scores: 2.1-(4), 2.2-(3.9), 2.3-(4), 2.4-(4.5), and 2.5-(4.2) for an overall average of 4.1. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mount Sterling Elementary had the following mean scores: 2.1-(4.1), 2.2-(3.8), 2.3-(3.8), 2.4-(4.2), and 2.5-(4.2) for an overall average of 4. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. MCIS had the following scores: 2.1-(4), 2.2-(4.1), 2.3-(4.1), 2.4-(4.6), and 2.5-(4.3) for an overall average of 4.2. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. McNabb Middle School had the following

mean scores 2.1-(3.8), 2.2-(3.3), 2.3-(3.7), 2.4-(4.3), and 2.5- (3.8) for an overall average of 3.8. This score has them between the three and four range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 3-50% or half to 4- to a large degree. The districts overall score was 4.0 on the Likert. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent.

Substantial Finding:

McNabb Middle School was the only school within the district to have an overall mean score lower than a four. The overall scores for the other schools in the survey, including the overall district mean score was a least a four. McNabb’s overall mean score for this response section was a 3.8 placing them between three and four range on the Likert Scale.

Research Question Three: Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture? Findings:

For the analysis of research question one it correlates with Construct 3 Structural Conditions of the survey. In the analysis of this construct, there were five questions that were asked within this section of the survey. The scores from each of schools were calculated to find the mean score. The responses for each of the schools varied in the findings. Camargo Elementary for Construct 3 had the following findings: 3.1-(3.6), 3.2-(4.2),3.3-(3.9), 3.4-(4.2), 3.5-(4.2) for an overall average of 4. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mapleton Elementary had the

following mean scores: 3.1-(4), 3.2-(4.5), 3.3-(4.3), 3.4-(4.2), and 3.5-(4) for an overall average of 4.2. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. Mount Sterling Elementary had the following mean scores: 3.1-(3.7), 3.2-(4.2), 3.3-(4), 3.4-(4.2), and 3.5-(3.8) for an overall average of 4. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. MCIS had the following mean scores: 3.1-(3.9), 3.2-(4.1), 3.3-(4.1), 3.4-(4.3), and 3.5-(3.9) for an overall average of 4.1. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent. McNabb Middle School had the following mean scores: 3.1-(3.6), 3.2-(4.5), 3.3-(3.7), 3.4-(3.9), and 3.5-(3.7) for an overall average of 3.9. This score has them between the three and four range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 3- 50% or half to 4- to a large degree and 5-to a great extent. The districts overall score for Construct 3 was a 4. This score has them between the four and five range on the Likert scale ranging from a score of 4- to a large degree and 5 – to a great extent.

Substantial Finding:

McNabb Middle School was the only school within the district to have an overall mean score lower than a four. The overall scores for the other schools survey including the overall district mean score was a least a four. McNabb’s overall mean score for this response section was a 3.9 having them to fall between the three and four score on the Likert Scale.

Implications

The implications of this study show that in order for schools that participated in this study to reach their ultimate goal of student achievement there has to be a sense of self involvement within the working community. The Montgomery County School District, led by Superintendent, Dr. Joshua E. Powell, has the goal of being a Top 10 school system. With this lofty goal, there has to be a sense of empowerment among the individuals who work within the school system. While over the past three years they have made astonishing gains, he believes that this is only the start of the process. Dr. Powell understands that in order for the Montgomery County School District to be Top 10 in everything that they do, there has to be that sense of empowerment among his respective staff. When talking to Dr. Powell, he notes that he does not have all of the answers, but it is his staff that has the answers.

Dr. Powell stated that he understood the necessity of having a positive culture in order to reach the Top 10. He understands that it will take a community to embrace the challenges that lie before them as a district. Dr. Powell represents each of the 5000 students that go to school every day within Montgomery County. He also understands that of the nearly 800 employees that he works with they have to share the goal of wanting to be Top 10. When analyzing the results of this survey, it shows that the beliefs of the individuals surveyed feel as though they are valued and have a sense of empowerment of the decisions being made within the Montgomery County School District. This belief of empowerment serves as a change agent for Dr. Powell

and the school district as it allows them to focus on what it takes to enhance student achievement.

Limitations

The findings of this research suggest some limitations. This study examined three elementary schools, one intermediate school, and one middle school; it did not include the responses from the educators who worked at the high school and the primary school that are also located within the Montgomery County School District.

Another limitation of this research could have been the response rate. While there are nearly 800 employees that work within the Montgomery County School District, the response rate that was designated for the return of their answers was 196 of the school district employees. Of all the individuals who were surveyed only certified employees were asked to take the survey. No classified staff that participated in this study.

Suggestions for Future Research

This study focused on five schools within the Montgomery County School District. With the findings, one was able to get some sense the overall status of teacher perceptions within the school district. When analyzing the data, there were some discrepancies between the questions answered within one school that was surveyed. There are some questions that this study did not answer. However, what this study did was to bring forth more questions that need to be answered. McNabb Middle School, on several different questions, answered below the median range on questions that were asked throughout the survey. When comparing the four other

schools to McNabb Middle School, there was also a discrepancy in state assessment scores. The findings of this survey helps one to understand the discrepancies of the state assessment scores. With the data collected, school administrators could review the different constructs that McNabb scored lower on and try to find the root causes of these results. Once the root causes were analyzed then a system could be implemented to start putting the structures in place that will allow for the building process to begin.

The main focus of the Montgomery County School District is to achieve “Top 10” in every initiative that the school district implements. With these findings, there is now data to show what areas need to be restructured. The data collected from the three elementary schools and intermediate school show that the structures currently implemented are making a difference and are they are on path to make “Top 10”.

The replication of this study could be very useful to other school districts across the Commonwealth. With the implementation of Kentucky’s Unbridled Learning, there is now more accountability for all school districts to achieve at a high level. All schools within a respective district have to have the tools and structures in place for them to achieve at a high level. The question(s) lies in what to do as well as where the problem is, if a school is not achieving at a high level. A district could use this survey and study to help find the root causes of what some of their issues may be. To find the problems and to find the answers to the problems requires a deep analysis of the school system. By implementing this study, districts will begin to have the data to show where their issues are and they can then begin the process of

implementing new structures in place to help lay the foundation of eliminating whatever deficiencies that might be inhibiting them from being successful.

Summary

Education reform has exploded within the Commonwealth of Kentucky since the implementation of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of the early 1990's. With this reform there has been high demand placed on student achievement. With Kentucky's Unbridled accountability system, the stakes are now even higher than ever for school districts to perform across the Commonwealth. It is imperative that all students within each of Kentucky's schools districts perform at a high level. The demands that are being placed on the end of the year state assessments have caused many districts across the Commonwealth to reevaluate how they are teaching their respective students. In order for districts to get the results that they desire, there has to be changes in their beliefs. No longer can just a single educator make a difference. It now has to be a team effort across each of the individual schools. Teachers have to come together as one to share and facilitate new strategies in their instructional approaches.

Teachers have to believe that they are empowered to make a difference. The culture of the school has to be one that is conducive to learning. The culture of the school has to be one that embraces educators working together for a common goal of improved student achievement or be Top 10 in everything that is attempted.

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APPENDICES

1. Introduction Letter
2. Professional Learning Community Survey
3. Characteristics of Quality PLC, Model
4. Why is a Quality PLC Important, Model
5. Teacher Empowerment Model
6. School Culture Scoring Guide
7. School Culture Triage – Overall Scores
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11. Overall Score, Montgomery County Schools PLC Survey Results 2013-14
12. Camargo Elementary Scores
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17. IRB Approval
18. Individual School Construct Survey and Sub Question Results
19. Montgomery County Approval Letter

Dear Montgomery County Public School Educator,

My name is Shannon K. Gross and I am a Doctoral student at Morehead State University. In preparation for my dissertation study I will be asking you to fill out a survey that is related to the implementation of the small learning communities. I am currently a Principal at Twenhofel Middle school and I know that time to an educator is of tremendous value. However with your cooperation I believe we can get a better perspective on how the impact of the PLC initiative has had on students and teachers. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

The major focus of my study is to determine the differences in perceptions of teacher empowerment among those who participated in a Professional Learning Community (PLC) initiative within three elementary schools, one intermediate school, and one middle school within a rural district? Following this question will be the three guiding questions that will help answer the major research question:

- A. In what ways did participating in the Professional Learning Community initiative enhance teacher empowerment?
- B. Are teachers provided with adequate resources to improve student achievement and improving school culture?
- C. Do the structures in place facilitate teacher empowerment and positive school culture?

With your permission I hope to be able to disseminate the attached survey to your teachers. The input from your teachers is greatly appreciated and I will ensure that all participants' answers will remain anonymous. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me at (859) 585-9329 or at skgros@hotmail.com.

Sincerely,

Shannon K. Gross

Professional Learning Communities Survey

This survey will help you think about and assess the extent to which each of the major factors associated with professional learning community—critical elements, human resources, and structural conditions is currently present at your school.

1.0 CRITICAL ELEMENTS

1.1 Reflective Dialogue

a. Faculty/staff members talk with each other about their situations and the specific challenges they face.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

1.2 De-Privatization of Practice

b. Teachers share, observe, & discuss each other's teaching methods & philosophies.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

1.3 Collective Focus on Student Learning

c. Teachers assume that all students can learn at reasonably high levels & that teachers can help them.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

1.4 Collaboration

d. Teachers not only work together to develop shared understandings of students, curriculum & instructional policy, but also produce materials & activities that improve instruction, curriculum, & assessment.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

1.5 Shared Norms and Values

e. Through words & actions teachers affirm their common values concerning critical educational issues and in support of their collective focus on student learning.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

Professional Learning Communities Survey

This survey will help you think about and assess the extent to which each of the major factors associated with professional learning community—critical elements, human resources, and structural conditions is currently present at your school.

2.0 HUMAN RESOURCES

2.1 Openness to Improvement

a. Teachers take risks in trying new techniques and ideas and make efforts to learn more about their profession.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

2.2 Trust and Respect

b. Teachers feel honored for their expertise within the school as well as within the district, the parent community and other significant groups.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

2.3 Cognitive and Skill Base

c. Within the school there are formal methods for sharing expertise among faculty members so that marginal and ineffective teachers can improve.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

2.4 Supportive Leadership

d. The school leadership keeps the school focused on shared purpose, continuous improvement, and collaboration.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

2.5 Socialization

e. The staff imparts a sense that new teachers are an important and productive part of a meaningful school community.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

Professional Learning Communities Survey

This survey will help you think about and assess the extent to which each of the major factors associated with professional learning community—critical elements, human resources, and structural conditions is currently present at your school.

3.0 STRUCTURAL CONDITIONS

3.1 Time to Meet and Talk

a. There is a formal process that provides substantial & regularly scheduled blocks of time for educators to conduct on-going self-examination & self-renewal.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

3.2 Physical Proximity

b. Teachers have common spaces, rooms, or areas for discussion of educational practices.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

3.3 Interdependent Teaching Roles

c. There are recurring formal situations in which teachers work together (team teaching, integrated lessons etc.)

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

3.4 Communication Structures

d. There are structures & opportunities for an exchange of ideas, both within and across such organizational units as teams, grade levels, & subject departments.

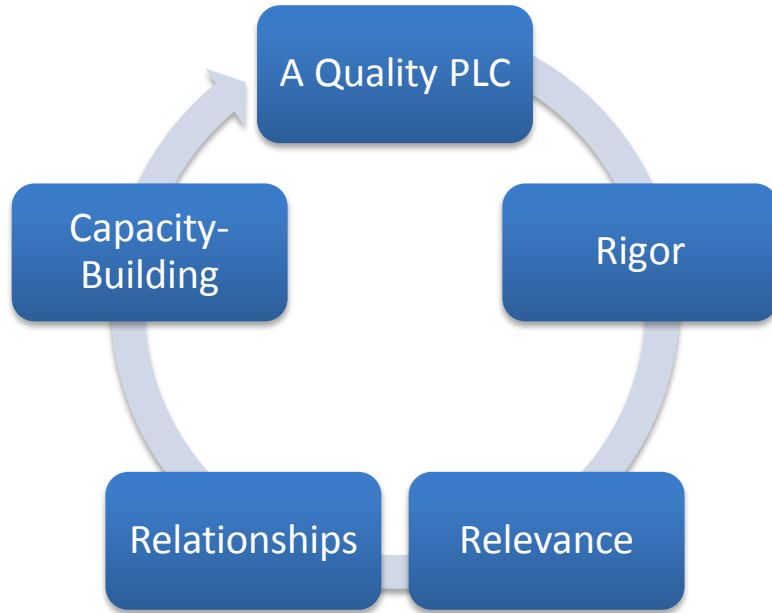
Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

3.5 Teacher Empowerment & School Autonomy

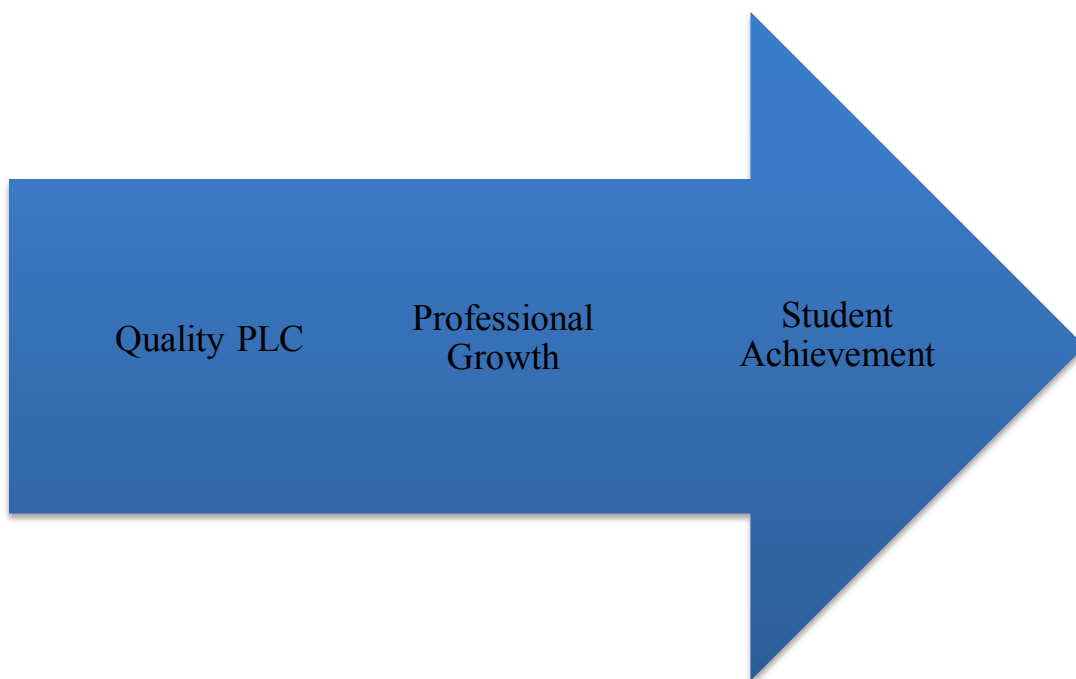
e. Teachers have autonomy to make decisions regarding their work guided by the norms and beliefs of the professional community.

Not at All	Somewhat	50%	To a large Degree	To a Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

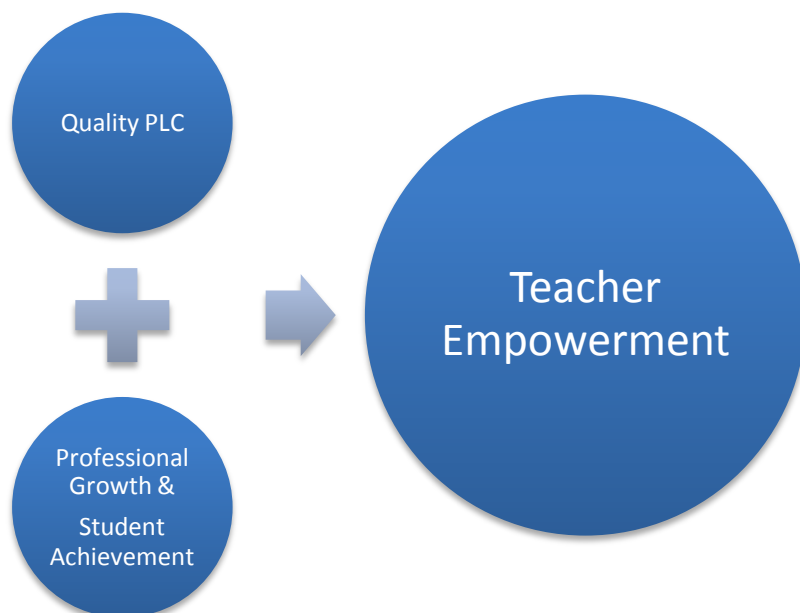
Characteristics of a Quality PLC



Why is a Quality PLC Important?



Teacher Empowerment

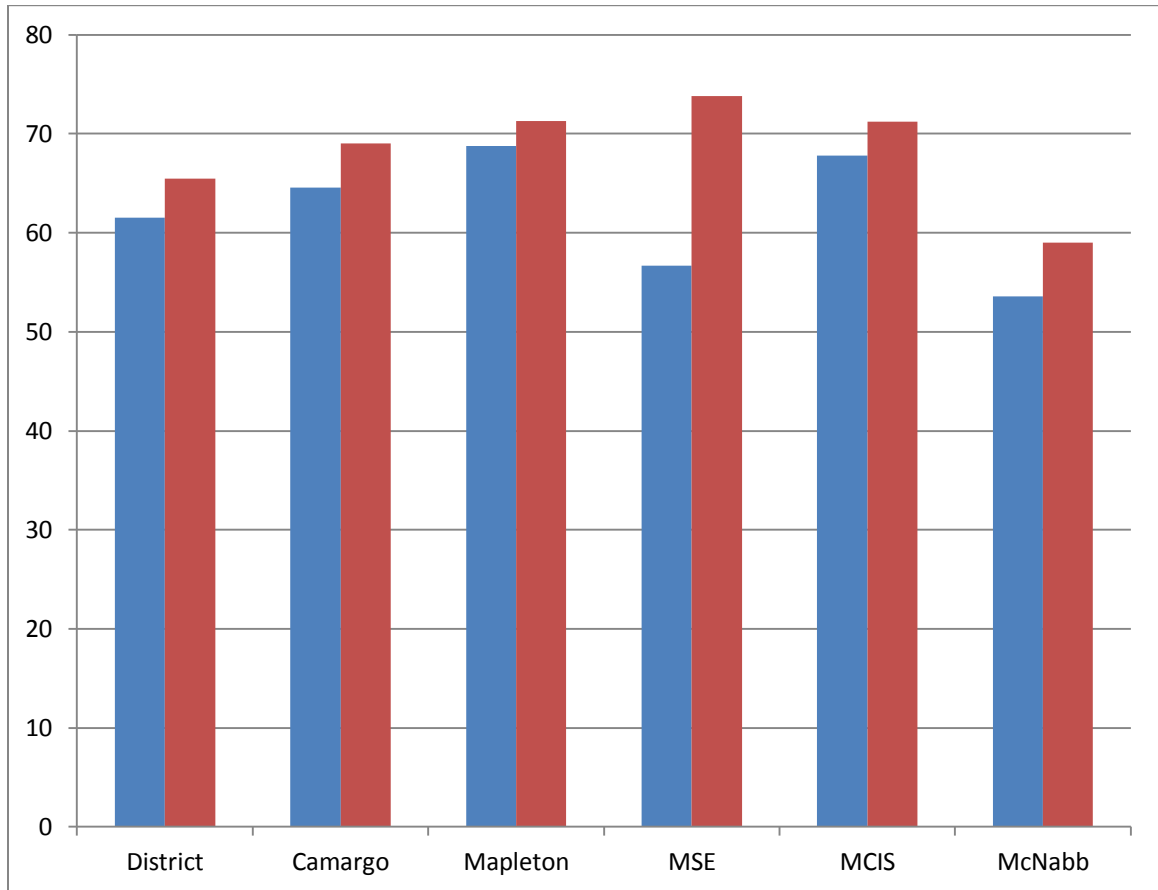


School Culture Scoring Guide

Score Range	Recommendations
76-85	Continue monitoring, with each school improvement planning cycle, or at least every two years. Currently no school has ever reported scores higher than 75.
60-75	Monitor and continue to make positive adjustments
41-59	Modifications and improvements are necessary. Begin with more intense assessment of your school's culture to determine which area is most in the need of improvement.
17-40	Critical and immediate attention necessary. Conduct a full-scale assessment of your school's culture and invest all available resources in repairing and healing your school's culture

The lowest triage score is 17 and the highest score possible is 85.

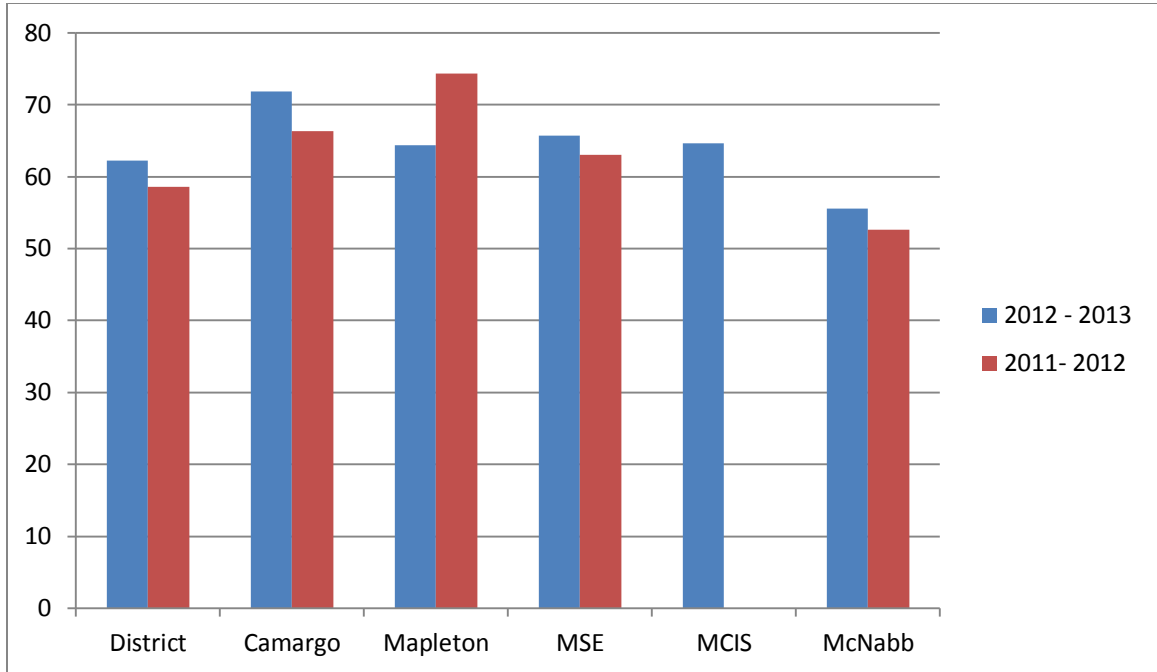
School Culture Triage – Overall Scores



Blue- 2012 – 2013 School Year

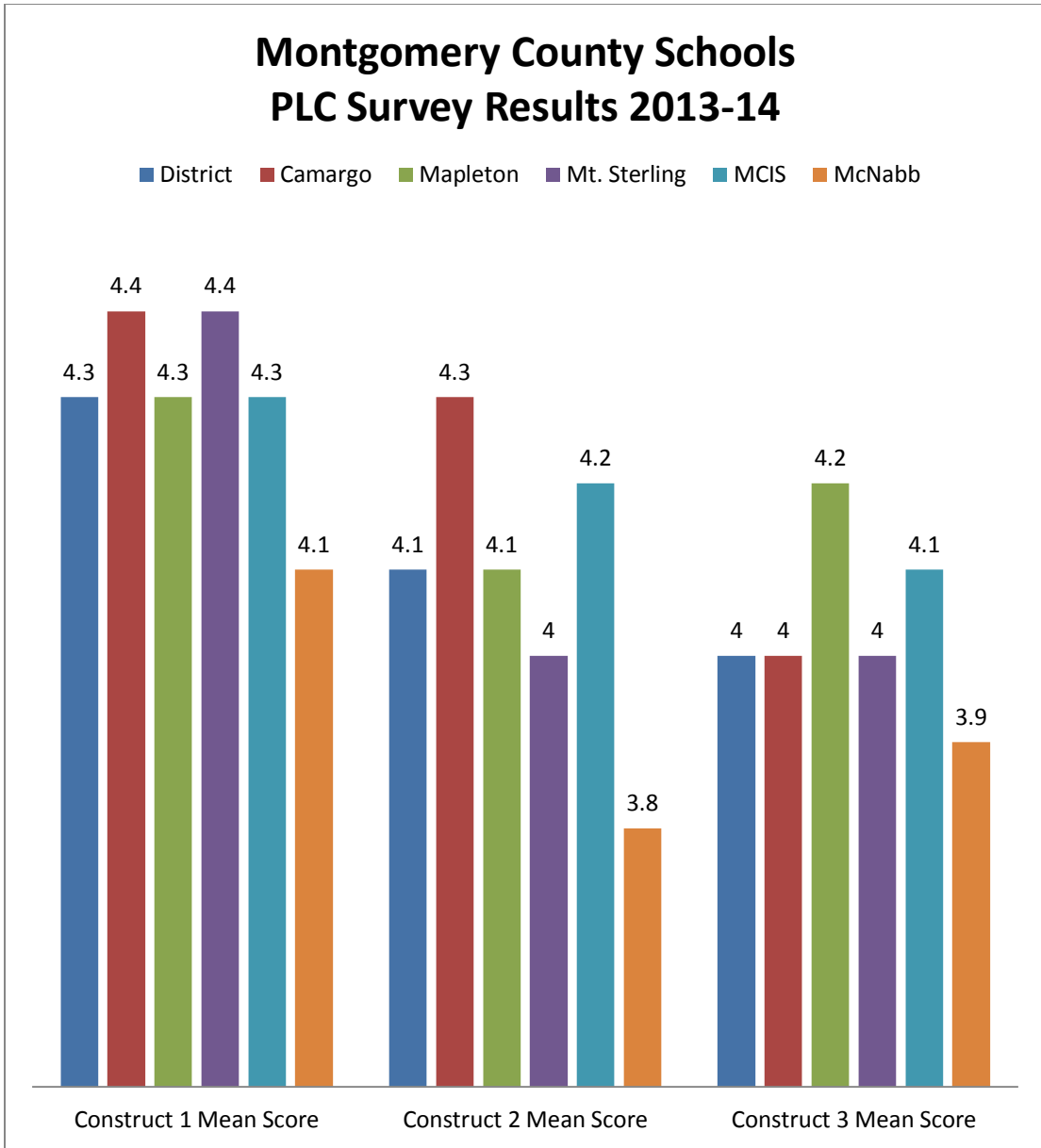
Red- 2013 – 2014 School Year

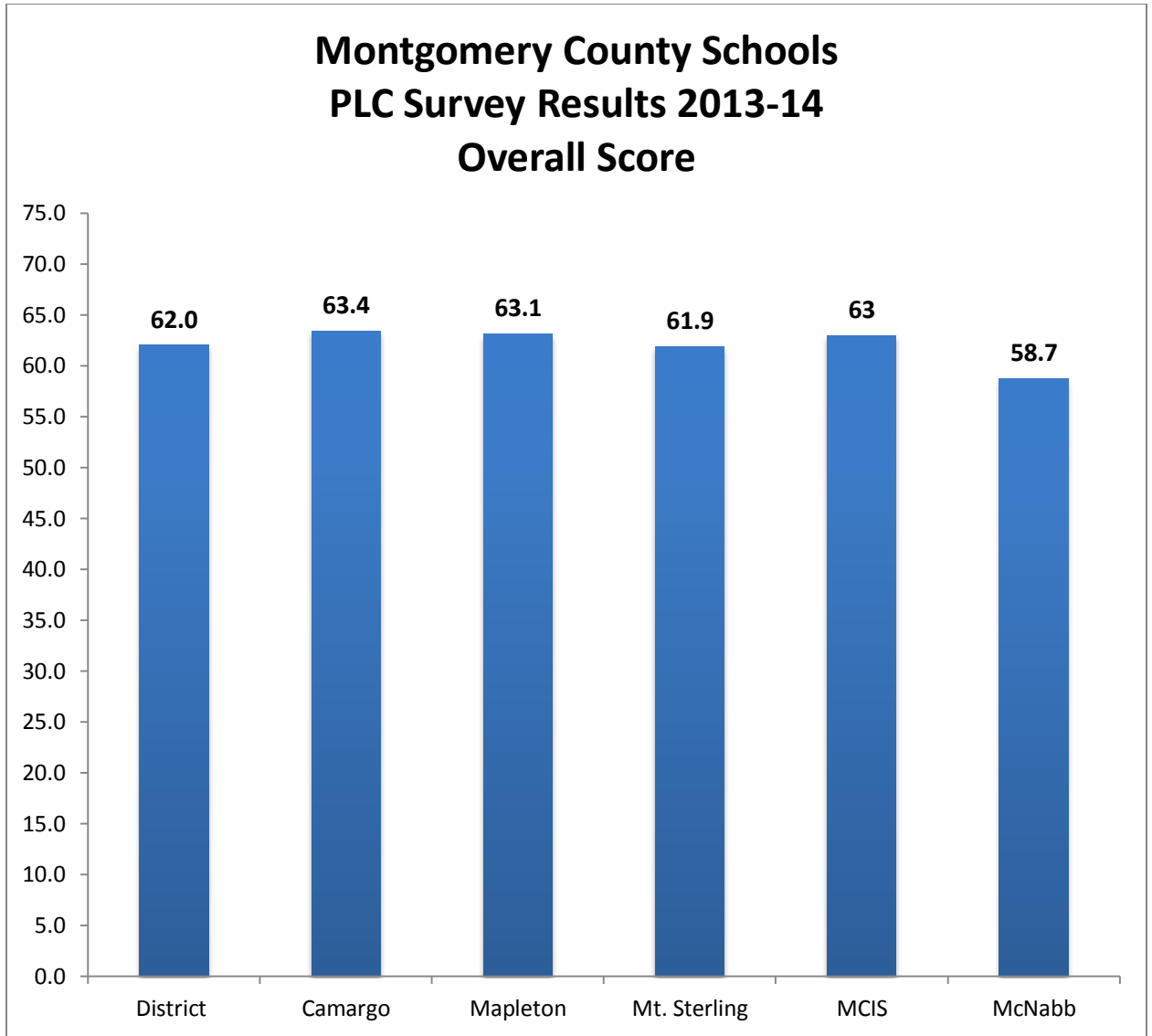
Unbridled Learning Test Results



Overall Score Construct

	Overall Score	Construct 1 Mean score	Construct 2 Mean Score	Construct 3 Mean Score
District	62.0	4.3	4.1	4.0
Camargo	63.4	4.4	4.3	4.0
Mapleton	63.1	4.3	4.1	4.2
Mt. Sterling	61.9	4.4	4.0	4.0
MCIS	63	4.3	4.2	4.1
McNabb	58.7	4.1	3.8	3.9





School	1_1 Reflective Dialogue	1_2 De-Privatization of Practice	1_3 Collective Focus on Student Learning	1_4 Collaboration	1_5 Shared Norms and Values	2_1 Openness to Improvement	2_2 Trust and Respect	2_3 Cognitive and Skill Base	2_4 Supportive Leadership	2_5 Socialization	3_1 Time to Meet and Talk	3_2 Physical Proximity	3_3 Interdependent Teaching Roles	3_4 Communication Structures	3_5 Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy	Overall Total
1: Camargo	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	57
1: Camargo	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	57
1: Camargo	4	4	5	4	5	4	3	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	63
1: Camargo	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	69
1: Camargo	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	72
1: Camargo	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	60
1: Camargo	5	3	5	4	5	3	4	5	5	3	4	4	4	4	4	62
1: Camargo	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	74
1: Camargo	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	73
1: Camargo	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	75
1: Camargo	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	68
1: Camargo	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	72
1: Camargo	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	2	5	5	4	66
1: Camargo	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	2	4	4	57
1: Camargo	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	3	4	2	4	62
1: Camargo	5	5	5	5	5	5		5	5			5	2	5	5	57
1: Camargo	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	67
1: Camargo	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	68
1: Camargo	4	2	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	2	5	3	54
1: Camargo	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	2	4	5	4	4	65
1: Camargo	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	4	3	4	5	66
1: Camargo	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	70
1: Camargo	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	60
1: Camargo	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	59
1: Camargo	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	58
1: Camargo	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	68
1: Camargo	4	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	1	4	3	50
1: Camargo	4	5	5	5	5	3	4	4	5	5	3	5	5	4	4	66
1: Camargo	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	65
1: Camargo	5	4	4	4	4	2	2	3	4	2	2	4	4	4	4	52

1: Camargo	5	4	5	4	4	4	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	60
1: Camargo	4	2	5	4	4	3	3	3	5	3	4	4	2	3	4	4	53
1: Camargo	5	4	3	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	1	2	3	4	4	4	55
1: Camargo	5	4	4	5	4	4	2	3	5	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	57
1: Camargo	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	69
1: Camargo	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	4	5	5	70
1: Camargo	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	71
Camargo Average	4.7	4	4.5	4.5	4.5	4.2	4	4.2	4.7	4.3	3.6	4.2	3.9	4.3	4.2	4.2	63.4
Construct Average	4.4		4.3					4									

2: Mapleton	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	69
2: Mapleton	3	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	3	4	59
2: Mapleton	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	2	5	5	5	4	61
2: Mapleton	4	4	5	5	4	5	3	3	5	5	4	5	4	4	3	63
2: Mapleton	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	61
2: Mapleton	4	2	5	5	4	3	4	1	4	1	1	5	5	5	2	51
2: Mapleton	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	67
2: Mapleton	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	62
2: Mapleton	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	64
2: Mapleton	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	63
2: Mapleton	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	68
2: Mapleton	2	3	4	3	3	2	3	3	3	3	3	2	3	2	2	41
2: Mapleton	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	62
2: Mapleton	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	68
Mapleton Average	4.3	3.7	4.4	4.6	4.5	4.0	3.9	4.0	4.5	4.2	4.0	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.0	63.1

4.3

4.1

4.2

School	1_1 Reflective Dialogue	1_2 De-Privatization of Practice	1_3 Collective Focus on Student Learning	1_4 Collaboration	1_5 Shared Norms and Values	2_1 Openness to Improvement	2_2 Trust and Respect	2_3 Cognitive and Skill Base	2_4 Supportive Leadership	2_5 Socialization	3_1 Time to Meet and Talk	3_2 Physical Proximity	3_3 Interdependent Teaching Roles	3_4 Communication Structures	3_5 Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy	Overall Total
3: MtSterling	2	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	2	3	4	4	4	4	4	53
3: MtSterling	3	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	66
3: MtSterling	3	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	3	5	5	4	3	57
3: MtSterling	4	3	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	1	4	4	4	54
3: MtSterling	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	3	4	57
3: MtSterling	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	55
3: MtSterling	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	2	2	4	3	4	5	4	3	58
3: MtSterling	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	2	4	5	4	4	56
3: MtSterling	4	3	5	5	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	61
3: MtSterling	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	3	3	55
3: MtSterling	4	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	3	5	5	68
3: MtSterling	4	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	70
3: MtSterling	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	5	4	62
3: MtSterling	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	3	5	2	4	3	62
3: MtSterling	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	60
3: MtSterling	4	3	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	2	5	2	4	4	58
3: MtSterling	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	5	3	4	5	3	58
3: MtSterling	4	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	5	4	65
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	3	60
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	2	49
3: MtSterling	5	4	4	5	3	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	68
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	69
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	72
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	4	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	65
3: MtSterling	5	3	3	5	4	4	2	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	55
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	66
3: MtSterling	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	59
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	73
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	73
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	66

3: MtSterling	5	2	4	4	4	2	3	2	4	2	1	2	2	2	2	41
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	3	5	5	3	3	4	4	1	5	3	4	4	59
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	73
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5		5	5	4	4	66
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	59
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	5	4	68
3: MtSterling	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	74
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	72
3: MtSterling	5	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	64
3: MtSterling	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	65
3: MtSterling	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	5	3	4	2	2	3	56
3: MtSterling	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	3	60
3: MtSterling	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	3	3	3	56
MSE Average	4.	4.	4.5	4.	4.	4.	3.	3.	4.	4.	3.	4.	4.	4.	3.8	61.9
	5	2		5	3	1	8	8	2	2	7	2	4	2		

4.4

4

4

School	1_1 Reflective Dialogue	1_2 De-Privatization of Practice	1_3 Collective Focus on Student Learning	1_4 Collaboration	1_5 Shared Norms and Values	2_1 Openness to Improvement	2_2 Trust and Respect	2_3 Cognitive and Skill Base	2_4 Supportive Leadership	2_5 Socialization	3_1 Time to Meet and Talk	3_2 Physical Proximity	3_3 Interdependent Teaching Roles	3_4 Communication Structures	3_5 Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy	Overall Total
4: MCIS	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	5	5	3	5	5	68
4: MCIS	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	57
4: MCIS	4	4	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	63
4: MCIS	3	2	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	62
4: MCIS	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	4		64
4: MCIS	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	3	3	4	3	4	4	4	3	54
4: MCIS	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	64
4: MCIS	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	66
4: MCIS	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	65
4: MCIS	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	64
4: MCIS	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	4	3	5	5	5	4	68
4: MCIS	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	4	3	56
4: MCIS	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	67
4: MCIS	4	3	5	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	61
4: MCIS	5	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	3	5	4	65
4: MCIS	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	71
4: MCIS	4	4	4	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	66
4: MCIS	5	4	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	68
4: MCIS	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	4	5	5	73
4: MCIS	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	3	4	3	3	3	5	5	4	59
4: MCIS	5	4	5	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	4	66
4: MCIS	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	68
4: MCIS	4	4	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	4	64
4: MCIS	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	3	3	4	4	64
4: MCIS	5	4	4	4	5	3	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	61
4: MCIS	5	4	5	5	5	3	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	70
4: MCIS	3	3	2	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	3	4	2	3	4	49
4: MCIS	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	58
4: MCIS	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	57

4: MCIS	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	5	4	3	4	4	4	3	64
4: MCIS	4	4	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	66
4: MCIS	5	5	5	5	4	3	4	4	5	5	4	4	3	4	4	64
4: MCIS	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	5	4	3	3	4	4	4	59
4: MCIS	4	4	4	4	4	2	3	4	4	3	4	3	4	5	4	56
4: MCIS	5	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	62
4: MCIS	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	5	5	5	2	2	5	4	4	64
4: MCIS	4	5	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	4	3	4	4	58
MCIS Average	4.4	4.1	4.3	4.6	4.3	4	4.1	4.1	4.6	4.3	3.9	4.1	4.1	4.3	3.9	63

4.3

4.2

4.1

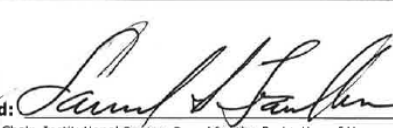
School	1_1 Reflective Dialogue	1_2 De-Privatization of Practice	1_3 Collective Focus on Student Learning	1_4 Collaboration	1_5 Shared Norms and Values	2_1 Openness to Improvement	2_2 Trust and Respect	2_3 Cognitive and Skill Base	2_4 Supportive Leadership	2_5 Socialization	3_1 Time to Meet and Talk	3_2 Physical Proximity	3_3 Interdependent Teaching Roles	3_4 Communication Structures	3_5 Teacher Empowerment and School Autonomy	Overall Total
5: McNabb	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	3	5	5	2	4	4	57
5: McNabb	5	3	4	4	4	4	2	2	5	4	4	5	1	4	4	55
5: McNabb	4	2	2	4	4	4	3	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	5	60
5: McNabb	4	2	3	5	3	2	2	4	3	3	3	5	2	4	2	47
5: McNabb	3	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	3	3	4	4	59
5: McNabb	4	2	3	5	4	4		3	4	4	3	5	2	3	4	50
5: McNabb	5	4	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	5	2	4	2	3	4	61
5: McNabb	4	4	3	3	4	3	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	56
5: McNabb	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	70
5: McNabb	5	4	4	4	4	2	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	4	4	60
5: McNabb	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	64
5: McNabb	5	3	5	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5	5	4	67
5: McNabb	4	5	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	3	2	5	5	4	4	59
5: McNabb	4	4	4	5	4	3	2	3	4	2	4	5	5	4	4	57
5: McNabb	4	5	5	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	68
5: McNabb	4	4	5	4	4	4	4	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	60
5: McNabb	4	4	5	5	4	4	5	4	5	5	3	4	5	4	4	65
5: McNabb	5	4	4	4	5	5	3	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	4	63
5: McNabb	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	5	3	4	4	62
5: McNabb	4	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	3	3	3	62
5: McNabb	5	2	3	3	3	4	4	3	4	4	5	4	5	2	3	54
5: McNabb	5	4	4	5	3	4	2	4	4	4	1	4	4	4	2	54
5: McNabb	5	3	3	4	4	4	3	2	4	3	4	4	4	4	3	54
5: McNabb	4	4	4	4	4	3	3	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	2	53
5: McNabb	5	4	4	5	4	4	3	4	4	4	5	5	4	5	5	65
5: McNabb	5	4	4	4	5	4	4	3	5	4	4	5	4	4	4	63
5: McNabb	4	3	5	4	4	4	4	4	5	4	3	4	3	4	4	59
5: McNabb	5	4	5	5	4	4	4	4	5	5	4	4	4	5	4	66

5: McNabb	3	4	3	4	3	3	2	3	4	3	4	5	5	5	3	54
5: McNabb	1	3	5	5	3	1	1	1	1	1	3	2	1	2	1	31
5: McNabb	4	4	4	3	3	4	2	3	3	3	2	4	4	3	2	48
5: McNabb	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	5	2	4	5	5	5	71
5: McNabb	5	4	4	4	4	3	2	4	4	4	4	4	4	2	2	54
5: McNabb	4	4	3	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	4	59
5: McNabb	3	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	5	5	4	5	4	4	5	68
McNabb Average	4.2	3.8	4.1	4.4	4.1	3.8	3.3	3.7	4.3	3.8	3.6	4.5	3.7	3.9	3.7	58.7

4.1

3.8

3.9

MSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research NOTIFICATION OF EXEMPT PROTOCOL REVIEW	
Principal Investigator/Researcher:	
Name: <u>Shannon Keith Gross</u>	Title: <u>EdD student</u>
Campus Address: <u>701 GH</u>	Campus Phone: <u>859-585-9328</u>
Department: <u>Department of Ed Leadership</u>	
Purpose:	
Title of Project/Course: <u>Professional Learning Communities</u>	
Funding Source/Agency: <u>NA</u>	
Period of Project/Course: From: <u>10/24/13</u>	To: <u>10/23/19</u>
Protocol Review Number: <u>13-10-28</u>	
Initial Review <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Continuing Review <input type="checkbox"/>	
The human subject use protocol described above has been reviewed by the MSU Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research with the following results:	
The IRB determined the project, as stated, is exempt based on federal regulation 46.101(b)(1). Federal regulations require that the IRB be notified if anything in the research changes, as additional review may be necessary.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Approved, may proceed as revised	
<u>10/24/13</u> Approval Date	
In accordance with new procedures instituted by the IRB, and because your study is exempt , you are not required to complete continuation or final review reports. However, it is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full-board review.	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input type="checkbox"/> Regulatory requirements have been met for the waiver of documentation of consent	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regulatory requirements have been met for the waiver of informed consent	
<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> N/A <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Criteria for use of children has been met	
Signed:  Date: <u>10/24/13</u>	
<small>Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research</small>	
Please refer to the protocol review number in any future references to this protocol. If any revisions are made to a project or if any unforeseen risks arise during an investigation, the principal investigator must submit Form H to the IRB, fully explaining all changes or unexpected risks.	
pc: Protocol File	

Institutional Review Board
Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
901 Ginger Hall
(606) 783-9370



MEMORANDUM

DATE: October 24, 2013
TO: Shannon Keith Gross
FROM: Institutional Review Board (IRB)
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
SUBJECT: **Exempt Protocol #13-10-28**

On October 24, 2013 the IRB determined that your project entitled, ***Professional Learning Communities***, meets the criteria to qualify as an exempt study.

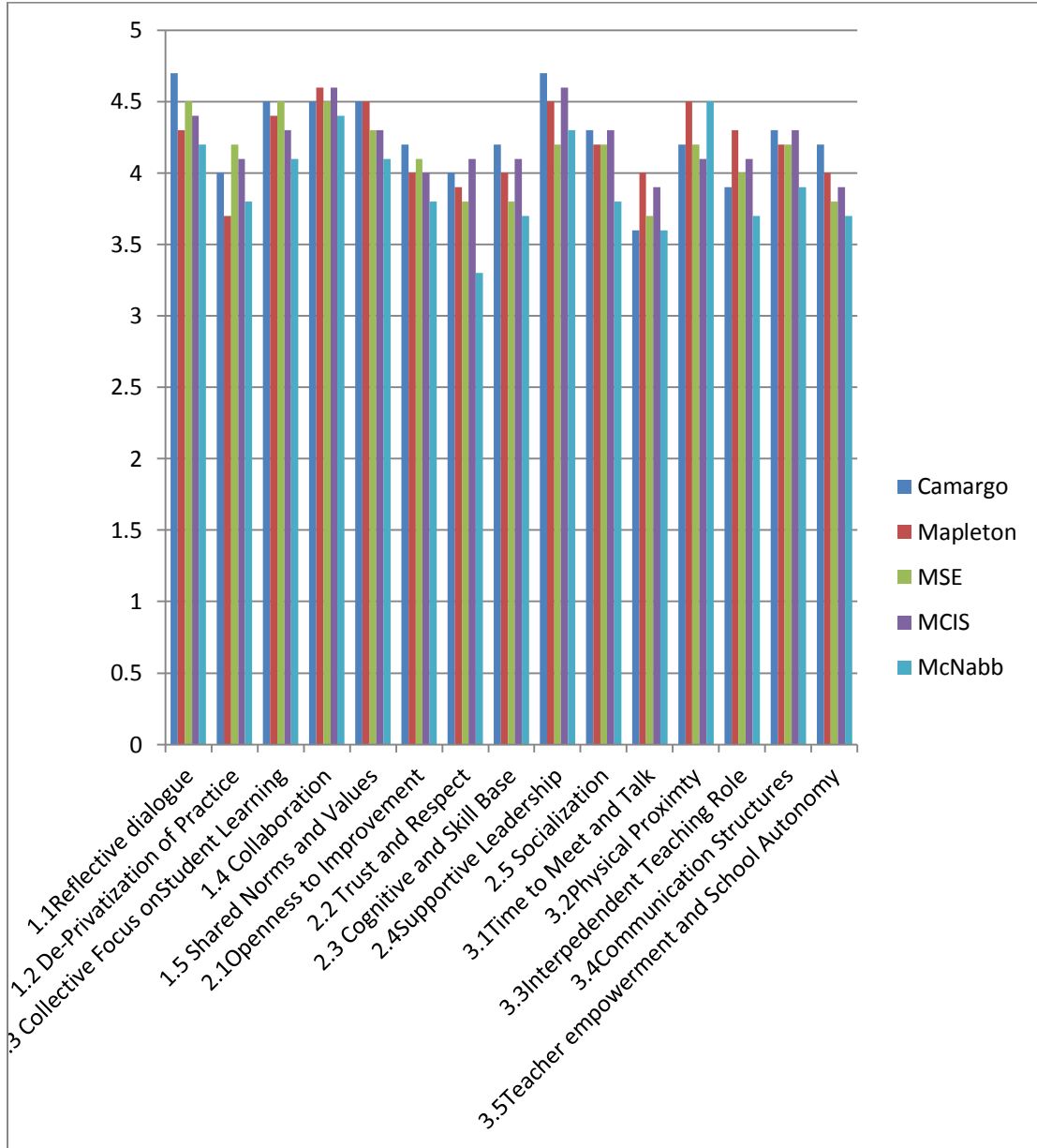
In accordance with new procedures instituted by the IRB, **and because your study is exempt**, you are not required to submit Part H (Annual Continuing Review) or a Part H (Final Report). **However, if any revisions are made to a project or if any unexpected risks arise during an investigation the principal investigator must submit Part H (Change of Status) to the IRB, fully explaining all changes or unexpected risks. It is your responsibility to notify the IRB prior to making any changes to the study. Please note that changes made to an exempt protocol may disqualify it from exempt status and may require an expedited or full-board review.**

The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will hold your exemption application for six years. Before the end of the sixth year, you will be notified that your protocol will be closed. If your project is still ongoing, you will need to contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs upon receipt of that letter and follow the instructions for completing a new exemption application. *It is important that you keep your address current with the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.*

If you have any questions, contact the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs at (606)-783-2010.

pc: IRB File

Individual School Construct Survey and Sub Question Results





Joshua Powell, Ph.D., Superintendent
Kenney Gulley, Chairperson
Kelly Murphy, Vice Chairperson

**District Vision - To lead all of Kentucky's
children by achieving top 10 in everything we do**

Donna Wilson, Board Member
Alice Anderson, Board Member
Sharon Smith-Breiner, Board Member

October 22, 2013

Mr. Shannon Gross
Twenhofel Middle School
11846 Taylor Mill Road
Independence, KY 41051

Dear Mr. Gross:

This letter serves as official notification that permission is hereby granted for you to conduct a survey in the Montgomery County School System. It is my understanding that the survey will focus on Professional Learning Communities and will include certified staff members at Mt. Sterling Elementary, Camargo Elementary, Mapleton Elementary, Montgomery County Intermediate and McNabb Middle.

Please let me know if I can be of further assistance. I look forward to receiving a copy of the survey results.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joshua E. Powell", is written over a faint, circular watermark or seal.

Joshua E. Powell, Ph.D.
Superintendent

VITA

SHANNON K. GROSS

Date of Birth: November, 30, 1977

Place of Birth: Morehead, Kentucky

EDUCATION

May, 2002 Bachelor of Science Health and Physical Education K-12
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

May, 2005 Master of Arts in School Administration
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

December, 2006 Rank 1, Supervisor of Instruction
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

December, 2007 Superintendent of Schools Certification
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

August, 2011 Ed.S. Degree – School Administration
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky

Pending Doctor of Education
Morehead State University
Morehead, Kentucky

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

2002-2006	Health & Physical Education Teacher, McNabb Middle School Montgomery County Board of Education Mount Sterling, Kentucky
2006-2012	Assistant Principal, McNabb Middle School Montgomery County Board of Education Mount Sterling, Kentucky
2012-Present	Principal, Twenhofel Middle School Kenton County Board of Education Independence, Kentucky

HONORS

Not Applicable

PUBLICATIONS

Not Applicable