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ABSTRACT

THE INDUCTION PROCESS OF NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS
INTO THE EXISTING SCHOOL CULTURE
OF NILES COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

by

Zechariah M. Hoyt

Chair: Shirley Freed

ABSTRACT OF GRADUATE STUDENT RESEARCH

Dissertation

Andrews University

School of Education

Title: THE INDUCTION PROCESS OF NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS INTO THE EXISTING SCHOOL CULTURE OF NILES COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Name of researcher: Zechariah M. Hoyt

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Date completed: April 2015

Problem

Schools, like other organizations, provide capital resources and experiences that promote the professional development of their employees. Professional learning and skill development are essential for educators as they work to improve student achievement. However, conventional professional development often fails to provide a collaborative social construction of knowledge that supports educators in transforming their schools into a strong culture of shared learning. This is especially evident when induction programs do not provide collaborative environments for new teachers to work with each other and other experienced teachers. This study explored the induction of newly hired personnel within a district located in the southwest corner of Michigan. The purpose was

to describe the existing school culture that newly hired teachers experienced and to understand the processes, structures and strategies used through the induction experience to create and nurture a collaboratively engaged learning community.

Conceptual Frame

Concepts from scholarship on social interdependence, cooperative learning, and collaborative professional development guide this study. Kurt Koffka argued in his theory of social interdependence that a dynamic quality in groups was the development of an interdependence that influenced roles, learning and action and created positive interaction, individual accountability, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing for learning. Practice and research on cooperative learning grew out of this work. Cooperative learning occurs when individuals work collectively to achieve group goals. While formal cooperative learning requires an instructor to make pre-instructional decisions, explain tasks and cooperative structure, monitor learning, and intervene to provide assistance, informal processes can also involve these characteristics of learning in a group.

Critical Friend Groups (CFGs) were developed as a professional learning modality that builds on cooperative learning literature. These groups are developed around norms, routines, and shared vision with a foundation of learning through social means. CFGs are focused on regular and intentional use of protocols developing the behaviors of collaboration and reflection as well as a focus on teaching and learning managed by skilled facilitation.

Methods

This study explored Niles Community Schools' (NCS) culture and the induction of newly hired teachers using a mixed-method approach. I surveyed all teachers within NCS and interviewed 19 induction participants. The School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) is a three-factor, 17-item survey about a school's culture. The factors focus on professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality, and self-determination/efficacy. The survey is designed to assess the general health of a school and/or district. Analysis of this survey allowed me to describe the existing school and district culture by descriptive statistics with further analysis of significant differences.

Qualitative data were collected from teachers through focus-group interviews, written reflections, observations, and meeting agendas in order to describe, analyze, and interpret patterns of behavior, beliefs, and culture. The data was used to describe the learning culture, identify structures, and recognize individuals who contributed to the success of the newly hired teachers within Niles Community Schools.

Results

Seventy-six teachers' responses to the survey were analyzed, and 19 participated in focus groups. The highest mean on the survey came from the item asking how often they met to discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues. The lowest mean came from the item asking if they visit/talk with each other outside of the school. This and other data suggest that social interaction between respondents was primarily work related. Mentors in an induction CFG gave an overall rating that indicated the culture in buildings and the district needs modifications and improvements. Newly hired teacher participants in the CFG induction program had an overall rating that indicated the culture in the buildings

and the district should be monitored and maintained, making positive adjustments. New teacher participants scored significantly higher than did mentors and teachers not participating in the induction program on two indicators: *Staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than wait for supervisors to tell them what to do*, and *People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here*.

Data and focus group responses indicate participants recognized a need and had a desire to learn from each other. Both participants and mentors reported developing confidence in their ability and skills to lead while in the program. They found the work beneficial and could identify specific skills associated with collaboration and felt more attuned with their colleagues. There was value in reflection, connecting learning as well as providing feedback for future learning. Induction participants recognized that no matter how many years of experience they brought to the district, teachers still could learn or provide insight for others to learn.

Structures that made learning and cultural development effective included meetings designed with clear norms, goals, protocols, team building, and a review of prior learning, and reflection. Support and training to equip district coaches (principals) on aligning district goals and objectives to help individuals and groups meet their goals was also seen as important.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Induction programs can create an environment for collaborative engagement that promotes adult and organizational learning. As they provide opportunities to share and learn, they fuel a passion for growth that can nurture a culture of learning and achievement throughout the school. As leaders work to cultivate a mind-set that adults

must be the primary learners within the school, they can create processes and experiences that are supportive of new teacher development. The development of specific induction goals that align with the organization's goals and individual growth seems central in the success of such a collaborative. Intentional meeting design should be developed from district and program goals while simultaneously integrating participants' needs and wants, since choice is vital in ownership of learning.

Traditional models of mentoring generally have a 1:1 ratio between mentor and mentee. Creating a constellation of mentoring relationships with multiple educators growing their knowledge base together, provides newly hired teachers a richer environment for learning and opportunity to maximize their potential. Learning communities should integrate skill development, provide protocols (learning plans), and decentralize leadership to provide for organizational development. Mentors should have clear expectations (job descriptions) yet maintain flexibility in their work. They should work directly with a coach to develop their own skills while developing those they mentor. This connection is the backbone to the nurturing and creation of an organizational culture grounded in learning and growth.

Successful induction should be determined by the sustainability created through organic development. Non-participants should become participants, participants should become mentors, and mentors should become coaches. Once this reciprocity is integrated throughout the organization, there is a high potential for the creation of an organizational culture conducive to creativity, innovation, and continuous adult learning through a vibrant environment of engagement.

Andrews University

School of Education

THE INDUCTION PROCESS OF NEWLY HIRED TEACHERS
INTO THE EXISTING SCHOOL CULTURE
OF NILES COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

A Dissertation

Presented in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Zechariah M. Hoyt

April 2015

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Member: Duane Covrig

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Date approved

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study and work to God for His daily strength. Without assurance that He was/is in control, this opportunity would not be realized. Alyse, my wife, and two daughters, Elynne and Ariaah, provided support by giving me an opportunity to work early mornings, summer days, and weekends to allow this step in my learning journey. My parents instilled a strong work ethic, accountability, and infinite forgiveness. David L. Cooke encouraged me on many occasions to ask myself why and for what purpose. Colleagues nurtured and challenged my thinking and learning through this process but more importantly actively participated in the noble work of self-growth and teaching children.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Problem

The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) finds that the United States spends more per student than most countries; however, this expenditure has not translated into overall higher achievement (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], 2010). Estimates by the Institute of Education Sciences suggest 3.2 million teachers are teaching over 49.4 million students. Human and financial resources are fundamental for educating students (National Center for Educational Statistics [NCES], 2011). Educational entities employ a vast variety of individuals who educate children to only basic levels of understanding. With this money and human capital, the United States' educational system is in need of development.

Even though the United States spends \$525 billion annually on education (NCES, 2011) those educated by America's schools globally rank 26th in math, 23rd in science, and 17th in reading (OECD, 2010). The second largest amount of financial resources in the United States is directed to the educational workforce. Despite these large amounts of money spent to educate our youth, many proclaim that our low international rankings are a result of the mismatch between the ability and skills of our teachers to meet the varying needs of today's learners.

As decades have elapsed from the industrial era, to the knowledge era, now into the conceptual age of the 21st century, individuals educating children need continued professional growth opportunities to meet the changing and varying learner needs (Frank, Zhao, Penuel, Ellefson, & Porter, 2011; Zhao, 2009). Providing traditional learning opportunities for educational professionals is not enough; to have a direct impact on student achievement and compete at a global level, learning organizations must create, develop, and maintain a culture of learning (Reeves, 2006). Therefore, understanding the aspects of developing a culture that improves adult learning is a necessary means for meeting the increased rigor and expectations of students.

According to Reeves (2006), hallmarks of a learning culture in educational environments include collaboration and decision making that foster adaptability. Traditional professional development and professional learning have typically evolved around theory or strategies necessary for effective teaching. Traditional professional development models in education rely on lectures or *sit and get* informational sessions, which generally lack the necessary social construction of knowledge (Saunders, Goldenberg, & Gallimore, 2009). The deficiency of appropriate supervisor feedback, professional development plans without opportunities for teachers to translate learning into teaching, and lack of attention to student outcomes all contribute to mediocre performance by students (R. DuFour, 2002; Schmoker, 2006; T. Wagner, 2004).

Teacher isolation, or the lack of collaboration, is a major contributing factor to average student achievement (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; T. Wagner, 2008). Time is an often-mentioned obstacle to collaborative learning among educational colleagues. Reeves (2006) confronts this obstacle by pointing out the enormous amounts of time and energy

that are consumed when teachers fail to collaborate. McCauley and Van Velsor (2004) respond to isolation and the importance of collaboration and believe educators should

be more than well-developed individuals. They need well-developed connections between individuals and deeper and more meaningful relationships around shared work. They need to form and deepen relationships within communities and across the boundaries between groups and collectives. They need to develop the capacities of collectives for shared sense making and for change. They need to get better at integrating the learning into a unified sense of purpose and direction, new systems, and coherent shifts in culture—that is, to enact leadership together through the connections between individuals, groups, and organizations. (p. 21)

The charge becomes designing professional learning opportunities, which change the culture of passively receiving professional development to actively being engaged in the development of professional learning. A variety of adult learning models have been developed and researched (Frank et al., 2011; Gersten, Dimino, Jayanthi, Kim, & Santoro, 2010; Grant, 2006; Levine, 2011; Thoonen, Slegers, Oort, Peetsma, & Geijsel, 2011; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). It is relevant to understand and strategically design learning models around staff needs, with an ultimate goal of improved student achievement.

Teachers' ability to develop instructional capacities through social construction of knowledge is a necessary element for student achievement. However, practical implementation is limited and minimally researched. Over the past 20 years, there have been the development of Professional Learning Communities and more recently the processes of Critical Friends Groups. Both these models of a professional community consist of structures for developing and changing cultural barriers detrimental to achieving improved student achievement (Richard DuFour & DuFour, 2012; Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002; Levine, 2011). When teachers are allowed to make collective decisions on pedagogy, their perceptions of innovation positively affect student

achievement (Dumay, 2009). Including individuals in the professional learning design challenges educators to innovate, collaborate, inquire, and design instruction focused around outcomes (Miller & Rowan, 2006; Sarros, Cooper, & Santora, 2008; Saunders et al., 2009).

Shealy and Kruse (1995) define elements of a professional learning community as collaborative, deprivatized, student centered, reflective, and a place where norms and values are shared. For professional learning communities to develop and flourish, professional growth relies on individuals' ability to effectively collaborate. There is a need to understand and explore the way Critical Friends Groups, through the development of a collaborative professional learning model, can change the culture of teacher isolation and improve student achievement, helping the United States to compete globally in reading, science, and math.

Statement of the Problem

American academic achievement falls behind globally, nationally, and locally in many school districts. Instruction has the largest influence on achievement, and most instruction could significantly improve if strategically created opportunities for collaboration among individuals occur (Schmoker, 2006). Unfortunately, institutional issues often create a culture where mediocre student achievement is normal and maximum student achievement is not realized. Compounding the issue is traditional training, development, and learning opportunities that only provide educators with a passive and individual approach to instruction. This conventional method does not develop the collaborative social construction of knowledge necessary for educators to transform their individual growth in the context of a group and within the organization's

culture. We need to know what processes, structures, and strategies support collaborative development within individuals in an educational organization, specifically with a focus on inducting newly hired educators into an organization's professional community.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to investigate the existing school culture that newly hired teachers experience within a school district in Southwest Michigan. I have used the written plans, participant feedback, planning meeting minutes, observations, and interviews to describe the elements of the induction CFG learning communities. These artifacts guided in understanding the processes, structures, and strategies used to create and nurture an engaged learning community. I have sought to identify how the development of newly hired teachers can impact the engagement within a school and district's culture.

Research Questions

The following overarching questions guided the present study:

1(a). How do teachers and staff within Niles Community Schools (NCS) describe their building and district culture?

1(b). Are there significant differences between the new teacher-induction teachers, mentor-induction teachers, or non-induction participants?

2(a). How do newly hired teachers (new teacher-induction) describe the learning culture they experience in their building and district level CFG?

2(b). What structures of the induction CFG processes impact perspectives of new teacher-induction participants in the NCS?

2(c). Who contributes to the success of the participants in the induction CFG work within NCS?

Research Design

A mixed-methods approach was used to understand and explore the way induction CFGs develop collaboration between new teachers. A School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) was administered to the entire school district. Summative statistical analysis identified factors as strengths within the district and areas needing attention. The SCTS provided a description of the existing building and district culture while the interviews and artifacts provided a more specific description of the processes and perspectives toward the induction CFG and school culture. Interviews, sequential-transformative growth data through qualitative open-ended questions, and emerging growth were the qualitative phase of this research. This approach was grounded through pragmatic knowledge claims (Creswell, 2009).

I focused on individuals' social and emotional growth along with skill development and structures relative to the collaborative construct of induction participants and their perspectives and learning within their communities. My interest was how newly hired personnel in induction CFG teams grew and developed around social-structured interactions and how that collaboration impacts individual growth. Individual growth developed through social interaction should lead to an improved culture of adult learning and ultimately impact student achievement (Gruenert, 1998).

Context of Study

In 2005-06, Niles Community Schools (NCS) began the process of incorporating a district component within the induction program. My interest in induction work began around the same time. 2010 brought a new superintendent with expertise on the CFG processes. Beginning that year, the induction program adjusted to fit the Critical Friends Group model. Teachers were assigned an individual mentor, as the law requires, and all newly hired teachers met monthly. During the 2011-12 school year, NCS hired very few teachers so other district teachers were invited to be part of the existing three cohorts from the prior year. This change was made to continue the development of district culture, learning and collaboration.

Forty-six (47.92%) of the participants completing the survey participated in the new teacher induction program. Overall, 87.5% of the teachers completing the survey had some working knowledge of CFG work either by their involvement in a new teacher CFG, a building, or district level CFG (see Table 1). Survey respondents could have answered yes to more than one of the questions since they could be a trained coach also involved in a district CFG, for example.

Table 1

Involved or Trained in NCS CFG Work

Question	Yes	%	No	%
Participation in a New Teacher Induction CFG	46	47.92	50	52.08
Participation in a Building Level CFG	66	68.75	30	31.25
Participation in a District Level CFG (Other than a New Teacher CFG)	34	35.42	62	64.58
Trained as a CFG Coach	30	31.25	66	68.75
Total involved in CFG work	84	87.50	12	12.50

With a district philosophy that educators are professionals, who bring many talents and expertise to the table, a concern for teacher preparedness for the profession loomed. Consistent average results and 68 newly hired teachers between 2012 and 2013 challenged the district to adjust the induction program. This adjustment was an attempt to integrate and extend the learning culture and collaboration within Niles Community Schools. Some teachers were beginning their first year right out of college. Others teachers came with teaching experience; yet some had prior work or life experiences and entered the profession as a career change. Appendix A provides an overview of the 2013-14 program as it relates to the Critical Friends Group work within NCS.

Rationale for the Study

This study focuses on the development of newly hired instructors as they enter into a district and their induction into and development within the organizational culture they are placed. With this induction is an opportunity to change the organizational culture to one of a learning culture through the processes of the Critical Friends Groups. There is a need to identify, explore and describe the Critical Friends Group and how the process develops a collaborative learning culture. By identifying the processes and factors that cultivate collaborative development of newly hired teachers, learning organizations can incorporate these processes into their induction or professional development programs, increasing the likelihood of improved adult learning which can lead to improved student learning.

Conceptual Framework

Kurt Koffka developed the theory of social interdependence in the early 1900s. Koffka proposed that a group would be dynamic since the interdependence among members is continuously varied. This consistent interdependence has an impact on a group's dynamic. Deutsch in the 1920s and 30s furthered Koffka's work by expanding this theory with the basic premise that interdependence can be structured and can determine how individuals interact with each other. This interaction largely determines the productivity and group outcomes (Deutsch, 1949). Positive interactions result in members sharing resources, supporting, encouraging and praising each other's efforts to learn (D. W. Johnson & Johnson, 1989). From the social interdependence theory emerged the concept of Cooperative Learning.

Cooperative learning focuses on instruction design and learning that is goal driven. The instructor or coach uses support the majority of the time with a focus on working cooperatively with others, competitive fun and enjoyment, and work being done autonomously on their own. Cooperative base groups are generally long-term relationships, have heterogeneous grouping, and have stable membership (D. Johnson & Johnson, 2013). Groups are comprised of individuals working collectively to achieve group goals. Formal cooperative learning requires an instructor to make pre-instructional decisions, explain tasks and cooperative structure, monitor learning, and intervene to provide assistance (D. Johnson & Johnson, 2013). The instructor also monitors task completion and supports interpersonal and group skill development. Reflection and group attainment of goals are the measurement of effectiveness. For this study, Professional Learning Communities and Critical Friends Groups are considered the adult

learning models with the underlying theory of social interdependence and the guiding principles of cooperative learning.

Professional Learning Communities are strategically developed, and findings suggest Professional Learning Communities take time to develop and have significant impacts on adult and student outcomes (R. DuFour, 2010; Levine, 2011; Schmoker, 2006). They develop norms, routines, and a shared vision. These professional groups are intentionally created and are associated with positive change having an impact on student learning. Levine (2011) points out that these communities exist only where they are intentionally developed. They are usually created with a trained coach and individuals interested in a common goal. Generally, these Professional Learning Communities happen with educators determined to grow their practice, and they generally focus on student work. Professional Learning Communities use a coach to guide members through protocols related to student work. The National School Reform Faculty developed an extension of the Professional Learning Community model, which is called Critical Friends Groups.

The Critical Friends Group model is a structured means for individual and group growth dependent on ideas and the movement towards goals and learning through a social context. They are characterized by two elements: regular and intentional use of protocols developing the behaviors of collaboration and reflection as well as a focus on teaching and learning managed by skilled facilitation. Groups of educators rely heavily on social interdependence and the ability to cooperatively learn. These professional learning teams consist of members having a common interest, and their learning evolves through the use of protocols led by a trained facilitator (National School Reform Faculty

[NSRF], 2012). Groups learn to work together with the aim of establishing student learning outcomes and increasing student achievement. They establish and state student-learning goals, help each other improve teaching practices, collaboratively examine student work, and identify and address school culture issues that affect student achievement. Group members also observe one another at work and offer feedback to each other in challenging but non-threatening ways (NSRF, 2012).

The characteristics imbedded in Critical Friends Group learning are grounded in cooperative learning. Five basic constructs create the structures for cooperative learning and are prominent and dependent on social interdependence within the Critical Friends Group learning model:

1. Positive interdependence is developed around clear tasks or goals that require group commitment.
2. All members are responsible for their share of the work, ensuring that all are committed to the group.
3. Members exhibit promotive interactions (i.e., sharing resources and supporting, encouraging, and praising each other's work).
4. Members use social skills resulting from the development of interpersonal qualities related to effective leadership, decision-making, trust building, communication, and conflict-management.
5. This discussion involves focus on whether group goals are being achieved or not, including the identification of actions leading to results (D. Johnson & Johnson, 2013).

These characteristics are integrated within the professional learning model design of the Critical Friends Group. Each element is considered and developed in order to effectively create the collaborative learning environment for newly hired instructors within Niles Community Schools.

Significance of the Study

Teachers are essential for student achievement; the ability to develop instructional capacities, through a collaborative constructivist approach, is the greatest investment a learning organization can make. Continued research is necessary for identifying the most effective learning approaches for adults, resulting in effective collaborative growth, influencing student achievement. Districts and organizations can benefit from this work as they develop strategies and processes for changing or creating a learning culture for staff. When hiring new staff, this study can help leadership understand the necessary processes, the needs of the newly hired staff, and tools that can improve professional learning and collaboration within a district, school, or organizational setting. Working in silos takes an organization to a certain level; providing the structures, support, and opportunity for collaborative learning can improve organizational culture and ultimately improve achievement.

Designing professional learning opportunities that change the culture of passively receiving professional development to actively engaging and collaborating, as adults, is the process being studied. This process is being studied within the context of an induction program for newly hired instructors within one district. This study is important since student achievement is related to good instruction and positive relationships between instructors within an organization. American children are not competitive

academically, resulting in being unmarketable in a virtual economy (Zhao, 2009); lack of student achievement results in economic disparity. Creating an adult learning environment, through induction CFGs, is the means this approach attempts to affect mediocrity.

Definitions of Terms

Coach: An individual who is supportive and challenging, models desired outcomes, and allows members to demonstrate what they know and are able to do. They provide constructive feedback designed to improve learning and "push" performance towards high standards (NSRF, 2012). These individuals lead CFG meetings.

Collaboration: The ability to call on one another to discuss the mutual development of skills related to new accomplishments in practice or to generate knowledge, ideas or programs that help advance expertise or contribute to school performance (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996, p. 33).

Collaborative Development: Collaborative development involves the intellectual and interpersonal skills that are necessary for productive group interaction (Nagel, 2013).

Collaborative Engagement: Dialogue, relationships, and learning connected through skill development. When groups integrate each component, an organizational culture exists where innovation and creativity emerge.

Critical Friends Group (CFG): Six to 12 teachers and administrators who commit themselves to 2 years of learning to work together with the aim of establishing student learning outcomes and increasing student achievement. They usually meet for 2 hours per month when they establish and publicly state student learning goals, help each other think about improving teaching practices, collaboratively examine student work,

and identify school culture issues that affect student achievement. Group members also observe one another at work at least monthly and offer feedback to each other in challenging but non-threatening ways (NSRF, 2012).

Induction: The entire professional development and support program a district establishes for its newly hired teachers from the first day they are hired (Ribas, 2006).

Induction CFG: Multi-level and content-specific teachers within a district. Trained facilitators coach district meetings, and building level meetings are led by mentor teachers.

Learning Organizations: A learning organization is an organization whose members collectively and continuously work on improving their capacity to create the things they really want to create (Senge, 2006).

Learning Culture: The organization's ability to create opportunities for members to collectively and continuously work on developing their mind-sets and structures to improve their capacity to innovate and create.

Mentor: Someone who is a trusted and respected counselor of others (NSRF, 2012).

Mentor-Teacher Induction: A teacher serving as a mentor within Niles Community Schools induction CFG.

New-Teacher Induction: A teacher participant in an induction CFG in their first 2 years of employment within Niles Community Schools.

Non-Induction: A teacher within Niles Community Schools not involved in an induction CFG.

Norms/Ground Rules: A set of rules arrived at by group consensus designed to guide the behaviors of its members and establish a safe, ordered, and productive context for their work (NSRF, 2012).

Organizational Culture: The deep structure of organizations, which is rooted in the values, beliefs, and assumptions held by organizational members (Dennison, 1996, p. 654). Individuals within groups share basic assumptions, developed over time, which are transmitted to new members as a way one perceives, thinks, and feels in relation to organizational problems (Schein, 2004).

Plus/Delta: A tool used to collect learning ideas from learning community work as well as a tool to collect critical feedback on experience and future learning.

Protocols: Structured processes designed for specific purposes usually related to the collective examination of teacher/student work (NSRF, 2012).

Professional Development: Traditional means of adult development within the educational context of individual development. General delivery is by experts while participants passively receive information (Frank et al., 2011).

Professional Learning: Ability to conceptually change, reflect, experiment, and innovate (Smylie, 1995).

Professional Learning Communities (PLC): A group of people working interdependently toward the same goal (DuFour, 2010).

Team Building: Processes and experiences done collectively for the purpose of constructing and strengthening relationships between and among groups of individuals who have a common task and who need each other to accomplish it (NSRF, 2012).

Delimitations of the Study

This study is delimited to Niles Community Schools' teachers willing to complete the School Culture Triage Survey and induction participants willing to be interviewed. Groups or individuals directly supervised by myself, the researcher, were not observed or invited to participate in interviews.

Limitations of the Study

Limitations for this study include the CFG participants' willingness to be part of this study. Accessibility, availability, and the receptiveness of participants being observed and interviewed could be limiting. Teachers may initially show interest in being part of this study but retention to teach within the Niles Community Schools is dependent on budgetary needs, resignation, or termination. Getting honest responses and doing the study in one district is a limitation. Other limitations include individuals' thoughts and ability to articulate, elaborate, and commit to being interviewed and providing feedback. Teacher interviews for this study were done on a volunteer basis; perspectives of volunteers may not be representative of all participants. Although this study is dependent upon the work being done within the Niles Community Schools, this implementation could be done in any organization.

Summary

Chapter 1 provided an overview of the background and identified the specific problem to be studied. It explained the purpose, presented the research questions, and outlined the design and context for the study. Within this chapter, a conceptual framework and explanation of the significance of the study was discussed. Chapter 2 contains a review of the existing literature while Chapter 3 describes the methodology

behind this study. Chapter 4 is an analysis of the quantitative and qualitative data while Chapter 5 provides an analysis of the findings.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Newly hired teachers experience learning processes as they venture into the culture of a new organization. Through a professional learning community development model, this study explores and describes their experience. Professional learning communities which rely heavily on collaboration have a positive impact on student achievement (Reeves, 2010). Individuals committed to learning, growing, and adapting their skills are needed to effectively increase student achievement. This adult development was studied in the context of an induction program using the Critical Friends Group professional learning model. Training and retaining effective teachers is essential for the progress of education. When continuity, commitment, and learning are lost, mediocre achievement is produced (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Professional development models used to induct educators into learning organizations combat less than proficient levels of student achievement (NCES, 2011).

A body of research has evolved around professional development and the impact on student outcomes. This literature review examined student achievement trends globally, nationally, and locally. Professional learning models have consistent themes relative to professional growth and student achievement (Killion & Roy, 2009).

Professional Learning Communities and Critical Friends Groups are two specific models

for professional learning. Within these models, a deeper understanding of learning communities, leadership, resources, data, learning design, implementation, and outcomes was gained (National Staff Development Council [NSDC], 2012). The National Staff Development Council (2012) has identified these Standards for Professional Learning as aspects contributing to adult learning.

This literature review connects adult learning design, collaborative cultures, and the integration of mentoring and coaching. It explored the impact of adult learning within the context of organizational learning. Finally, it identified areas needing further research in regard to design and development of professional learning within educational organizations. This professional learning becomes the anchor for addressing the varying educational needs of the students being served.

Student Achievement

United States Academic Status

In 2001, the federal government established a law known as the No Child Left Behind Act. This legislation was to ensure all students should receive and gain a high-quality education. Arguments exist that this legislation has had a successful impact on school reform (United States Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). However, over the past decade, the United States has focused on reforming an educational system still not competitive with other countries when comparing assessment data like the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) or the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). Today, training and producing a competent workforce continues to be a challenge for our 21st century educational centers (Zhao, 2009). For 30 years, autonomy has been given to states and local agencies to determine fiscal allowances and

local decision-making (U.S. Department of Education, 1983). Nonetheless, student achievement is failing. Expectations continue to increase, and not meeting these expectations threatens the future success of educational institutions within the United States.

Twenty-four countries trail the U.S. rate of improvement; however, 24 other countries are improving at a faster rate (Hanushek, Peterson, & Woessmann, 2012). Despite government spending up to 35% more per pupil since the early 90s (NCES, 2011) the United States' failure to educate its children at a proficiency level competitive around the world threatens the country's ability to thrive globally. Six percent of U.S. students are performing at the advanced level in math, which is a percentage lower than those attained by 30 other countries (Hanushek et al., 2012). In 2009, only five states set proficiency levels equivalent to the NAEP. Disparity between the U.S. and other countries around the world is evident; likewise, disparity within the United States is apparent. In Virginia, Latinos performed better in fourth grade reading than did White and non-poor students in 17 other states (Schmoker, 2006). The cause of disparity between educational institutions lies within the ability of educators to meet the needs of their students.

Causation of Achievement

Student achievement is dependent on relationships and engagement created by adults (Stronge, 2007). Schmoker (2006) describes that in *good* schools, students read only a fraction of what they need for intellectual development, and writing is seldom seen. Most schools do not follow common curriculum, allowing teachers to teach what they want without prioritizing or agreeing upon a standard (Hess, 2004). Instructional

leadership and supervision is in general minimally affecting the quality of effectiveness or accuracy of content (Elmore, 2003). Lack of teamwork and professional learning is a causal factor for lesson inconsistency relating to mediocre assessment results and student outcomes (T. Wagner, 2004). Fullan (2011) refers to this lack of connectivity as isolation—another cause ensuring that educational outcomes result in ordinary (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; T. Wagner, 2004).

Fifty-five percent of teachers within their first 5 years quit teaching (Varney, 2009). This poor retention rate can be attributed to lack of motivation and passion for the profession; however, it also may be credited to lack of preparation and mentoring (Haberman, 2011; Varney, 2009). Retaining a newly hired workforce is related more to useful training than recruitment (Brown & Wynn, 2007). Cromwell and Kolb (2004) estimate that no more than 15% of learning through traditional professional development transfers to the job. Talented and skilled prospects are not being trained to an appropriate level to meet the demands of the teaching profession.

This training failure can be manifested through individuals at different levels within the organization (Bunch, 2007). Failure could be due to lack of appropriate supervisor feedback, professional development plans that do not provide opportunities for teachers to translate learning into teaching, and lack of attention to student outcomes (DuFour, 2002; Schmoker, 2006; T. Wagner, 2004). When looking at practitioners and their influence on success or failure, Bunch (2007) identifies four reasons achievement is not manifested:

1. Unskilled practitioners provide flawed interventions.
2. Skilled practitioners provide flawed interventions because they lack influence.

3. Skilled practitioners provide valid interventions but learning is not transferred.
4. Skilled practitioners provide valid interventions that produce positive transfer but effectiveness is not perceived.

These behaviors create a deficit with student achievement growth as well as negative perceptions toward professional development and learning.

Most professional development is superficial and does not relate to learning by adults. Further, it does not lead to deeper understanding and learning for students (Gabriel, 2011). Margolis and Doring (2012) did a qualitative 2-year study on teachers working within the context of a “studio” classroom. This professional learning model is based on extensive peer and coach observations. Findings of this study show teachers liked seeing instructional approaches modeled; however, they did not like being visited, and they lacked trust of each other. Failure to connect teacher learning with student achievement is a fundamental cause for poor student achievement.

Student achievement is directly related to the personnel within organizations, adults’ capacities to learn, and ability to change their instructional behaviors. Strategically designed professional development begins to break down this closed-door culture of teaching (Lieberman & Pointer Mace, 2010; Little, 1982; Margolis & Doring, 2012). The challenge for professional development design is mentoring and coaching the adult development through continuous professional learning.

This process has been known as the induction into the profession. A study done by Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) with newly hired K-12 teachers evaluated the effectiveness of a curricular framework based on adult learning within a Beginning Teacher Program. Surfacing in their study was the importance of interactivity, which

leads to collaborative talk providing the comfort for participants to fully participate in this community of practice. Similar to the development of a Professional Learning Community, Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) distinguished that this peer-mentor approach allowed for critical dialogue; however, problematic beliefs were left unchallenged. These habits resonate in an educational culture historically resistant to change (Chassels & Melville, 2009). This historical challenge becomes the focus for designing professional learning that changes adult behaviors and leads to sustainability of a collaborative culture that impacts student achievement.

Designing a Culture for Achievement

Professional Development

Common characteristics exist between professional development models existing prior to educators becoming professionals and once they arrive. These characteristics provide relevant information important to the design of professional learning opportunities. Many of the reviewed professional development models have effective learning designs necessary for guiding adult learning. Evident in the research is minimal learning design opportunities relating to improved student outcomes. However, there is evidence that culture and student achievement correlate (Gruenert, 1998). Student outcomes will not improve without a focused organizational culture intent on learning how to collaboratively and innovatively design opportunities for teachers to participate in learning experiences. These experiences must be focused on meeting the changing demands of the students they teach. A strategic focus on designing opportunities meeting the individual needs and aligning with organizational desires is necessary. For an organization to attain this alignment, research has identified common characteristics

needed for changing the adult learning environment in order to have improved student outcomes.

For decades professional development, where teachers *sit and get* from experts, was prevalent in education. This hegemony is effective for lower levels of learning and implementation (Frank et al., 2011). Frank et al. (2011) refer to this level in a longitudinal study done on diffusion of innovation and knowledge as the “focus” level. This level of implementation is where all staff are introduced to an organization’s innovation, goals or focus. Moving from the focus is the next level of implementation and learning. This level is referred to as the “fiddle” stage, also known as the exploration and experimentation phase. The last stage is referred to as the “friend” stage where individuals collaborate with each other, pushing and challenging their learning from the fiddle stage. This stage had a statistically significant impact on implementation and results. To move from the “focus” level to the “fiddle” level requires adult engagement in their learning. Effective professional development incorporates each stage while considering input from the adults within the learning teams.

One existing process that engages individuals to participate in school decision-making and professional growth is site-based decision making. Miller and Rowan (2006) identify this approach as management innovation where local teachers are empowered to design and replace centralized forms of decision making. Through this decentralized approach, staff feel equipped to guide their own learning needs, allowing personal ownership in their learning. In an analysis of the National Center for Educational Statistics, NCES (2011) identified that schools organized with a strong commitment strategy by staff, find better success in achieving their reform goals. This

ownership in professional growth supported a 26% reduction in teachers leaving and created a positive collaborative culture.

Ball and Cohen (1999) developed a practice-based curriculum and pedagogy for teacher training, Teach for America's Professional Development Model. This model has the underlying assumption that teaching must be learned through the practice of teaching. For this to occur, three fundamental principles must exist:

1. A conception of practice and what it takes to practice well should lie at the foundation of professional education.
2. Professionals should have a concept of what is involved in learning to operate in practice in terms of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes.
3. Teachers should have an ability to investigate practices using tools of professional analysis that must be developed and tested.

These conceptual principles are developed through collaborative discourse and measured by achievement outcomes rather than the process of development. Discourse and collaboration are developed through deep reflection using protocols around classroom observation carried out by coaches and peers.

DuFour (2010) and Webster-Wright (2009) ascertain that professional development in the past focused on the professionals as deficient and in need of developing and directing from an expert. Many professional development models are designed for learning to occur in segments or chunks, primarily scheduled around days devoted to professional development (Song, Joo, & Chermack, 2009). Professional learning design should focus more on improvement and growth rather than on proving a skill (Margolis & Doring, 2012). For this process to occur, within learning organizations,

teacher learning must be imbedded in the actual work of teaching (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). Learning theory suggests learning is constructed through engagement and self-direction. Designing professional development opportunities to develop as a learning organization is vital for organizational growth. The ability to adapt, change, and innovate with the changing standards and differing student needs is a key component for meeting the demands of improving student outcomes (Dumay, 2009). Development of a systematic approach for adult learning is intricate in developing an effective collaborative culture.

Gersten et al. (2010) designed a program based on Wayne, Yoon, Zhu, Cronen, and Garet (2008), applying effective professional development theory with practical implementation and design. The study identified the advancement of team trust to be an intricate component in the development of an effective professional learning team. They examined the impact the Professional Development strategy, Teacher Study Group (TSG), had on student and teacher outcomes. Randomized field trials, observations, and multiple quantitative measures were used to study three states' implementation of the TSG model. Participants were involved in 20 hours of professional learning following a four-step process: review of research, debrief of previous application of research, review of lesson, and collaborative planning. This design led to improvements with teacher growth but resulted in minimal student outcome growth. This model incorporated coaching, guided time, and specific resources used by all participants.

Other common characteristics exist between professional development models; these characteristics provide relevant information important to the design of professional learning opportunities. "If we wish to see educational change, we have to realize that

those day-to-day interactions and mechanisms in our schools, namely teachers, must be entrusted to create change” (Saavedra, 1996, p. 276). This meaningful professional development must extend beyond short-term professional learning models and involve teacher beliefs, values, and underpinnings about education (Cranton & King, 2003). For an organization to attain this alignment, research has identified common characteristics needed for developing an effective collaborative adult learning environment.

Professional Learning Design

Existing research on professional learning communities does connect teacher development to student learning (Guskey, 2000; Jean-Marie & Normore, 2010; Louis et al., 1996; Schmoker, 2006). Thoonen et al.’s (2011) research shows that the more teachers feel comfortable, the less likely they are to experiment and reflect on their practice. Leadership’s ability to design learning cultures fostering professional learning pushes teachers out of their comfort zone into the risk zone, allowing growth. There is a need to help teachers think systematically about connecting their practice with standards for learning. These standards are directly related to student outcomes. Without the time and structure for reflection, learning organizations cannot create an environment necessary for teachers to develop effective strategies for meeting student needs.

Thoonen et al. (2011) found that keeping up to date, experimenting, and reflecting are essential for developing the learning capacity of staff. Creating a professional learning environment promoting self-efficacy, allowing for the internalization of school goals into personal goals, creates for ownership within employee learning. Schools having the capacity to make curricular choices and assessment decisions perform higher than do schools without this autonomy (Kotter, 1999; OECD, 2010). Setting norms

encourages teachers to question their practices, beliefs, assumptions, and values, increasing motivation for growth (Thoonen et al., 2011). Increased professional development time does not relate to inquiry; however, it does provide for greater use of specified program protocols allowing for increased student outcomes. This focused use of structured protocols is an effective strategy for gaining results (Saunders et al., 2009). Trained coaches are intricate in planning and implementing these protocols (Fahey, 2011). Protocol use allows adults to focus and guide learning while reviewing and analyzing student work. Protocols also can be designed to guide, direct, and organize adult skill development.

Timperley and Alton-Lee (2008) did a meta-analysis of multiple studies focusing on designing learning to develop professional skills. Identified through this study were concepts and skills necessary for effective professional growth. These skills included:

listening/watching; being observed and receiving feedback; receiving student activities and materials; engaging with professional readings; authentic experience of subject in action; discussing own theories of practice and their implications; examining student understandings and outcomes; analysis of current practices and reconstruction of new practice; discussing self/mutually identified issues. (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008, p. 342)

For these qualities to be effectively incorporated into a well-defined plan, time, coaching, and strategic planning must be addressed.

Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (1999) believe professional learning and development opportunities should be designed to actively engage teachers to learn in ways that they should teach. City et al. (2009) believe teacher learning should be embedded into the actual work of teaching. Coaches implementing protocols provide the structures for learning to materialize. Learning is continuous and ongoing. It is the strategic process which integrates new knowledge with the parallel development of

implementation within one's work (Watkins & Marsick, 1993). As an organization grows, develops, and continuously learns, the system allows for the opportunity of collaborative learning through effective professional development practices.

These practices focus on the development of basic functions of reflection described as (e.g., planning or analytical problem solving) having more of a critical function by questioning and challenging assumptions (e.g., about self, others, work, or ethical issues) (Webster-Wright, 2009). DuFour (2010) outlines a shift in thinking that incorporates professional learning as job-embedded. Garet, Porter, Andrew, and Desimone (2001) identify effective professional development as providing time to develop, absorb, discuss, and practice new knowledge within the context of instructing for student outcomes. Capitalizing on adult learning models provides the structure for maximizing educators' learning, which directly impacts student achievement.

Multiple initiatives can create barriers that slow progress, which causes a lack of innovation and change. To address this cause of mediocrity, there are professional learning models that incorporate specific components that lead to adult learning, and behavioral and organizational change. Behavioral change can occur through systematic and philosophical beliefs underpinning professional learning. Humans rarely get it right the first time, and making mistakes is key to developing intelligence (Jensen, 2005). Leadership and learning designs that foster imperfection, incorporate reflection, and adjust for the adults within the learning model are needed for professional learning.

A body of research has evolved around professional development design and its impact on outcomes as they relate to learning and learning organizations (Kanold, 2002; Song et al., 2009). Essential in the development of a learning organization is a

foundational understanding of leadership theory and learning theory and their impact on the development of an organization (Garvin, 1993). Organizational culture presents challenges that hinder the ability for organizations to innovate and grow. Strategically designed professional learning models aligned with personal and organizational goals can have a direct impact on organizational design, culture, and change. This adult professional learning should impact interpersonal growth, resulting in improved achievement.

Professional Learning Communities

Grant (2006) and Levine (2011) believe teachers develop and evolve into Teacher Professional Communities (TPC); these communities exist by having norms, routines, and shared vision. Teacher communities evolve naturally and are useful in understanding positive and negative student and staff outcomes (Levine, 2011). TPCs exist in educational settings and can have a positive impact depending on the culture within the learning community. They play an intricate role in professional development. Differing from a TPC is a community that is created separately and strategically within an existing organization. These strategically organized communities are referred to as Professional Learning Communities (PLC).

Organizational goals and vision provide the foundation necessary for professional growth to occur. Gallucci, Van Lare, Yoon, and Boatright (2010) believe professional learning must be coordinated across people, settings, and events. Teacher performance and student outcomes should be the shared responsibility by educators (Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996). A study analyzed data collected through the National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES, 2011) and determined schools organized with a strong

commitment strategy have better success in achieving their goals. Increased teacher participation in content-related professional development and greater stability in teaching staff result in increased learning outcomes. Barrier, Anson, Ording, and Evelyn (2002) found that all initiatives should be tailored to the specific context of the organization. Employees should be engaged in the process of defining initiatives, and high levels of leadership commitment must be maintained for adult learning to occur.

Sabah and Orthner (2007) review an organizational learning model in Israel and the United States, which achieves high levels of staff morale and perceived effectiveness. This model was developed from work done by Senge (2000) with businesses and adapted to schools. The structures necessary for learning were assessed by four dimensions: *collaboration*: staff meet to review progress, *planfulness*: measurable goals and activities must link to outcomes, *diffusion*: share success, *infrastructure*: resources and time are set aside. Designed learning organizations require continuous efforts in exposure of current and rising issues. The capacity to develop an adult learning culture to meet these consistent challenges is integral to the success of the organization and ultimately student achievement. Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) is one form of an adult learning model that has been recognized as having a cultural impact by an educators' ability to learn and grow.

Findings suggest PLCs take time to develop and have significant impacts on adult and student outcomes (DuFour, 2010; Levine, 2011; Schmoker, 2006). They develop norms, routines, and a shared vision. These professional groups are intentionally created and are associated with positive change having an impact on student learning (R. DuFour & Eaker, 1998). Levine (2011) points out that these communities exist only where they

are intentionally developed. They are usually created with a trained coach and individuals interested in a common focus. These PLCs happen with educators determined to grow their practice, and they generally focus around student work (Eaker et al., 2002; Margolis & Doring, 2012).

PLC work begins with guiding principles set through the process of norm development (Dumay, 2009; Thoonen et al., 2011; Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Norms guide team members in working collaboratively through clarifying expectations on how individuals will collectively work together to achieve shared goals (DuFour, 2010). Team norms provide the structure, approach, and culture for “doing business.” Levine (2011) promotes norms that include collaboration, shared objectives, respect for experienced teachers, and promotion of morale. Dumay (2009) adds to the research by showing that a shared norm of innovation appears impactful in schools with low socio-economic composition.

Professional Development has the potential to serve the means of professional growth within organizations if leaders create an environment allowing autonomy. Competent professionals willing to hold each other accountable for collaborative decisions are essential in the creation of autonomy. Leadership’s ability to foster autonomy and personal ownership within an organization is crucial for an organization to reach the capacity of a learning organization that meets students’ needs and provides an educational experience globally competitive. One process used by some leaders is the Critical Friends Group model, which is the conceptual framework for this case study; it will be detailed next.

Critical Friends Groups

The National School Reform Faculty developed the concept of Critical Friends Group. This model of professional growth is characterized by two additional elements extending the Professional Learning Community work. The first element is regular and intentional use of protocols to help build the skills of collaboration and the second element of reflection is focused on teaching and learning. Skilled facilitation by a coach is essential as well (NSRF, 2012). Drago-Severson (2009) developed the four-pillar practices for adult growth that are integrated into the Critical Friends Group. Providing leadership roles, collegial inquiry, mentoring, and action research are all integrated constructs within the Critical Friends Group design.

Having skilled coaches lead the CFG work provides the structure and mechanism for guaranteeing rigor as the group learns. If rigor is not injected into the design of the learning community, the experience and group development do not translate to student results (Ballock, 2008). The use of protocols helps guide participants through actual dilemmas or a review of student work, with a focus on causal factors. This ability to inference is an essential component in the development of teaching and learning skills. Saunders et al. (2009) refer to this concept as inquiry focus. This allows for joint planning, designing, and evaluating instructional materials which leads to community development of teaching practice. These attribution changes take place when there is focus on learning goals, progress tracking, and student results (Saunders et al., 2009). Reeves (2010) supports this definition of professional learning when adults focus on student learning, rigorous measurement of adult decisions, and adult practices rather than programs.

Lieberman and Pointer Mace (2010) believe that public teaching facilitates improved teaching and all can benefit from making practice public. The ability to make meaning of student work and outcomes, through reflection and collaboration, is important to the development of teaching practice. Sixty percent of influence on teachers and leaders is attributed to colleagues while the remaining 40% is associated with professional development seminars, books, and articles (Reeves, 2008). Strong Critical Friend Groups may contribute to 100% of adult learning within the context of the organization's vision and mission toward learning if all aspects are considered.

Studies have documented specific changes in teaching practices that support student learning for participating CFG teachers (Bernacchio, Ros, Washburn, Whitney, & Wood, 2007). These groups find that trust is developed through a deepening sense of purpose and meaning, while seeking insight in understanding students' thinking as it relates to outcomes (Ballock, 2008). This deep analysis and inference lead to adjusting instructional strategies for achievement and behavioral change in both adults and students. Curry (2003) found that CFG participation changed the normal isolation of teachers and created a collegial tie across groups creating a more school-wide approach to meeting the needs of students. This individual learning advances the capacity of the organization to move from learning-silos to organizational learning (Koliba & Lathrop, 2007). Critical in the process of individuals collectively learning is the ability to foster collaborative interactions.

Components of a Culture of Achievement

Collaboration

The Critical Friends Group design creates professional learning opportunities, which change the culture of passively receiving professional development to actively engaging in the development of professional learning. It is relevant to understand and strategically design learning models around staff needs, with an ultimate goal of improved student achievement. A balance of collaboration is needed for effective learning. Too much collaboration and learning could be stifling, too little collaboration and teacher isolation hampers growth. The right amount can lead to stimulation and support from colleagues needed for change (Opfer & Pedder, 2011). Developing the process of collaboration is done by valuing each other through a participative approach leading to the co-creation of meaning and instructional concepts (Carr-Stewart & Walker, 2003).

Nagel (2013) delineates between standards for doing business and process norms for creating a collaborative environment. Standards for doing business are structural norms that are expected as a professional. Process norms include effective questioning, reading body language, focus on changing adult behavior, delayed response, rephrasing, intentional brainstorming, safety in sharing, staying focused, and continuous learning. These concepts are further developed within the learning community with a focus on skill development of those collaborating. Development of interpersonal qualities, within the context of professional learning, is the means necessary to effectively collaborate and hold each other accountable for results.

Cordingley, Bell, Rundell, and Evans (2003) believe collaborative professional development produces change in teacher practice, attitudes, belief, and student

achievement. Most professional development is superficial and disconnected from complex learning by adults and focuses on curriculum and pedagogy issues. This in turn leads to a lack of complex learning by students (Ball & Cohen, 1999). Substantial professional discourse and engagement, in collaborative communities, leads to improved adult instruction and student learning.

Instruction itself has the largest influence on achievement. Through ordinary and accessible arrangements among teachers and administrators, improved instruction is possible (Schmoker, 2006). Kotter (1999) identifies that the behaviors critical to the mission of an organization can become the focus for this cultural transformation. A leader's ability to design professional learning opportunities that push educators to innovate, collaborate, and develop instruction focused around outcomes is vital for changing student performance. Process norms for deliberate discussion and collaborative skills are being developed simultaneously while learning new adult behaviors necessary for changing instruction. These skills are developed through protocols led by coaches within Critical Friend Group meetings. Fahey (2011) describes these skills of collaboration as listening, wait time, withholding solutions, probing and clarifying questions, and reflecting back.

Coaching and Mentoring

Instructional coaching and mentoring are tools for professional growth and learning. Zellers, Howard, and Barcic (2008) refer to the network of support for professional growth as "constellations." Luna and Cullen (1995) refer to this structure as mosaics of supportive relationships. A qualitative (Gallucci et al., 2010) study within three urban districts implemented a coaching program where coaches learned right along-

side those being coached, making the process dynamic. The design implemented specific coaching within a team of first-grade teachers interested in improving reading outcomes. It was recognized (Gallucci et al., 2010) that coaches were conduits for reform, taking information and disseminating it within their district. This coaching approach created a symbiotic relationship where learning was done between coach and teacher (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). This relationship allowed learning to be circulated to and with others. Coaches also provided the opportunity for teachers to participate in observations of other professionals. One professional development model integrated coaching within the context of teacher preparation.

Castle, Fox, and Souder (2006) compared Professional Development Schools (PDS) with non-professional development schools. Their study analyzed the impact of training teachers prior to their employment and then providing continuous support once employed. Castle et al. (2006) used this program provided by George Mason University as basis for their belief that training is vital since inexperienced teachers, those with less than 3 years' experience, produced smaller student learning gains than did experienced teachers. The design of the PDS program was to build connectivity between theory and practice, focusing on one's individual performance and then shifting to a student-centered focus. This approach found PDS students more competent in instruction, management, and assessment, all qualities necessary for an effective start as an educator.

Early training for emerging educators also includes coaching and mentoring while learning the profession. This process has been known as the induction into the profession. A study done by Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) with newly hired K-12 teachers evaluated the effectiveness of a curricular framework based on adult learning

within a Beginning Teacher Program (BTP). Surfacing in their study was the importance of interactivity leading to collaborative talk. Similar to the development of a Professional Learning Community, Cuddapah and Clayton (2011) distinguished that this peer-mentored approach allowed for critical dialogue; however, some problematic assumptions were left unchallenged. Leaving problematic assumptions unchallenged can cause environments where institutional values and norms are left and teacher effects detrimental.

Coaches and mentors are change agents leading people to look at the organization as a whole (Zheng, Qu, & Yang, 2009). These change agents should possess strong and effective communication skills, have the ability to motivate and provide constructive feedback, encourage staff participation in setting goals and developing plans, challenge people, and strengthen teamwork (Barrier et al., 2002). Day and Bakioğlu (1996) identify mentors as being within one of four stages: initiation, development, autonomy, and disenchantment. Each of these stages provides a different perspective necessary to those being mentored but also allows for the mentor to be pushed, depending on their stage. They contend that the rapid rate of change can create incompetence among those being in the profession. This reciprocal learning can provide a mutual growth opportunity for mentor and mentee.

The ability to create an environment where individuals are willing to change rather than are forced to change, creates a culture adaptable to the changing educational landscape. When trust, empowerment, and involvement in decision-making are integrated into a learning culture, there is a less rigid response by personnel to change (Daly, 2009). Leadership celebrating change promotes the norm of risk-taking and

allows members to view change as less intrusive. The existence of trust and leadership approaches that are active and inclusive predict lower levels of threatened responses by staff (Daly, 2009).

Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) distinguish four variables, known as “the four paths,” necessary for leaders to develop in order to influence learning. These paths include rational thought, managing emotions, organizational behaviors, and managing family. For these paths to be developed, leadership must direct resources, knowledge, and attention toward these variables (Leithwood et al., 2010). This study identified collective teacher efficacy, where teachers are responsible for student learning, coupled with the internal motivation that the more teachers are involved, the greater student achievement. Leadership provides the vision, resources, and guidance; but it is the individuals within the learning organization, holding each other accountable to measured outcomes rather than processes (Ball & Cohen, 1999), who have the greatest impact. Developing a culture focused on process development and measured outcomes does require leadership as it develops its organization.

Leadership

Competing at a global level calls for creating a cultural system based on adult professional practice, peer collaboration, and adaptable decision-making. A culture that fosters adult learning links with student outcomes (Bunch, 2007). Culture is the foundation of an organization providing the guide for organizational growth, development, and change (Barrier et al., 2002). Culture is evolutionary yet challenging to manipulate (Denison, 1996; Schein, 2004). Barrier and others (2002) believe leaders

within organizations can influence culture through modeling and reinforcing positive outcomes.

Individuals within an organization need leaders to guide, support, and create an environment conducive for adult learning. K-12 learning organizations carry common characteristics of leaders identified as having two approaches to leadership.

Transformational leadership fosters the capacity for individuals within an organization to have higher levels of personal commitment to goals resulting in greater effort and productivity (Bass & Avolio, 1994). Distributive leadership theory requires learning organizations to shift from a culture of dependency to one of empowerment. Distributive leadership is something not done by an individual to others, rather it is an emergent property of a group of individuals pooling their capabilities (Grant, 2006).

For conditions to be effective, leaders should have communication skills, an ability to motivate and provide constructive feedback, encourage staff participation in setting goals and developing plans, challenge people, and strengthen teamwork (Barrier et al., 2002; Brown & Wynn, 2007; Varney, 2009). This exchange between supervisors and subordinates is defined by Kozlowski and Doherty (1989) as “negotiating latitude,” which includes role taking, role making, and role routinization. One’s ability to personally relate and understand colleagues is vital for leaders and followers to collectively get results. This interaction provides the foundation for effective relationships between colleagues.

It is a leader’s ability to maximize subordinates’ potential, develop their capacity to learn, and use and develop interpersonal qualities that is foundational in developing a learning culture. Growth through trust, care, and relationships is integral for development

and retaining personnel (Varney, 2009). All individuals bring an affective component including feelings or emotional reactions to their task or the organization in general. Individuals within organizations add a value component by internalizing organizational goals into personal goals (Thoonen et al., 2011). It is the leader's responsibility to maximize this human resource. Transformational and distributive leadership rely heavily on the capacity of individuals and their unique skills and talents. The group's ability to grow and develop skills provides the leader with the necessary resources for meeting the educational demands of this era. Leadership theory helps identify the general attitude toward an organization and the approach leadership has in guiding, directing, and teaching.

Van Maele, Forsyth, and Van Houtte (2014) determine trust in leaders based on the nature of the social exchanges between leaders and their colleagues and on aspects of the leader's character. In order for growth and development of an organization to occur, overcoming resistance to trust and development of leadership practices are necessary (Daly, 2009; Gersten et al., 2010; Grant, 2006). Barrier et al. (2002) studied the implementation of an innovative bottom-up culture, composed of behavioral norms that members of an organization follow as they perform their work. By revealing vision, setting high performance expectations, and caring for fellow workers through individuality can be attributes of effective relationship development (Sarros et al., 2008). Developing these professional relationships can be a catalyst for engaging adult learners within an organization, optimizing its human resource potential.

School leaders in a learning culture give rise to conditions that create a context for adult learning that has an impact on student growth (Kanold, 2002). Developing adult

learning capacity and creating cultural conditions for adult learning are vital for healthy educational organizations. The focus on individual and collective adult learning is for the purpose of creating improved and more consistent student learning experiences throughout the school (Kanold, 2002). Improved adult outcomes and learning can relate to an increase in student outcomes (Gersten et al., 2010). Educators must be active participants in their own learning in order to effectively design the learning for their children. Leaders are responsible for designing adult learning that nurtures and develops their team.

Adult Learning

Dewey (1933) has been a profound authority on the understanding of and research undertaken into learning. Dewey's conception of learning was holistic, maintaining it was indefensible to separate thought from experience. Vygotsky's (1978) theoretical framework is that social interaction plays a role in the development of cognition, and community plays an intricate role in the process of "making meaning." Educators work within a social context where thought and experience are routinely practiced.

Kolb (1984) developed an experiential learning cycle, where he described learning as a cyclic process involving active experience, observation and reflection, formulation of concepts, and applying and testing these in practice. Mezirow (1990) challenges learners to reassess assumptions on which beliefs are based, simultaneously acting on insights derived from the new meaning. This meaning is usually developed through community, resulting in transformative learning. Robert Kegan's (1994) constructive-development theory helps one understand how differing behaviors, feelings, and thinking are related to the differences in constructing and making meaning of our

experiences. The challenge becomes in developing experiential learning opportunities for adults.

Creating this experiential learning environment is crucial for an educational organization to become a true learning culture. A leader's ability to combine an understanding of organizational culture, leadership principles, and learning creates an environment conducive for educational organizations to effectively improve adult and student outcomes (Guskey, 2000). Levels of learning within an organization are essential for organizational growth. Organizational learning is dependent on individuals needing to learn, school teams needing to learn, as well as districts needing to learn (Argyris, 1999; Schein, 2010; Senge, 2006).

Constructivist-developmental theory (Breidenstein, 2012; Drago-Severson, 2009; Kegan, 1994) identifies levels of individuals' knowing. These levels of knowing can be attributed to individuals as well as to teams. For schools and organizations to become reflective, learning-focused, and collaborative, individuals within organizations begin at one of these levels. Breidenstein (2012) identifies and defines types of knowing as:

1. Instrumental – There is limited reflection or collaboration when their needs are not met generally through specific, concrete, and a prescribed “right way” of doing something.

2. Socializing – There is reflection and collaboration; however, conflict is uncomfortable and individuals believe that group needs are important.

3. Self-Authoring – There is personal reflection and expected conflict. This conflict is accepted, and these individuals consider personal ideas very important.

It is important to have an understanding of the types of and levels of *knowing* within an organization and the individuals. To effectively identify the school's learning needs, Breidenstein (2012) also identifies and defines the leader's stance as it relates to building a learning culture. These needs for group learning are necessary for a school to improve their adult learning capacity in order to increase student learning (Breidenstein, 2012). The three leadership stances as they relate to the school learning needs are:

1. Instrumental – Leaders can help teachers find the necessary expertise and “best practices.”

2. Socializing – Leaders can construct collaborative groups, guide reflective practice, and build school culture around issues with teaching and learning.

3. Self-Authoring – Leaders can facilitate best practices, build collaborative cultures, and through inquiry create new learning.

Professional learning occurs when teachers develop their skills and take on the responsibility of creating a culture of collaboration focused on results. This responsibility implies a form of leadership by teachers to work collaboratively with all stakeholders toward a shared vision of their school within a culture of mutual respect and trust (Grant, 2006). For a learning organization to fulfill improved student outcomes, it is essential for teachers to become aware of and take up informal leadership roles in the classroom and beyond. Pitts (2005) refers to this leadership practice as participative management, which leads to the formulation of a seven-dimension comprehensive definition: power, decision-making, information, autonomy, initiative and creativity, knowledge and skills, and responsibility. These qualities outline the interpersonal

characteristics necessary for professional learning to occur. It also moves learning and leadership to the self-authoring dimension.

Gallucci et al. (2010) determine particular ways of thinking through interaction with others that transforms thinking in the context of one's own work. This collaborative work leads to new learning through professional dialogue leading to new and improved strategies for effective outcomes. Teacher empowerment and staff collaboration improve student achievement, when teachers are involved in the development of curriculum and instruction (Miller & Rowan, 2006). It is the teacher's ability to negotiate latitude (NL), which signifies the nature and quality of the relationship that develops through reciprocal interactions (Kozlowski & Doherty, 1989). The importance of relationships is characterized by a study done with teachers in Auckland, New Zealand, where teachers reported the value of sharing the experiences with their colleagues (Till, Ferkins, & Handcock, 2011). This study found that teachers with high levels of confidence relied heavily on colleagues for support. Identified in developing teacher leaders are quality relationships that lead to a collaborative culture ultimately creating organizational change (Grant, 2006). Quality relationships are characterized by interpersonal qualities of transparency, trust, respect, a sense of worth, and ability to communicate.

My research, qualitatively and quantitatively, studied the teachers' ability to collaborate within the professional development design of Critical Friend Groups within their organization. This growth and application of learning, as it applies to student outcomes, is a necessary correlation. Student achievement is directly related to the capacity of adults and their abilities to grow and learn. Continued research is necessary

for identifying the most effective learning approaches and protocols resulting in an influence on student achievement.

Summary

This chapter reviewed student achievement within the United States by reviewing global and local achievement. Achievement results were discussed in relationship to issues that public education faces as it professionally develops its teachers. For professional development to be lasting, it must be intentionally designed to meet the adult learning needs. Professional learning design has evolved with a focus on social interdependence and collaborative learning. Professional learning communities and Critical Friends Groups are two models that have been effective in changing school culture into one that is collaborative in nature and can have a lasting impact on student achievement.

Components that lead to a collaborative learning environment are the development of collaboration, coaching and mentoring, leadership, and adult learning. These aspects provide the foundations for creating a culture that is collaboratively engaged, which correlates to improved student achievement. There are multiple learning designs that can impact an organization's ability to design learning, which impacts culture. The following chapter will outline the study of how one district applied the adult learning model of the Critical Friends Group to induct newly hired teachers into the existing culture of Niles Community Schools.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the induction Critical Friends Group (CFG) processes and collaborative development within the Niles Community Schools. Through the implementation of the CFG model, I describe the process of developing a learning community and strategies used for collaborative development. I focus on individuals' social and emotional growth along with skill development relative to the collaborative construct of learning. My interest was newly hired personnel in CFG groups, their development around social interactions, and how that collaboration impacts individual growth and school culture. Individual growth developed through social interaction should lead to improving an adult culture of learning and ultimately impact organizational culture and student achievement (Valentine, 2006).

This study investigated how individuals within schools at Niles Community Schools describe their collaborative culture. Further, it explored and analyzed how newly hired teachers in the Niles Community School district describe their ability to collaborate with colleagues within their induction Critical Friends Group.

Research Questions

The following questions guided my research:

1(a). How do teachers and staff within Niles Community Schools (NCS) describe their building and district culture?

1(b). Are there significant differences between the new teacher-induction teachers, mentor-induction teachers, or non-induction participants?

2(a). How do newly hired teachers (new teacher-induction) describe the learning culture they experience in their building and district level CFG?

2(b). What structures of the induction CFG processes impact perspectives of new teacher-induction participants in the NCS?

2(c). Who contributes to the success of the participants in the induction CFG work within NCS?

Research Design

This study is a mixed-methods design. Mixed method design seeks to elaborate on or expand on findings of one method by using another method (Creswell, 2009). This research used qualitative and quantitative data sources, which was triangulated (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Contextual information facilitated the discovery of cultural nuances. Quantifiable data were collected through the use of the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) (C. R. Wagner, 2006) shown in Appendix B. The survey provided strengths and weaknesses and measured the degree to which perceptions of cultural behaviors were present in a school or the district. A descriptive analysis of the following demographics was a variable that helped identify participants in the induction CFG work: New-Teacher participant in an induction CFG, Mentor in an induction CFG, or Non-Induction participant.

Qualitative ethnographic-designed research was simultaneously conducted. Ethnographic designed studies describe, analyze, and interpret a culture, sharing a group's patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time (Creswell, 2009). The specific focus groups and interviews were multiple instrumental case studies, serving the purpose of revealing insight into a cultural phenomenon of the development of school culture through Critical Friends Groups. I explain the process and structures necessary for collaborative development to exist within Critical Friends Groups through interviews, a survey, agendas, and observation.

Quantitative

Population/Sample

The population surveyed consisted of building principals, teachers, speech pathologists, and behavior specialists within the Niles Community Schools district. This list included all Niles Community Schools staff who fell within these descriptors.

Demographic data collected included

1. Years of Experience
2. Years in District
3. Role: Administrator, Teacher or Behavior Specialist/Speech Pathologist
4. School Building
5. Current Participation in a New Teacher CFG–Yes/No
6. Current Participation in a Building Level CFG–Yes/No
7. Current Participation in a District Level CFG–Yes/No
8. Currently Trained as a CFG Coach–Yes/No.

The groups for this study included teacher participants and mentor participants in the

induction program, along with those that were non-participants.

Data Collection

All building principals, teachers, speech pathologists, and behavior specialists within Niles Community Schools had an opportunity to take the School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS). Data representing only teachers were used for analysis within this study. The survey was administered online through Survey Monkey. Their willingness to take the survey was considered consent and a reminder on the survey gave them an opportunity to opt out. It is my responsibility as the researcher to protect and safeguard the rights of participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). Anonymity was protected by only providing aggregate results of buildings, without disaggregating it by response.

Phillips (1996) and C. Wagner and Masden-Copas (2002) developed and refined the SCTS that has been used across the United States and Canada. The School Culture Triage Survey (SCTS) is a three-factor, 17-item survey about a school's culture. The factors focus on professional collaboration, affiliative collegiality and self-determination/efficacy. Each factor measures a unique aspect of the school's culture. Items are answered using a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, 5 = *Always* or *Almost Always*.

This instrument provides data about critical cultural variables based upon the collective perception of faculty. The factors are (C. R. Wagner, 2006):

- (1) Professional collaboration: Do teachers and staff members meet and work together or solve professional issues—that is, instructional, organizational, or curricular issues?
- (2) Affiliative and collegial relationships: Do people enjoy working together, support one another, and feel valued and included?
- (3) Efficacy or self-determination: Are people in the school because they want to be? Do they work to improve their skills as true professionals or do they

simply see themselves as helpless victims of a large and uncaring bureaucracy? (p. 42)

Data Analysis

I used descriptive statistics to identify participant perspectives on the existing collaboration and culture found in Niles Community Schools. Measures of general tendencies were analyzed with a focus on the overall culture perception as measured by the SCTS for the district. I also did a comparison between three groups of participants: new teachers participating in the induction CFG, mentor teachers participating in the induction CFG, and non-participant teachers within the district. The Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) statistics was used to determine whether significant difference existed within or between the three identified groups. The ANOVA is the most appropriate statistic used when comparing multiple means simultaneously (Howell, 2007). The results of the ANOVA were used to identify participants' perspectives on collaboration and culture while the qualitative process was used to identify how to develop a collaborative culture using an induction CFG model.

Reliability/Validity

The School Culture Triage Survey is a research-based process designed to assess the general health of a school's or district's culture. Researchers at the Center for Improving School Culture have used the SCTS in more than 9,400 schools, in addition to independent researchers (Cunningham, 2003; Melton-Shutt, 2004; Phillips, 1996), providing strong evidence that the instrument is reliable and valid in the study of school culture, student achievement, and staff satisfaction.

Ethics IRB

Research and data collection must be ethical and respect the individuals and sites (Creswell, 2008). This portion of the data was used to identify areas of strength and weakness within the school culture of the Niles Community Schools district. The data were provided to leadership teams to review, analyze, and design their building-level and district-level culture, if they desired. It was not intended to be evaluative in nature and was a guide to focus the qualitative portion of this study. All data were kept confidential and shared with district-level principals upon their request.

Qualitative

Population/Sample

My sample was a purposeful sample (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012) of 8 active induction Critical Friends Groups within the Niles Community Schools. The purposeful sampling approach was designed before data collection and is a concept sampling design (Creswell, 2008). In order to avoid bias, all participants I had direct supervisory duties over were not involved in the sample. These multiple induction Critical Friend Groups and members operate connectively through coaches and mentors, and it was the intent of this study to explore the development of collaboration and culture. The focus groups were representative of the different induction CFGs. Focus group interviews (Appendix C), observations, and agendas were data sources from four building-level induction CFGs, one district-level induction CFG, and a mentor group. These six groups were identified as groups having no individuals directly supervised by myself. District-level documents were also provided which coincided with the overall induction program.

Data Collection

Groups were selected based on their willingness to contribute to this study. Agendas, feedback, focus group interviews, and participant observations were forms of data collected and analyzed. Field notes helped facilitate insight into complex social and cultural nuances. Critical incidents logged through field notes were used to document observations, engage participants in the reflective process, and draw on the personal meaning of experience.

I attended as an observer in cohorts willing to have me; a respect for confidentiality was a priority in the design of this research. Characteristics and components that lead to development of the factors of strength, as identified by the SCTS, are a basis for this portion of research. A review and analysis of meeting plans along with participant feedback were completed. Interviews were completed, which focused around the research questions posed and the results of the SCTS. An analysis of these data coincides with the other data collection points.

Data Analysis

Qualitative research is interpretive where personal review looks for themes that capture the major categories of information (Creswell, 2008). The process of collecting and analyzing happened concurrently. Through this analysis, a balance of description, analysis, and interpretation for effectively discussing findings occurs (Creswell, 2008). These findings reflect back to the literature as evidence of prior research and then advance the literature through analysis and understanding of the case study. The School Culture Triage Survey statistic summary, document review, surveys, observations, and critical incidents are data sources in this study; each is used for theme analysis.

Transcripts and documents were entered into the computer program Dedoose, where analysis was conducted. The collection of agendas, meeting feedback, interviews, and observations were analyzed, considering individuals' anonymity without compromising content. The conceptual framework of the Critical Friends Group work with a focus on social interdependence theory was one foundation for my coding. Coding began by identifying perspectives that spoke to the collaborative phenomena within this CFG work. Within collaboration, it was identified that culture, adult learning, structures, and leadership emerged as major themes. Each of these major themes aligns with the theoretical constructs of social interdependence theory, which are positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing into learning situations (D.W. Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

The five constructs are all qualities that create the induction CFG culture. From the perspectives of the participants, they were able to identify elements and strategies that led to their adult learning. Structures that created this culture included meeting times and duration, group composition, goal orientation, setting expectations, agenda development, reflection and feedback. The last major theme was leadership, which focused on coaches, mentors, administrators, and colleagues.

The other foundation for my coding was the School Culture Triage Survey. This survey measured the perspective of staff within the culture of a building and district. Professional collaboration, affiliative and collegial relationships, and efficacy or self-determination are the three categories measured. These categories helped me identify

themes that were consistent structures or perceptions leading to each of the three groupings.

Reliability/Validity

Bloomberg and Volpe (2012) outline the standards that are used for a good qualitative study: validity and reliability. To evaluate the validity of this study, the following filters were addressed. Credibility is the ability to match up the portrayal of participants by the researcher's perception. This portrayal can be accurate through the use of a peer examining and auditing my notes. All participants reviewed transcripts and provided any adjustments not meeting their intentions. My involvement in the field and the use of multiple methods and data points for triangulation present both the positive and negative instances with findings. This study was also reviewed by a peer who was heavily involved with the design, creation, and implementation of the CFG induction program within Niles Community Schools.

Dependability relies on my ability to collect and interpret data. Precise documentation through data collection, analysis, and synthesis must leave an "audit trail" as evidence of the study (Creswell, 2008). I incorporated peers to provide inter-rater reliability with the quantitative data. Each participant interviewed was given the manuscript of his or her interview. The use of the web-based analysis program DeDoose provides evidence of coding, categorizing and grouping. Principals were given summative statistics of the results from the School Culture Triage Survey.

Transferability is another factor measuring validity; closely related to transferability is generalizability. By doing a thorough job of describing context and assumptions, transferring findings and processes to similar contexts should result. My

ability to provide thoroughness and clarity through this process is essential for others trying to emulate this study within similar contexts. The measurement of reliability would be done through the ability of other researchers applying and generalizing the information learned from this study within the context of other work or research (Eisner, 1991).

Ethics IRB

It is an underlying principal of Critical Friends Group work that while the conversations are private, the content is public; this underlying principle was upheld. All research studies must protect participants as it relates to ethical issues (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). It is my responsibility to protect the respondents while at the same time keeping those being studied informed of the research and data collection process. Since this research study involves voluntary participation, respondents had the ability to choose to be part of the study or not participate. No ethical issues were identified; however, there was an informed consent outlining the details of the study. Names and responses were kept confidential, focusing on the process growth in general, not the individual respondent. Materials were also kept confidential and secure.

Summary

In summary, this chapter described my research design, instrumentation, data collection and analysis processes to better understand the collaborative and cultural development within the context of new teachers' involvement in an induction Critical Friend Group. The School Culture Triage Survey, focus group interviews, and agenda documents developed this understanding. The design provided insight into how newly

hired teachers within a public school setting can develop their skills of collaboration within the context of an existing culture.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Introduction

The purpose of this thesis is to describe the existing cultural perceptions and how the induction CFG contributes to the development of a collaboratively engaged culture within Niles Community Schools. This was done through the use of the School Culture Triage Survey provided to teachers, administrators, and behavior specialists/speech pathologists within Niles Community Schools. For the purpose of this study, I analyzed only the perceptions of the teachers. Quantitative results were derived from 10 buildings with 12 programs within the Niles Community Schools. Two buildings had multiple programs housed within one physical building.

Approximately 239 teachers, building principals, speech pathologists, and behavior specialists were asked to take the online survey. One hundred surveys were started and 90 surveys (37%) were completed. From the 90 surveys, 76 teachers were used for this analysis. The online survey requested responses to demographic questions. This information is provided in Tables 2 and 3. To have consistent comparisons, only those participants completing the survey as teachers were analyzed; all three research groups were comprised of teachers only.

Table 2

Return and Completion Rate of Survey Within Niles Community Schools

Role	Surveys Sent	Number Started	Number Completed	Percentage Completed
Teacher	216	84	76	35
Total	239	99	90	37

Table 3

Research Groups

Group	Participant Number	Percentage
1. New-Teacher Induction	25	67.57
2. Mentor-Induction	12	32.43
Subtotal Induction	37	48.68
3. Non-Induction	39	51.31
Total	76	

Thirty-nine percent of Niles Community Schools’ teachers participated in the induction program. Nineteen of the 84 participants (23%) accepted the invitation to participate in focus group interviews. The following eight groups were identified to prevent conflicts of interest, and all teacher and mentor participants from each focus group were given an invitation to the interview.

1. Five members from a district CFG representing 13 teachers, 3 mentors, and coach
2. Two members from a building CFG representing 8 teachers and 2 mentors
3. Two members from a building CFG representing 14 teachers and 2 mentors

4. One member from a building CFG representing 15 teachers and 2 mentors
5. Three members from a building CFG representing 7 teachers and 2 mentors
6. Two mentors representing 16 mentors
7. Three members from a building CFG representing 12 teachers and 3 mentors
8. One member from a building CFG representing 5 teachers and 2 mentors.

Through interviews regarding building- and district-level induction work and artifact attainment, structures and perceptions were identified that contribute to the induction experience for new teachers. This mixed-methods design collected data through the use of an online survey, focus group interviews, observations, and agendas. The results of the quantitative and qualitative data are reported in this chapter.

Survey Results

Due to this being a mixed-methods study, I began by summarizing the quantitative data followed by the qualitative data. Regarding the quantitative data, there are summaries of demographic information followed by summative statistics and multiple comparison analyses of significantly different responses. Questions were developed to guide my inquiry in the qualitative section, and themes were developed for analysis. These themes are integrated within the overarching premise that each idea creates, develops, and nurtures a school culture conducive to the induction of newly hired teachers. Collaboration, culture, adult learning, structures and leadership are explained through the stories of individuals from focus groups, a survey, and meeting artifacts.

A total of 76 teachers completed the survey. Thirty-seven (49% of respondents) participated in the new teacher induction program. Of the 37, twenty-five were new teachers or teachers new to the district (New-Teacher Induction). The remaining 12

teachers acted as mentors (Mentor Induction). Thirty-nine teachers completed the survey who did not participate in the induction program (Non-Induction). The percentage of respondents and the average years of experience for each group (New-Teacher Induction, Mentor Induction, and Non-Induction) can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

Teaching Experience in Current Niles Role and Total Years of Teaching Overall

Range	Number of teachers with completed years of experience					
	New-Teacher Induction		Mentor Induction		Non-Induction	
	Current	Total	Current	Total	Current	Total
0	15	8			2	
1	8	4			1	
2	2	6			2	1
3		1			3	2
4-10		4	5	3	11	11
11-20		2	6	8	14	16
21+			1	1	6	9
Total	25	25	12	12	39	39

On the survey, teachers provided their number of completed years taught overall as well as the years of experience in their current role. Teachers were hired into the district with years of experience; however, for this study if a teacher was in their first 2 years of employment in the district they were considered a teacher participant in the program. Table 4 displays the number of teachers that fell in each completed years or range of years of experience for each of the three groups. For the New-Teacher Induction group, 18 of the participants completed 2 total years of teaching while all 25 teachers currently completed 2 years in the district. For Mentor Induction teachers, all 12 ranged

in service in the district from 4 to 21+ years. Non-induction teachers were in their current role ranging from 0 to 21+ years with a total teaching experience ranging from 2 to 21+ completed years.

Research Question 1(a) asked, *How do teachers and staff within Niles Community Schools describe their building and district culture?* The survey consisted of 17 descriptors of school culture categorized under professional collaboration, affiliative and collegial relationships, and efficacy or self-determination. Each factor measured a unique aspect of the school's culture using a 5-point Likert scale of 1 = *Never*, 2 = *Rarely*, 3 = *Sometimes*, 4 = *Often*, and 5 = *Always or Almost Always*.

C.R. Wagner (2006) identifies that an overall score ranging between 41-59 comes with a recommendation of *modification and improvement is needed* (Appendix B). A score ranging between 60-75 suggests *monitoring and maintenance is necessary making positive adjustments*.

Mentors ($M = 51.67$) within the induction work had an overall average score that recommended *modifications and adjustments are needed* (see Table 5). Non-induction participants ($M = 58.87$) likewise fell under the category of *modifications and adjustments are needed*. Newly hired teacher participants ($M = 60.88$) had an overall survey score that suggests *monitoring and maintenance are recommended*. There was not a significant difference ($sig. = .098$) between the three groups and their overall score on the survey.

Across all three groups (see Table 6), *Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school* was ranked in the top 3 for each group.

Table 5

Overall Rating on School Culture Triage Survey

Survey Results	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	Homo. Var.	Sig.
Total Summative for each Individual					
New-Teacher Induction CFG	25	60.88	8.34		
Mentor Induction CFG	12	51.67	12.21		
Non-Induction CFG	39	58.87	13.99		
Total	76	58.39	12.35	.026	.098

Note. CFG = Critical Friends Group; Homo. Var. = Homogeneity of Variance.

Table 6

Top Three Highest Ranks for Each Group

Rank	New-Teacher Induction	Mentor Induction	Non-Induction
1	People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.	Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.	Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.
2	The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.	Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.
3	Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.		The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/ teams than as separate individuals.

The highest ranked descriptors for each category were: *People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here* (New-Teacher Induction) and *Teachers and staff often discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues* (Mentor Induction and Non-Induction). Ranked second for New-Teacher Induction and Mentor Induction was *The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do*. New-Teacher Induction participants ranked *Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school* third overall and *The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals* was ranked third overall by Non-Induction participants.

Across all three groups (see Table 7), the descriptors with the highest rated means were: *Teachers and staff often discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues* ($M = 3.882$), *School staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do* ($M = 3.829$), and *Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school* ($M = 3.790$).

The lowest rated descriptors in terms of mean ratings were (see Table 7): *Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other's company* ($M = 2.829$), *Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule* ($M = 3.092$), and *when something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair* ($M = 3.118$).

New teachers participating in the induction CFG rated 11 of the 17 descriptors higher than the ratings of the other two groups on the same descriptors (see Table 7).

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics by Category & Question

Question	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
<i>Professional Collaboration</i>					
1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.880	.781		
Mentor Induction	12	3.583	.900		
Non-Induction	39	4.026	.932		
Total	76	3.882	.882	1.178	.314
2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.160	1.143		
Mentor Induction	12	2.833	1.267		
Non-Induction	39	3.128	1.080		
Total	76	3.092	1.122	.379	.686
3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.280	1.400		
Mentor Induction	12	2.667	1.073		
Non-Induction	39	3.359	1.112		
Total	76	3.224	1.218	1.545	.220
4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff.					
New-Teacher-Induction	25	3.160	1.106		
Mentor-Induction	12	3.167	1.528		
Non-Induction	39	3.539	1.295		
Total	76	3.355	1.272	.827	.442
5. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.520	1.046		
Mentor Induction	12	2.917	1.084		
Non-Induction	39	3.718	1.025		
Total	76	3.526	1.064	2.721	.072

Affiliative and Collegial Relationships

6. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school's values.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.600	.817		
Mentor Induction	12	3.000	.739		
Non-Induction	39	3.615	.935		
Total	76	3.513	.887	2.482	.091

Table 7–Continued.

Question	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
7. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each other’s company.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	2.960	1.060		
Mentor Induction	12	2.250	.622		
Non-Induction	39	2.923	1.010		
Total	76	2.829	.999	2.502	.089
8. Our school reflects a true “sense” of community.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.440	.870		
Mentor Induction	12	2.917	.669		
Non-Induction	39	3.282	1.122		
Total	76	3.276	.988	1.143	.324
9. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.440	.917		
Mentor Induction	12	3.083	1.311		
Non-Induction	39	3.308	1.260		
Total	76	3.316	1.157	.381	.685
10. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.960	.889		
Mentor Induction	12	3.417	.900		
Non-Induction	39	3.795	1.128		
Total	76	3.790	1.024	1.147	.323

Efficacy or Self-determination

11. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events and recognition of goal attainment.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.280	3.280		
Mentor Induction	12	2.583	2.583		
Non-Induction	39	3.308	1.080		
Total	76	3.184	1.042	2.486	.092
12. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.240	.779		
Mentor Induction	12	2.917	.996		
Non-Induction	39	3.103	1.071		
Total	76	3.118	.966	.459	.634
13. School members are interdependent and value each other.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.760	.926		
Mentor Induction	12	3.333	.985		
Non-Induction	39	3.564	.882		
Total	76	3.592	.912	.924	.402

Table 7–Continued.

Question	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>	<i>F</i>	Sig.
14. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.960	.611		
Mentor Induction	12	3.333	.985		
Non-Induction	39	3.615	.963		
Total	76	3.684	.883	2.371	.101
15. Members of our school community seek to define the problems/issue rather than blame others.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	3.640	.952		
Mentor Induction	12	2.917	.900		
Non-Induction	39	3.385	.963		
Total	76	3.395	.967	2.354	.102
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	4.280	.678		
Mentor Induction	12	3.417	.996		
Non-Induction	39	3.667	1.084		
Total	76	3.829	.999	4.467	.015
17. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.					
New-Teacher Induction	25	4.32	.690		
Mentor Induction	12	3.333	.779		
Non-Induction	39	3.539	1.315		
Total	76	3.763	1.130	5.200	.008
Total Summative for each Individual					
New-Teacher Induction	25	60.88	8.343		
Mentor Induction	12	51.67	12.21		
Non-Induction	39	58.87	13.99		
Total	76	58.39	12.35	2.401	.098

Mentors in the induction CFG rated 16 of 17 descriptors lower than the ratings of the other two groups on the same descriptors and did not rate one descriptor higher than the other two groups. Non-induction CFG participants scored an overall higher average on 6 of the 17 questions compared to the average of the other groups.

Teacher participants in an induction CFG had an overall higher average score on 11 of the 17 questions compared to the average of the other two groups (see Table 7).

Mentors in the induction CFG had an overall higher average score on 0 of the 17

questions compared to the average of the other two groups. Non-induction participants scored an overall higher average on 6 of the 17 questions compared to the average of the other groups. In addition, the teacher mentor scored a lower average on 16 of the 17 questions than did both the teacher participant and non-induction members.

Significant Differences

Research Question 1(b) asked, *Are there significant differences between the new teacher-induction teachers, mentor-induction teachers, or non-induction participants?* A One-Way ANOVA was used to identify if there were any significant differences between the three groups analyzed and their perceptions of their existing school culture. Seventy-six teachers responded to the request to take the survey, and from their demographic data, three groups were identified: New-Teacher participant in induction CFG, Mentor in Induction CFG, and Non-Induction CFG participant. Of the 17 descriptors, 2 showed a significant difference (see Table 8).

Table 8

Mean Score (and Standard Deviation) of Respondents

Question & Response by Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>SD</i>
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.			
Teacher Participant in Induction CFG	25	4.280	.678
Teacher Mentor/Coach in Induction CFG	12	3.417	.996
Non-Induction CFG participant	39	3.667	1.084
17. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.			
Teacher Participant in Induction CFG	25	4.320	.690
Teacher Mentor/Coach in Induction CFG	12	3.333	.779
Non-Induction CFG participant	39	3.539	1.315

Note. CFG = Critical Friends Group

The results show that the perception of new-teacher participants in the induction CFG regarding the variable *The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do* is significantly different from the perception of mentors (sig. = .032) and non-induction participants (sig. = .038). The other descriptor that showed significant differences in perception is that *People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here*. This descriptor shows a significant difference in perception between the teacher participants in the induction CFG and the mentors (sig. = .028) and non-induction teachers (sig. = .016).

Table 8 shows the mean perception score and standard deviation of each identified group. One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to test for group differences. Table 9 shows the results of the ANOVA which, at $\alpha=0.05$, indicate that there are significant differences among the groups in references to descriptor 16 ($F_{(2, 73)}=4.467, p=.015$). Approximately 11% ($n^2=.109$) of the differences in groups can be explained by variance in the number of participants responding to the question. Approximately 13% ($n^2=.125$) of the differences in groups can be explained by variance in the number of participants responding to descriptor 17 ($F_{(2, 73)}=5.200, p=.008$).

For the two descriptors found to be significantly different, *People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here* violated the Levene's test, $F(2, 73) = 9.854, p=.000$. Tukey HSD was used to determine the nature of the group differences. Table 10 shows the results of the post hoc multiple comparison procedure using Tukey HSD. This result indicates that teachers in their first 2 years of experience within Niles Community Schools, when responding to questions 16 and 17, significantly differ in their perception

toward being empowered ($M = 4.280$, $SD = .678$) and choosing to work here ($M=4.320$, $SD = .690$).

Table 9

One-Way Analysis of Variance Result

Source	<i>SS</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>n</i> ²
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.						
Between Groups	8.153	2	4.076	4.467	.015	.109
Within Groups	66.623	73	.913			
Total	74.776	75				
17. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.						
Between Groups	11.938	2	5.969	5.200	.008	.125
Within Groups	83.799	73	1.148			
Total	95.737	75				

Table 10

Post hoc Multiple Comparison Tukey HSD Results

Group	Mean	1	2	3
16. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do.				
1. Teacher Participant in Induction CFG	4.280	*	*	
2. Teacher Mentor/Coach in Induction CFG	3.417			
3. Non-Induction CFG participant	3.667			
17. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here.				
1. Teacher Participant in Induction CFG	4.320	*	*	
2. Teacher Mentor/Coach in Induction CFG	3.333			
3. Non-Induction CFG participant	3.539			

Note. CFG = Critical Friends Group.

*Indicates significant group differences ($p < \text{or} = 0.05$).

It can be concluded from these results that empowerment to make instructional decisions and people choose to work here because they enjoy and choose to be are perceptions that are significantly different between the three different groups.

Qualitative Results

In the next section, I report the qualitative data collected from teachers regarding their experiences in the induction CFG program. These data come from focus group interview transcriptions and are supported by agendas and field notes when applicable. Interview questions can be found in Appendix C. I coded interviews, field notes, and meeting documents into themes. Codes evolved from the data, reviewed literature, and my experiences. Through this coding process and “constant comparison” approach, which involved systematically comparing text identifying similarities and differences, the emergence of categories and themes developed (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012). As themes emerged, they gave insight into the culture and collaboration of new teachers within the induction CFG model (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

The following sections describe the themes through three distinguishable categories within the context of this study. The categories are induction culture, induction structures, and induction leadership. Also reference is made to documents (Appendixes D, E, F, and G) that correspond with ideas and constructs alluded to within participant interviews. These documents provide the district vision, participant overview, mentor and coach overview, and year-to-year adjustments. Articulated through the following stories are the perspectives, learning, and insights of 19 of the participants within the induction CFG program. These stories express outcomes of the induction processes,

which are designed to create, nurture, and develop a collaborative culture for newly hired teachers within the Niles Community Schools.

Description of Induction CFG Culture

Research Question 2(a) asked, *How do newly hired teachers (new-teacher induction) describe the learning culture they experience in their building and district-level CFG?* Newly hired teachers described the collaborative culture they experience in their building and district-level Critical Friends Group by identifying aspects of their ability to collaborate and by describing attributes of their culture. One of the district goals was *to use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district.* I used the category *collaboration* to capture the interactive elements necessary to create an environment conducive to meeting this district goal. Many participants shared appreciation for having the opportunity to meet with and work with colleagues outside their building. One participant found colleagues in two separate buildings whom she created a professional relationship with. She shared that they are “collaborating next year on our project, to create an outside mural with students in first grade and kindergarten for next year. And if I didn’t have the CFG I wouldn’t be doing it.” External relationships throughout the district are evidence of collaboration.

Along with networking, participants identify a confidence and willingness to share ideas with participants within their own building. “The first thing I want to do is go to other rooms and say, Oh my gosh, this is what I learned or this is what I found. You should use it, too.” Participants found themselves willing to share more and, in fact, recognized the value in being open to sharing ideas and concepts.

One participant acknowledged the need for understanding that collaboration means “equality in conversation and voice not necessarily in materials and resources.” This theme was an underlying issue within a few programs throughout the district. Some teachers worked in separate programs and felt they were working in a negative competitive culture within the district rather than a supportive collaborative culture. “Collaborating means discussion of techniques or practices or things that are working or not working in the classroom, it does not mean there are have and have-nots.” Essentially, participants recognized that collaboration was about the conversations, not the materials and tools.

This section shares reflections on how participants describe foundations and elements of collaborative groups and strategies used for developing collaborative groups. These two subcategories explain participants’ perspectives toward collaborating and how district- and building-level CFGs contributed to the development.

Foundations and Elements of Collaborative Groups

Developing a collaborative culture begins early in the creation or development of the group. “When we first started this process back in August and started having our discussions, establishing our norms and our procedures, that was done very early.” Developing group norms and procedures for doing business was a key ingredient for how each group would function as a unit. Discussing the norms provided the foundation for future meeting times and specifically helped develop how diverse participants would interact with each other. These actions relied on an evolution of trust, honesty, and acceptance of varying perspectives.

Participants shared that honest dialogue comes with time and having a perception of safety. To have open conversation around topics of interest requires creating an environment that allows groups to function safely. This safety allows groups to have honest dialogue around topics of interest and issues. Developing an understanding of where team members were coming from, their background, and their experience was identified as integral. For some groups, it took the majority of the year to develop a trusting group where dialogue and construction of knowledge were synergistic. One participant identified that the length of time was a bit disconcerting, but once she felt comfortable speaking, it was a good feeling.

Once safety is created and honesty is present, participants overwhelmingly found comfort in working with colleagues. Two participants defined a successful collaborative group as cooperative, but cooperation does not always mean agreeableness. It can be “one that cooperates together, works together, and has the same set of ideals and goals to work toward.” Another participant expanded on this thought by sharing, “I believe it has the collaboration piece but I also don’t feel that they have to have the same ideas but that they are able to take each other's ideas and build upon them and come up with an agreeable set of goals to work on.”

Differing ideas are created through diversity of individuals, and diverse individuals create varied teams. Integrating all levels and multiple buildings lends itself to this diversity: “I feel like we are a very diverse group but we can really maintain confidentiality and I think everyone feels really comfortable talking to each other.” Developing comfort with each other comes through intentional design specifically using team builders and structured protocols. Both elements create an environment that leads

to relationship development. “I know when we do the protocols and we actually get to laugh and joke with each other I think that helps with communication and opening up to each other more.”

One participant shared that the ability to collaborate is simply a characteristic of each individual. She felt that some individuals are born sharers. She explained, “I happened to stumble across a great big group of them here. In general, people like trying to own their ideas whereas we share them.” If individuals are not naturally inclined to share, it is necessary to understand how the development of collaborative teams can be created. Varying perspectives, at the district level, were recognized, and variety from K-12 assignments and content specialists helped create these dynamic and diverse groups.

Multiple participants alluded to the openness of participants’ perspective. Having the right mind-set and attitude were important traits. Being engaged in the meeting prompted collaboration. Protocols and structure forced participants to draw conclusions by working through data, books or readings. Working together was required, and one participant expressed that teachers have a choice to work, but it would be together; and if something is to be gained from the time, collaborating is required.

Strategies for Group Development

When teams do not naturally find themselves collaborating around topics and issues, strategic approaches for this development are needed. Within the development of district- and building-level groups, participants found that common struggles and needs brought unity. “Yeah, that helps you to get to know people and you see that you have the same issues, you see you have the same problems, and it helps you work together; you develop a team through team building ideas.” One building explained that the general

design of each meeting lends itself to creating a collaborative culture. “At this building, as far as collaboration, you know most of the activities and team buildings that we do are kind of designed that way.” Imbedded in most district and building meetings were structured team-building activities that helped participants develop relationships through laughter. “Those team builders are amazing and I understand they’re games but it lets our guards down and we get to be silly and get to be funny.”

The development of norms and structured protocols was frequently identified by many participants as structures necessary for efficiency and effectiveness within their groups. “I think it kind of paves the road or builds the road for how to interact with people, so going back to the norms there’s a way to interact with each other and then through the close collaboration, personal relationships develop.” One participant explained:

It helped me most in terms of facilitating with my communication. Communicating things in CFG in a way that it doesn’t step on anyone else’s toes, it’s honest, it’s on topic, and we’re not off in ‘Lala Land’.

Furthering the impact of how to create an environment that is efficient and focused, one participant identified that the structures created at the district level helped communication with her students. She identified the importance of efficiency and recognized the value of communication and classroom management.

District meetings occurred monthly and building CFG meetings occurred generally on a monthly basis. This set and structured time was identified as essential for developing relationships. Having the time that was set aside with colleagues was useful in the development of dialogue. Spending time with one another was recognized as an opportunity to have more things to discuss and share. If time was not spent with one

another, there would not be other opportunities for getting to know one another that would then translate into further discussions outside the CFG work.

The combination of district- and building-level CFG meetings helped participants identify individuals willing to support and guide their thinking. Many participants explained or identified their use of questions to glean insight. “Hey, I see that you're doing this activity, how did you do that?” One participant shared her comfort in having a variety of colleagues to guide thinking:

I know that my relationships inside my building are improved because if I didn't have a place to vent outside in my CFG about that and have people say, ‘Oh, I have that, too. This is how I handle that situation’, or some people saying, ‘How about you handle it this way.’

Designed feedback loops gave opportunities for all participants to be heard. “How are we going to focus on that and then to follow that up, what we say matters and we're given equal voice in the situation.” Also, integrating levels and content created a natural interest in each other's areas of expertise, not otherwise recognized without an intentional design. Variety helped participants be open to others' perspectives as well as being a “little bit more vulnerable, asking for advice or even just wondering what's going on at their level.” This range gave participants comfort in knowing they would not be judged because the only connection to a building would be the participants themselves. As participants found comfort through assignments, diversity in levels, varying backgrounds and experiences they developed a social connectedness, which allowed them to collectively learn.

Culture

Niles Community Schools identifies the improvement of culture as a district goal. Within their induction work, two of the three goals include the concept of culture. Many

participants reference culture or identify that culture is created, nurtured, or developed within and throughout the district CFG work. The development of culture is integrated within the design of the induction CFG meetings, is intentionally discussed, and is a conceptual construct that many participants acknowledge as a component that impacts their work. In this section, teachers share how the CFG creates and/or nurtures an existing culture of collaboration.

One participant shared that the work begins with a focus on the children. “And I think that we as a staff talk a lot about, what always comes back to is this is about the kids. It’s very student centered.” Beginning with the children also develops and leads to the manifestation of passion. “I think the one thing that has motivated me more than anything else with this CFG is just to see all of the other teachers and to realize their passion for the kids and their passion for teaching.” One way this student-centered passion is created comes from a process of being heard. “It’s an opportunity for everyone to come in with an open mind and feel respected for our opinion and we can express ourselves, our needs as well; and even request it and receive that help.”

When coming together, it allows for a social learning opportunity around the commonality of those new to the community and those already existing in the culture. “The CFGs are trying to bring something in common and for me it is great that we have at least an opportunity to do well and not work in a corner like I have been in the past.” In order to create this openness for collaboration and relationship development, the focus on questioning was articulated by many participants. Participants recognized the importance of having a voice and appreciated the opportunity to question and give

feedback. They alluded to the idea that some teachers, with years of experience in the district, convey they wish they could be part of this process of two-way dialogue.

Other participants described and explained the development of their CFG group as “open-minded, collaborative, inquisitive. We’re all really question driven and reflective.” Example questions that pushed this collaborative culture were questions such as “What can I do to make this better? Who can help me?” Another participant explained the importance of having a common perspective in order to have courage to ask questions. “I think there’s a really good sense of there’s nothing taboo, you don’t need to be afraid to ask any question.”

One second-year participant felt his CFG culture empowered him to be instrumental in the development of practices that are influential for his learners. He explained the importance of having leaders who trust teachers to make the best decisions for children. It is recognized that just because one is a first- or second-year teacher, their impact is not limited. Another participant explained the importance of creating a school culture that transcends the students’ ability to create their own school culture. This participant reflected by sharing that ultimately teachers direct and guide children in making the culture of a school what it is. He referenced some reading and learning he did regarding how the Japanese create an inclusive buy-in with their students.

Goal alignment was recognized as a key ingredient in developing school culture. One participant shared the importance of aligning her goals with the goals of the building. The CFG work provided her with an understanding of what the building expectations were. This understanding gave her focus, and she felt aligned with building expectations.

Multiple participants felt that required CFG meeting times added to their already busy schedules. At times, their commitment to the extra times caused anxiety toward their learning. However, once involved in their CFG work, this particular participant found value. Prior to going, she had stress but compared it to going on vacation. Once she involved herself in the meetings, she recognized "'Oh, I needed this,' and I needed that revitalization."

Participants valued being involved in the CFG and its impact. It was shared that many veteran teachers in the district wanted to know more about the work being done and would have conversations regarding the work. Participants felt that veteran teachers could benefit from engaging with new hires regarding the issues new teachers face. It would be a good reciprocal process where both groups could learn from each other. Ultimately, the desire of multiple participants is to create a culture of growing and reflecting. Having community time to be together is exciting and refreshing. This time provides opportunities for learning new things or allows one comfort in knowing they can start over.

For participants to feel connected to this collaborative culture, there was certain qualities they felt necessary in order to meet their ongoing professional needs. "We all want to succeed and we all want to see our children succeed, so if I find something that was successful in my classroom, why wouldn't I want everybody else to be good?" For one mentor, it was hard for her to articulate why their building had a good culture but surmised, "I think it was a small enough group and because [the sister school] is such a small close-knit family anyway, I think it just kind of came with the territory. I don't think it was anything that we really developed. It just was there."

When community is nurtured, one participant shared comfort of being in his passion through a continued focus on improving their community. He reflected on the high burnout rate of teachers with a solution that making teachers feel significant would solve this issue. Nurturing a culture by providing a voice allows for this significance to be recognized. Another participant expanded on how developing a collegial culture has an impact on children. Participants recognize the multiple levels necessary for creating and nurturing an impactful culture. When teachers feel comfortable with their learning experiences, they find value in allowing students to likewise have a voice. Multiple participants reference the value of creating an environment that allows integration of students into the learning design.

This development and promotion of a learning culture is developed by staff and evolved with students. One participant reflected on his love for learning, and as a teacher, he finds himself as a facilitator of, not a traditional authority on, learning. Finding ways to engage children through risk taking is carried over from the CFG work at the district and building levels and resonates with the students served.

Niles Community Schools imbedded feedback loops through surveys, informal dialogue, plus/deltas and feedback reviews. One example of a district suggestion for continued development of culture was to do a year-end event for all staff. Participants appreciated that their first- and second-year voices, even though being new, were heard. Since CFG work is developed from participants' needs, interviewed participants shared some cultural areas that still needed attention.

Multiple participants recognized a divisive culture between certain buildings and programs within the district. This was a topic discussed in multiple interviews. One

participant concluded that this competitive divide comes from a “false idea that one way of teaching is better than another. Like what we do here is different than what another school does.” Having a common time to share with each other would minimize this divide. One suggestion given to continue the bridging of programs and buildings is a continued focus on team building and friendship. One participant reflects “that people collaborate better when they are friends; if the district wants collaboration they should help promote friendship between teachers.”

Not only were programs and buildings a cause for cultural dissention, some participants felt that if they had multiple years of experience, prior to arriving in Niles, they were not valued. “I don’t want to be labeled as a new teacher because it makes me feel like what I’ve done doesn’t matter.” This participant further shared that he had many years of experience, much like his mentor, and could contribute by presenting and leading with the CFG work. Through his articulated perspective, this participant realized with the focused mind-set for learning, not only could he gain but he could also contribute in others’ learning.

Adult Learning

Niles Community Schools’ third goal for their Induction CFGs is “To inspire everyone to be learners.” I used the category *Adult Learning* to capture the elements described by participants that provided the opportunities for adult professional learning. I coded thoughts and ideas as adult learning if participants shared evidence of growth through understanding and knowledge, showed an aptitude toward improving student achievement, reflected on an experience from their group work, or identified someone who prompted their growth. Primarily, this category focused on the ability of a

participant to reflect upon how and what they learned. Three emergent subcategories explain participants' perspective toward the learning within their Critical Friend Group: adult needs and attributes, learning experiences, and relationships and networking.

Adults' needs and attributes

Participants' points of view toward the CFG work were critical in their personal perspectives and approach to their CFG work. The autonomy to determine their direction was a critical component in their positive perception toward their time. A mentor in charge of leading a building-level CFG shared, "It may not turn out anywhere like you thought it was going to. That's the beauty of having a CFG and having all of those components built in there is you can do that. Okay, this is where I was heading but this is where we're going." Both a first-year and second-year teacher recognized that their ability to adapt their time to address their building needs of Problem Based Learning was essential in their success. Multiple participants identified that comfort in knowing their learning time would meet their needs, and it was recognized that the coaches accommodated or planned learning activities that supported this need for flexibility.

Creating a successful learning environment provides a positive outlook by participants with years of experience. One participant shared, "It's hard for some of us to sit and you know sit through things that we've been doing for six or seven years, but it has been a very nice balance because you are in a positive environment where we're still learning." Many participants shared that having the right mind-set gives you an opportunity to learn something about something or someone.

In order to create a meaningful experience, finding ways to mentally engage all participants is necessary and expected. Teachers do not want to be part of the traditional

meeting where they are designed to meet the leaders' needs or desires and not the participants'. It was noted by one participant that following meeting structures and using protocols helped them not to have another meeting where they went and talked. Another participant found deeper value by changing her perspective on being pulled from the classroom monthly. "So as a gift and an opportunity sometimes I have to be honest to let my kids be taught by somebody else, but good planning helps and it's a good break for us to come and reflect and get that time."

It was observed that one building-level group with 10 participants found true joy in their work. This joy was manifested with laughter, formal and informal dialogue, and questioning around their topic of Project Based Learning (PBL) certification. This same group was defined by a participant as a "spunky group, full of questions constantly but a lot of our questions centered around the PBL and the certification process that we are going into." One way this particular group shared their learning and work was through posting their work in their teacher workroom for all to see. "When we put all our work down –like you heard [mentor] asked in our CFG, can I put this up in the workroom?" Teachers were proud of their learning processes and outcomes. It was recognized by this CFG that their work could benefit their colleagues not present, so they wanted to share their learning.

Ultimately, participants recognize their opportunity to work with colleagues in building- or district-level CFGs which provide learning experiences necessary in meeting their goals. One teacher shared, "I wouldn't be here if I didn't fully back my main goal; my focus is to bring forth what each of these kids have inside them whatever they may be." Furthering this attention toward goals, one first-year teacher shared, "We're driven

to learn. I think our group is . . . You know we're on task. It meets our goals almost every time we meet. It's a good group." Another teacher shared their perspective of, "I'm learning that I can learn from anything and every experience."

Learning experiences

The general CFG experience provides teachers with multiple strategies and opportunities for community and professional growth. Within these CFGs, activities provide a common experience while they grow their professional skills and knowledge. One experience that was shared by multiple teachers was the opportunity to watch colleagues instruct. At one building, the participants are invited into different studios or classrooms. These invitations are more than just observing. When completed, there generally is an opportunity to collaboratively give and accept feedback. All district-level CFGs participated in peer observations as well.

The design of the observations (Appendix G) provided participants with a guide for their observations as well as follow-up conversations. These structured observations also help develop a culture that fosters relationships. One teacher shared, "Observing others and learning from others we know the type of culture that the school or district has and I think we are feeding into that or how are we to integrate our style to the district into the kids." Likewise, another teacher identified the importance of not only observing but being observed. Organized observations were done twice throughout the 2013-14 school year. These opportunities were identified as a powerful process in the development of relationships and consistent instructional strategies. Another opportunity to learn collaboratively within the district was an evening where teachers and staff presented to their colleagues.

“Learning from Peer” (Appendix H) was a district-developed opportunity described by multiple participants. This evening consisted of 13 CFG members developing a best practice in which CFG members presented to their peers. Participants could choose three sessions from the agenda. One participant shared, “I did like the expert rotations but it seemed a quick intro.” Another participant shared that they learned how to deal better with difficult parents after a counselor presented:

[Middle school counselor] did a really nice job. Hers was about how to handle difficult parents; we all have to talk to parents. We all have to have some conversations. We all have to have those conversations that don't go how it was supposed to which can be a really difficult conversation to have. And the way that she had set that up, it made everything straight to point and easy to follow. I talked to parents very differently right now. You know that's a prime example for me.

One participant challenged the district to continue these opportunities to provide additional variety and content. Extending this thought they felt first- and second-year teachers could offer meaningful learning opportunities as well. Multiple participants recognized that allowing choice in determining who and what to listen to was essential in the success of this event.

The use of technology was identified as a good way of developing ideas and guiding learning. “I know [District Coach] has helped us periodically and asked questions and we do that by email.” Another way technology enhanced the learning experience was through the use of Google Documents as a forum to jigsaw learning. One teacher shared that they enjoyed an opportunity where they watched a video, and were asked to participate in an online conversation through Google Docs. Learning groups also found ways to solve general issues within their school. Referencing a colleague, one participant complimented his partner on solving a paper issue by using Goobrics and

Doctopus. Learning groups recognized and used each other's technological talents to improve their work.

The use of technology also helped with the mundane issues in order to spend time on learning goals. One participant found that getting the mundane information out through email allowed for better learning. "When we go to professional development, we are to be professionally developed." He felt that if individuals could read about it, it was not necessary to have a discussion. This allowed for more time when true discussions were necessary for group development of a concept or idea. Other uses of technology within CFG work translated into teachers applying it to their instructional practices.

One participant shared her understanding and knowledge of how to use SurveyMonkey. This was expanded when a coach used it for eliciting feedback regarding district CFG work. This led to her incorporating this tool into her practice. She did a student and parent survey for gaining valuable insight from parents.

District evenings were designed, at times, around the important happenings during the school year. One evening was developed based on how to have conversations at conference time (Appendix I). The basis for this work was from the training of district coaches on the content of Crucial Conversations. This evening was designed to help teachers think through their conversation with parents. Participants explained how this time allowed them to practice and critique these critical conversations before engaging in them. It was noted how helpful this time was in preparation for conference time. Some participants even remarked that their conversation skills improved with colleagues as well.

One other district evening was developed around a deeper understanding of the district evaluation tool (Appendix J). At the building level, one individual worked closely with her principal and felt very confident in working through the teacher evaluation tool at the district-level meeting. She felt she had a good understanding of the evaluation tool and the supporting literature. When she attended the district work, she felt like she had much to contribute.

Building-level learning was developed around differing needs of each building group. Depending on the needs of each environment, agendas and learning were tailored and differentiated as needed. One elementary building turned their attention to discipline. They found that many teachers needed support with dealing with challenging children and began the series *Discipline with Dignity*. This need for understanding children and developing strategies for dealing with challenging situations was made possible by the structure of this building CFG. Exploring this topic allowed members to identify colleagues who had strengths in this area. As a result, relationships and networking took place where teachers found comfort in going to other teachers for advice, guidance, and support.

Data review, analysis, and strategizing presents a challenge for certain groups of teachers. Periodically, building-level groups would focus on better understanding the use of data. Protocols for mining and probing data were put in place for teachers to learn how to analyze and develop plans based on their data. Small-group discussions were helpful and allowed participants to determine strategies they felt would be beneficial for students. Taking the lead and initiative in reviewing data allowed for ownership in

determining the best approach for moving forward. Participants recognized that buy-in was necessary if change were going to happen.

Problem Based Learning certification became a top priority of one building CFG; they adapted their needs around domains, which had expectations of competency in order to be certified. Their focus also allowed them to network with other individuals. One participant recalled their building CFG was perfect for addressing certification needs. It allowed them to hear each other's ideas and incorporate them into their own practices. This time for sharing allowed her to gain ideas that she otherwise would not have gleaned, if her CFG were not functioning. She found confidence in learning with her group and in knowing whom to reach out to as she continued her growth.

One participant identified the need and desire for further understanding of instructional strategies. This was spurred on by a combination of learning about a strategy and then actually observing the strategy take place in the classroom. This teacher shared:

I know for me personally the one thing that I want to do is work on different strategies of instruction like they talked about in the jigsaw. I want to work on making it more relatable like I saw one of my teachers do. . . . When I observed, the teacher made it super relatable to the kids and he was talking about something that I would have never been able to relate, and I was like, how did you do that?

Most participants enjoyed the district-designed activities and found great benefit from the specific building meetings, regarding their general needs. However, participants shared insights on ways to improve their learning. "I think more practice. Just being involved and continuing the process." This focus on practice led one participant to share that confidence was valuable for her as she developed into the role of mentor. Multiple

times she was asked to lead a CFG, but once she took the lead and developed confidence, she was appreciative of the opportunity.

One participant highlighted the importance of managing the amount of material. They felt “you sat there, and we would do certain activities, and it seems like the activities kind of came and went because I didn’t use it the next day. I mean there is so much to remember.” Another participant agreed that “I just feel like we didn’t have time to focus on one thing, one skill, and work on that one skill for a period of time.” One participant suggested a strategy for imbedding accountability for their learning by coming back a month later and sharing one way in which something from their past learning was implemented.

Teachers are expected to join district- and building-level CFGs. However, clarity on whether CFG work was voluntary or required seemed to always be of debate. Niles Community Schools suggested the work be voluntary, but participants perceived it as a requirement. As a result of this perception, participants at times attended meetings under the pretense of a requirement. One participant challenged, “I would be curious to see what happens if it was turned to voluntary because there are . . . I say this because it has happened earlier. A lot of people are complaining.” This participant further challenged the complaining mind-set by forcefully acknowledging, “I wanna be here because I wanna be a better teacher and if you don’t wanna be here for whatever reason, then don’t come, because it sounds like--you’re sucking the fun out of it for us.” It was common for most participants to share that the district needs to be clear on being voluntary or required.

One building-level CFG, which was observed for this study, made their meetings optional. A participant shared her perspective that by making it voluntary, a core of consistent teachers shows up. She alluded to the ideas that if it is meaningful and consistent, then people want to come and learn.

Induction Structures

Research Question 2(b) asked, *What structures of the induction CFG processes impact perspectives of new-teacher induction participants in the NCS?* Critical Friend Groups are intentionally designed with specific structures in place for doing the work of the group. I used the category structures to capture the elements described by participants that provided the arrangement needed for new teachers to collaborate. Primarily this category focused on meeting strategies and components that supported the evolution of their learning communities. Seven emergent subcategories explain participants' perspective toward the structure and its impact on their induction Critical Friend Group: (a) meeting times and duration, (b) group composition, (c) goal oriented, (d) setting expectations, (e) protocols, (f) agenda development, and (g) reflection and feedback.

Meeting Times and Duration

District CFG meetings occurred once a month with a rotation of 1 month being a full day away from the classroom and the other month an evening event lasting from 2-3 hours. Building-level CFGs met monthly with a focus on local building-level culture, instruction, and needs. These meetings would be flexible based off of building needs; and generally ranged from 1-1.5 hours. Generally, they were held in the mornings prior to school or directly after school was released.

Participants had mixed perspectives on being pulled away from the classroom every other month, but once they were engaged in their work, they shared their appreciation. One participant explained that if she would not have been given the time, she would have never networked with other professionals. Other participants found this time to be rewarding as they developed relationships. It allowed them to grow closer professionally and personally. Spending time together was recognized and valued. One participant believed that if he were not expected to attend, he probably would not have. He continued his reflection by saying he was “thankful for the opportunity to be able to talk to people because I honestly probably wouldn’t if it wasn’t for this [CFG work].”

District CFG dates were set by coaches, and building-level mentors worked with their groups to determine dates and times that would meet their needs. One mentor shared that the process for developing meeting times was democratic. They used email to identify best times and then they developed their calendar around their building needs. This allowed for participants to be part of the planning rather than be told where to be. Flexibility with dates and times was something both the district-level and building-level participants found to be beneficial. They felt as if they had a voice in the meeting times.

A few challenges presented by participants were the meetings during the school day and the limitations placed on them by being asked to be a part of the CFGs. Rather than using an entire day to do CFG work, one felt that half days would be better, so students could still get instruction from them. Another participant found some frustration in that she wanted to be part of other learning groups but had to prioritize her time. Being committed to the district CFG and building CFG did not allow her to participate in other areas of interest. She did not want to be overwhelmed by committing to additional

learning groups. Learning communities in the district consist of new-teacher district meetings and new-teacher building meetings. Also throughout the district are other learning communities that exist independently from the induction program.

Group Composition

District CFGs are designed with mentors representing early, middle, and high-school-level instruction. Each district CFG has a principal coaching the group. Within each community, there is a diversity of staff from all levels and buildings, which represent the district. Three district CFGs have a combination of first- and second-year hires to the district while two district CFGs have all new hires to the district. The two groups with all new hires have a variety of experiences but are first-year to the district. Participants are responsible to attend district CFG meetings as well as building-level CFGs. Building-level CFGs consist of between 1-4 mentors, depending on number of new hires, and teachers in their first and second year in the district.

At the building level, mentors provide ongoing mentoring as well as coach the monthly building meeting. These building-level meetings allow participants to get to know people within their building and grade level. It also was noted that these meetings were beneficial in helping them understand their building culture and needs. Multiple participants shared their appreciation for the diversity between grades, subjects, and experiences. This appreciation was shared not only regarding the building level but for the district-level CFG meetings.

District-level groups represent pre-K-12th grades, all subject areas, a variety of experiences, multiple programs, and each building in the district. It was noted that this variety allowed for participants to gain a better understanding of levels vertically, which

was rare in their existing experiences. It also allowed for a mixture and better awareness of programs they would otherwise not experience. Having a representative from each building allowed for them to develop a firsthand perspective of others' work. For district and building levels to mesh the designed diversity, some participants identified the importance of setting group goals in order to have focus.

Goal Oriented

Niles Community Schools outlines three general goals for their CFG induction program: to build effective facilitators for student learning; to use their CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school, and district; and to inspire everyone to be learners. General district and building agenda structures were goal focused, as written on their plans. When participants were asked their goal(s) for meeting times, it was clear they had purpose for their meetings. One participant shared their focus was to build culture through developing a comfort for asking questions. Multiple participants could identify the general district goals as well as specific goals for meeting times.

Not only were participants clear on articulating the goals for their work, they also were appreciative that the goals were met. When asked about whether their meeting times met their outlined goals, participants shared that they stuck to meeting their goals. For this to happen, other clear structures such as norms and protocols led to the attainment of meeting goals. A process known as plus/deltas was used at the end of many meetings as a way to objectively identify whether goals were met.

Setting Expectations

District and building agendas generally begin with a review of the “norms.” Examples of norms include limit sidebars, on task, stick to time, public work—private conversations, confidentiality, listen to hear—not respond, stay positive, be respectful, focus on goals, hold each other accountable, manage your technology, focus on learning, and confidentiality. Additionally, teams or groups develop other operating procedures. “Yeah, we have to establish the norms in terms of deadlines, having materials ready or having open or regular communication.”

This attention to developing their culture of doing their business within their groups helps everyone understand their role within the group. Participants identified that norms gave everyone a common understanding of how the group should interact. It also provided new members with very clear expectations on how and what interactions, actions, and behaviors were expected. This allowed for all to have a clear perspective each meeting time.

Most norms were set at the formation stage of each group; this was generally done at the beginning of each year. Participants explained that norms were always reviewed, even if they became redundant and seemingly unnecessary. One participant shared that the redundancy of reviewing norms was in fact necessary because of the tendency of members to digress if norms are not reviewed. The review of norms sets the standard and helps participants hold each other accountable for the developed expectations.

Different ways of managing norms include individuals and tools. Some groups used chart paper to post their norms, others review off of agendas, and yet others further develop their norms using technology. One teacher explained that all members are

responsible for managing the norms. This management could be through having open discussions at meetings or explaining what each norm represents. Another way participants explained norms are managed is through an evolving Google Document. These are accessible to all so adjustments and clarity can be made.

One participant explained that intentionality is necessary for them to continue their development of their culture and their way of doing business. Following norms also creates an intentional focus on adult behavior that meets the varying needs of students. As a professional community, with an underlying purpose of becoming a better educator, norms allow for the conversations to stay focused on “How do we make our kids better?” Norms provide the thread for doing the work of each meeting time; generally protocols and clear agendas were how each meeting was carried out.

Protocols

Specific guidelines for producing the intended results of meetings were evident in participants’ feedback. The use of detailed plans and leader-managed assistance provided efficiency during meetings. It was recognized by participants that intentional meeting design and restricting work through protocols allowed for efficiency during meetings. Having exactly what was to be done, on paper, provided comfort in the time spent but also gave the tools necessary to go back into their own instructional environments and implement their learning. One participant shared that they always started with a protocol, made agreements on how the protocol would be implemented, and expected all to participate. They further conveyed that they felt respected from the beginning, the expectations were clear, and they felt as if the group were provided a great opportunity to grow with whatever theme or goal was on the agenda.

Coaches and mentors, leading their groups, first listened to their groups' needs and then worked together to create agendas using structured protocols. CFG coaches and mentors shared that their attention was on eliciting feedback from participants, prioritizing issues or learning desires, and then drafting agendas. Once content was identified, the further development of agendas and protocols was necessary for efficiency in meeting their group goals.

Protocols were used not only to manage the meeting times; there was an expectation that protocols would help with instruction in the classroom. One participant explained, "I think any time we come together as a CFG there is always a protocol to take away, there is always some sort of take away." These protocols were transitioned into strategies for improving classroom instruction and management. One participant shared how the use of a connections protocol allowed her to better manage her classroom. She was challenged by children wanting to have time to discuss their interests, so she used the CFG protocol with her students and found it to be beneficial. She shared, "I never would have thought about doing that had I not experienced that as an adult to get all my chit-chatting out."

Agenda Development

District agendas are designed by needs and are based on upcoming calendar events, for example, conferences or other needs such as data analysis, discipline, instruction and curriculum needs. They are developed using feedback and coaches committed to spending time each month developing general agendas and are tailored to the varying CFG's needs. At times, agendas were developed at the building level as an

extension of the district meetings. “I’ve noticed that our building CFGs are based off of the district CFGs.”

Building-level agendas were flexible and developed based off of district conversations or building-level goals. “At the beginning of the year, we sat down with our mentor teachers and we discussed different topics that may have come up with interest.” One participant explained, “Our agenda today was developed based on the questions that we had from previous CFGs.” Another participant explained that the content was developed ahead of time through an interactive GoogleDoc. Ideas were expanded and clarified so when the meeting time arrived, there was efficiency in their time spent.

Multiple participants found that having an agenda allowed them to be more fully engaged in their experience. “We want to have an agenda. We want to know what we’re going to talk about and we want to get through it. And come out with something as well.” CFG coaches used different ways to provide participants with details of upcoming meetings. “My partner and I would make up an agenda, send it out to the participants and they agreed with this. Then we would just hold our meetings.” More in-depth contributions for learning and meeting development were also imbedded through other methods for gaining insight into participants’ needs.

Reflection and Feedback

Providing a voice through reflection and feedback opportunities was a concept identified by participants. Some meetings planned time to elicit a deeper understanding of what the new teachers’ needs truly were. Imbedded questions included “Okay, how are you today?” or “What is the best and the worst?” Another built-in method was the

use of Plus/Deltas (Appendix K). One participant shared that “everybody has the opportunity to express either by saying, in writing, or in a game; so the space is there.”

Written feedback is an intricate process for reflection and provides coaches with direction for meeting development and learning. It allows for coaches to hear the needs of participants, understand their thinking, and give them the insight for future meeting design. One participant critically identified mistakes his coach has made; however, he was grateful that he was given the opportunity to give feedback through the Plus/Delta system. This participant shared, “I love that . . . most every time we start off the CFG by reading the Plus/Deltas and say, What did you guys say from last time, and then I feel like I see real changes between each CFG based on those Plus/Deltas.”

Written Plus/Deltas were collected at the end of each meeting time and then read orally the next meeting. This provides a reflection of the work done as well as allows participants to share their issues or concerns. Reading and discussing the Plus/Deltas provided participants with a review of their learning from the prior time but also allowed for any concerns to be anonymously attended to through conversation. Participants recognized and appreciated the opportunity to share their voice and have closure on their issues. It was recognized by many participants that coaches adjusted the learning time based on the feedback on Plus/Deltas.

Some building-level groups did not do written feedback; they felt their conversations provided the necessary feedback to guide their work. “We didn’t have written feedback at all. It was just more verbal. When we sent our agendas out, that would be feedback.” This participant went on to say:

I feel like everything we [discuss], like the feedback—the conversation that we have at the end. I don't feel like the Plus/Deltas are even necessary for this specific CFG. Other CFGs I really value that.

The concept of feedback was reflected in the participants' responses as they relate to their instructional practices with their students. Two teachers transferred the use of feedback to their practice and explained, "We also get a lot of feedback from the learners, our class themselves, from surveys and a lot of asking for feedback from the kids." Instructional strategies for learning are challenged by adults in the CFG but teachers find that learners they teach should also challenge their teaching. It was recognized that learning as an adult and the processes involved are not too different. Another teacher explained their perspective:

I always try to give my feedback because I feel like it's important; you can't grow unless somebody gives you feedback and I expect feedback from my kids. If they didn't like something and they can tell me, I can change it. If they never tell me anything, then we will keep doing the same thing and I will assume they like it.

Meetings were either designed or adjusted during the meeting or prior to the meeting in order to meet the local goals for the school or district. One building-level CFG began the year with a set of goals but shifted mid-year, recognizing they were going to be certified in Project Based Learning. Feeling inundated, one respondent remarked, "We all kind of panicked and [were] a little overwhelmed and this, then, became a tremendous help [referencing building CFG]." They felt it would be a perfect opportunity to use CFG time for this learning. Another building felt that discipline was a need and began a video series mid-year, in order to adjust and meet the needs of their group. After designing a district meeting, a personnel issue arose which caused a distraction in the district. Time was given for questions and closure, and participants recognized and appreciated this opportunity.

Participants also recognized the relevance of reflecting and internalizing their CFG work. Although the work could be challenging and possibly a lot to process, one participant captured that they usually go home, think through one or two key aspects from their time, and then apply it to their teaching. Other participants explained they need more time to digest the learning and would take a day to jot down their learning before providing it to their coach. Imbedding this interactive feedback was one avenue that developed the heart of a collaborative culture. This interactive feedback was also used to design meaningful learning opportunities for participants.

Eliciting feedback is an expected and valued component of CFG work. Some participants were challenged by the immediate nature of when they were asked to respond to their learning. “To write down and have that reflection immediately is too much—For me personally, and I've heard other people say it, too. I can't reflect on anything until I've let it sink in and simmer a little bit. I'll turn mine in a day late.” Using the feedback is an inherent expectation that was not heeded in all CFGs. One participant felt the process used for gaining feedback was good, but when it was not shared at the next meeting, it felt like it was not valued. She felt good about providing the feedback; however, if it was not read or meetings were not adjusted, it was then questioned whether it was being used.

Participants recognized the importance of their voice being heard and acted upon. One individual shared that listening early and adjusting meetings from the very beginning are a necessity in the development of this work. “The only way that everybody's going to grow is if you allow them a voice. So listening to what your group's needs are in the very beginning, and then address them as you go along, I think that works.”

Induction Leadership

Research Question 2(c) asked, *Who contributes to the success of the participants in the induction CFG work within NCS?* According to Niles Community Schools' overview of their induction CFG program (Appendix A), Professional Learning Communities and Critical Friends Groups are grounded in the following beliefs: (a) educators are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students, (b) PLC's operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators, (c) educators are the experts, (d) time is our greatest resource, and (e) all voices are equal. For these five qualities to be executed, it takes leadership. Emerging from the interviews are four groups, representing individuals, which had lasting impacts on the new hires. These four groups are: coaches, mentors, administrators, and other colleagues.

Coaches

Each district CFG had a building-level principal who coached each meeting. The five coaches met monthly to plan the next month's event, based off of feedback from participants. Teacher mentors participated in district meetings and were responsible to coach their building-level meetings. Mentors were involved in two additional meeting times throughout the year (Appendix L). Three themes emerged as qualities exhibited by coaches: meeting design and implementation, continuous learning, and challenging participants.

Meeting design and implementation

Participants identified attributes such as flexibility, ability to listen, and providing structures for focused meetings. In order to develop goals, strategies, and agendas, coaches were celebrated if they listened to participants. “They are very open to listening all year.” Participants appreciated the attention of their coach to adjusting meetings based on their needs. One teacher shared:

I have no doubt that they will be like, this is the topic of the next meeting, and even again, jumping to the district level, I feel the same way we do that often with my CFG leader. I don’t know who yours is, but you know, we’ll write something down and that is surely addressed immediately in the next meeting.

In addition to listening to participants for agenda development, coaches also were able to adjust their meeting times to meet the immediate needs of participants. “We’ve had some discussion that went beyond the minutes appropriated in that, I believe and I mean we had a flexible leader.” Sometimes leaders sensed a need to adjust the meeting times as they were in tune to their adult learners’ needs. “I think, too, something that we dealt with that ties into this is, our leader one day just opened it up on a Plus/Delta and said, ‘You know what? We would like to know what you guys are thinking.’” One mentor/coach, leading a building-level meeting, was aware of her need to adjust and shared, “Well, I think it’s almost like being in a classroom; it depends where that CFG is going on that day.”

A delicate balance of flexible-focus is appreciated and recognized by participants. They value having agendas as well as following the agendas. Participants found it necessary to have goals and had an expectation that the coaches would keep the learning progressing. One mentor/coach explained:

I wanted to specifically accomplish a certain goal and that was to keep it on track and I was really nervous about being the one to say we need to bring this back because I didn't want to step on toes and that kind of thing. But I learned through their comments in the end that was appreciated. Please keep us on track, keep us moving in that direction.

Continuous learning

Leading a CFG meeting was new to many coaches. In fact, the year this study took place, two of the five district coaches were new. An added expectation that mentors would coach building-level meetings was integrated. Participants recognized that coaches were developing their skills through their courage to learn, practice, and fail at times. "Obviously our administration makes mistakes and not every CFG has been the best CFG that it could be." However, a sympathetic understanding by participants allowed for mistakes that lead to deeper learning. "We all make mistakes when we're learning how to do them [lead protocols] but if you keep doing them, then they become almost second nature." One participant recognized the value in their coach's learning. They explained their acknowledgment that there will be critical feedback, and the willingness to try new things is appreciated and recognized.

Courage to even step into a leadership role can be dangerous for leaders. One participant reflected on her hesitancy to lead a CFG. She shared that on numerous occasions she was asked to lead but shied away from the work. Once she was over her reluctance, she found the process to be rewarding. One mentor/coach shared her comfort:

I feel like I can use the protocols way better. I love, love, love using protocols. I can start out my meetings and they flow well. We don't have the sidebar things going on. It just, we get a lot accomplished and everybody feels like they got something out of the meeting and that for me is a huge hurdle to jump in. How do you even process a meeting? How does that work? How do you stop those extra things from going on? So, using the protocols, practicing the protocols and researching the protocols has all been beneficial.

Challenging participants

Designed agendas, questions, and protocols were integrated into the CFG meeting times. Besides the coaches' ability to lead and manage meetings was the additional quality to challenge participants and hold them accountable for their learning. "They're always asking, How are you going to add this into your learning? What would you do if you could bring this into your classroom? What would it look like?" One participant shared her perspective on being challenged by explaining how the coach always designed the time so the teachers became the learner. This participant recognized that her ability to learn impacted her ability to create a learning environment for her students. She found that the behavioral and emotional work done in the CFG transferred into her development of her students' well-being. She continued by sharing, "I would be curious if she turned it over to us and we had to say what we used that month as far as in the class and how it changed in our classroom." This participant was interested in being held more accountable for her adult growth and implementation of instructional strategies.

Another challenge identified by a participant was goal setting. A participant recalled a time when she was asked, What goals do you have? Not only was she asked, but she was expected to record her goals. In her previous years of teaching, she was never asked this question. Her memory of this experience was compounded by the fact that she reviewed her goals and found that she had met them. She then challenged herself to come up with more demanding goals as a result of this time.

As individuals begin to find comfort in the process and embrace their growth, coaches can begin to transfer responsibility over to participants. One excited participant believes she wants to step in and be part of the district development of this work. Other

participants found that managing and leading protocols gave them confidence in their abilities as well. Imbedded into the group work was the opportunity for participants to develop their leadership among their peers.

Mentors

Mentors were integrated into the district meetings, expected to lead building meetings, and provide professional support to all first- through third-year teachers within their assigned building. All buildings in the district have at least one mentor, depending on the number of first- through third-year teachers. Niles Community Schools had 16 mentors for the 2013-14 school year with specific expectations (Appendix E). Mentors also acted as coaches, which makes it hard to differentiate between them. However, the mentoring role was more of a support role and provided teachers with a variety of individuals at the district and building level. Mentors shared that they found freedom to adapt to differing needs. “You have to adapt to what the needs of the students are. We have to adapt to what the needs of the new teachers are.” This mentor continued by sharing: “I think [mentoring] needs to have the freedom to be able to work in different types of situations.”

One quality that multiple mentors shared was their ability to be open to learning from those they mentor. In order to be open to guiding new teachers in their growth, being open to their own growth is equally important. One mentor shared the importance of developing a foundation and environment where teachers were comfortable to ask questions. Encouraging them to ask these questions and provide feedback gave this mentor a sense of relief: "Okay, I'm not the only authority, you know. How do I improve? How do I get better?" She found that being a mentor provided a reciprocal

learning opportunity. One articulated this opportunity by recognizing that her vulnerability was necessary to show new teachers that it was okay to make mistakes and not know everything. Her ability to lead has been impacted by her willingness to be transparent.

Multiple mentors provided insight on their eagerness to use the experience provided by the district program to grow. One of those opportunities was scheduled observation times. These times were designed for all CFG participants. One mentor recognized and celebrated the fact that they were able to observe their colleagues. “I went and saw a couple of first-year teachers because everyone brings different things depending on their experience.”

Niles does not follow a traditional one-to-one mentoring model. Some participants shared their concern without having a mentor assigned. Conversely, one mentor referenced how multiple teachers sought her out who were in her district CFG. This particular mentor presented multiple times throughout the year and found that those presentations provided an opening for new teachers to reach out to her and her expertise. She was not assigned or even in a group with some of the new teachers who accessed her knowledge and guidance. It was hard for her to identify why they reached out; however, I would surmise it was her humility.

Mentors, like coaches, are also being watched and new teachers see themselves interested in their role. One teacher identified the passion in her building mentor and wanted to learn more. She shared:

I can't imagine what it's like right now, to be a mentor teacher and it's like, this is great. So I give kudos to them because you don't walk away feeling uncomfortable or that it's fake. It's very positive and it has to do with the job. But

just from our CFG, when we're given district time for CFG's to observe, I went in and observed [Mentor] on purpose because I was impressed by her positivity.

Administrators

Building-level principals played different roles within the Induction program. Administrators were given an overview of the program (Appendix A). All five district coaches were building principals, and building-level principals not taking part in the detailed district planning defined how they wanted to integrate into their building-level CFG. One building found their administrators to be heavily influential in their work. Common themes they identified were reciprocal feedback and empowerment. These participants explained how their administrators engaged in two-way feedback. This two-way feedback was generally done when principals would visit classrooms routinely and provide insight on what they saw. Feedback was focused around what they saw kids doing. This feedback became a normal occurrence and was found to be a meaningful growth process for instruction as well as relational development.

Not only do these teachers accept and want feedback from their principals, they also felt comfortable and confident in giving them feedback. They further gave examples of times they were asked by their principal for feedback and the principals acknowledged and adjusted their behaviors and processes in order to meet needs. This openness gave them a confidence that they were part of the community design.

Another theme highlighted was the ability of principals to empower their group in decision-making. One participant shared the importance of how their administrators modeled the facilitation of their adult learning. This model allowed them to be fully engaged as well as provided them the motivation to push themselves professionally. This push gave them intrinsic motivation and empowered them to deeply engage in their own

learning in order to facilitate their students' learning. Creating the opportunities to engage participants at the building level by using CFG and learning-group processes sets the example for how participants view their roles in the classroom.

Colleagues

Naturally, public school districts are comprised of K-12 teachers and administrators encompassing all subjects and levels. This composition consists of general education teachers, behavior and speech specialists, special education teachers, and all other professional roles that help carry out the function of the schools. Niles Community Schools' induction program has individuals in their first and second year in the district comprising of multiple years of past experience and first year right from college. There are mentors of all levels, backgrounds, and experiences, as well as administrators of all levels and experience. This array of more than 90 individuals makes up a variety of options for new teachers. A mixture of first-year teachers to veteran teachers, all inclusive of building, level, and content within the district, provided opportunities to learn many styles, strategies, and viewpoints.

It was not uncommon for first- or second-year hires to identify other first- or second-year hires as their "go to" person. A first-year teacher, when asked about who he felt was a mentor or coach, pointed to his interview partner. This teacher was in his second year teaching in the district and had a few years teaching prior. Another participant when asked about who they accessed for support referred to their building counselor, assistant principal, principal, and department head. None of these individuals were identified as district-level mentors but were identified by this participant as mentors. When asked about the variety, she explained, "I don't just ask one person, I like to know

what many would say about the same thing and I learn something different.” Another participant shared how she developed the courage to say, “‘Hey, what’s something that works for you?’ and they’re willing to share ideas, and that doesn’t just revolve around people that are involved in the CFG, that involves other people too.”

Participants explained an understanding that not having a defined mentor did not limit their capacity to find human resources. “I think that it is interesting ‘cause when you think of the term mentor traditionally, you think of this one person that you go to, to ask questions and I really feel like I have five.” This participant extended his number of mentors and explained that in fact he had 11 mentors. He felt connected to his entire building and found that each teacher provided valuable insight. “I don’t feel there’s one mentor because I feel encouraged and empowered to be able to get information and inspiration from just about anywhere.” Having an array of support and a structure that empowers teachers to recognize colleagues’ strengths allowed for tailored advice for each situation. This array of individuals leads to a building and district culture that nurtures relationships and values each other’s strengths. The majority of participants recognized that their ability to identify colleagues who could support their learning was essential. Themes that resonated are of honesty and trust, networking and sharing ideas, and comfort in company.

Honesty and trust

Positive common experiences with colleagues helped lead participants in forming positive professional relationships. These relationships were generally based on trust or honesty as a foundational component of becoming closer than when starting out. “So that’s part—the closer that you are the better you create the idea of this is how we’re going

to do business.” This closeness does not come naturally at times; through design, the CFGs helped this development. “When you can laugh hysterically and do something incredibly stupid like sit on somebody else's lap, you become friends.” Team builders, protocols, agendas, and content adjustments that consider the participants’ needs were important.

Group makeup also was valuable to participants as one identified that the variety of grade levels allowed for participants to be more open, since they have never experienced certain grade levels. A high-school teacher speaking to an elementary teacher, or vice versa, provided an openness that may not have been realized if all CFGs were designed by level. One participant thinks that a sense of intrigue and wonder allows for more vulnerability.

Fun and enjoyment, observed through laughter and positive facial expressions, are evidence of relationship development and nurturing. This joy leads to participants wanting more from each other. They shared their interest in walking into others’ rooms and engaging in conversations about projects, materials, and children’s work. Extending this conversation is dialogue around what is working well and vulnerability when things are not working so well.

Sharing common goals and experiences is another way group trust is developed. Primarily at the building levels, multiple participants shared that this bond is developed when you truly believe in your work. This belief is individual but also contributes to a greater cause. As you develop this cause collectively, your understanding, knowledge, and desire to support each other increase; this is founded upon real trust. Confidentiality is a consistent norm within the foundational development of most building- and district-

level CFG's. "Parking lot meetings" or "meetings after the meeting" can often damage the work of the group. One participant explained that her experience within her building was unsettling at times as disagreement within her group led to hurtful conversations outside the meeting time. She recognized the damage done by these conversations and worked at stifling it by stating, "You are talking at the wrong place because I cannot do anything for you." This sense of trust in your co-workers further leads to an ongoing and developing network of colleagues.

Networking and sharing ideas

Teachers routinely shared their appreciation for having a variety of colleagues to learn from. This variety included colleagues from their own grade level, their building, other buildings, Pre-K-12 teachers, administrators, and peers with differing years of experience. This diversity provided teachers with a constellation of human resources.

One teacher explained how his building-level work played out:

With the model that we're using and the practices being shared not just in the grade level but across nine through eleventh grade I am picking up skills and ideas that I wouldn't have. I wouldn't have thought of personally and that shatters that glass ceiling and now my thoughts are I want to do better.

Participants articulated their comfort in knowing specifically who can meet their needs based on insight given in their building CFG. One participant recognized his peer for his contributions with technology, and another for her contribution with projects; and yet another participant knows whom to ask for support when dealing with a challenging student. This participant captured the essence of identifying varying individuals for specific needs:

Today specifically highlighted one of the things that I feel like I'm needing to improve on the most is more formal assessments in my class and so I think that

moving forward, it'll be—I know tomorrow—I know exactly who I'm going to go to and say, hey, I need help with XYZ because I struggle with assessments.

Networking in meeting times is recognized as necessary; however, extending this network of support outside the classroom was also identified. Follow-up outside the meeting leads to stronger and sustained partnerships. The meetings set the foundation, and individual initiative helped develop individuals. “We knew who we could go to, who had certain ideas, who had certain connections and that all came through at those meetings.” Multiple participants appreciated both the horizontal (grade level or content) and vertical (between level, content, or building) design; it provided opportunities to develop relationships they would not have developed.

The district integrates mentors into the district meetings as well as has them lead their building-level meetings. Generally, the building-level mentor is assigned to a different CFG in order to provide variety. Mentors find that they are learning as much as the first- and second-year teachers. They feel at times they may be learning more and question why they were assigned as mentors. One mentor shared her excitement to learn from a first-year teacher who is learning a new reading program. She recognized that when she begins to implement the program, the colleague she mentored could provide her with support.

Comfort in company

Participants in the district program are assigned to groups ranging in size from 15 to 18 members. Building-level participants are in groups ranging from 2 to 17 participants. Generally, teachers find comfort in having these groups because someone is dealing with the same issues they are. “Coming in my first year in the building, it is a refreshing change to have that opportunity to have people in the mix, because there surely

isn't otherwise. So it's positive." The groups provide an opportunity for participants to meet new people they otherwise probably would not. "I think it helps you to get to know people, especially if you're a new teacher."

The building groups provided relief in a sense that it gives a starting point for new hires to find support. Meetings allowed participants to identify individuals who fit their needs at the time. It allowed structured time for new teachers to formally identify their support. "I was thinking as a new teacher you put a face with the name kind of thing, so I knew which in line we'll talk to, and it makes you feel more comfortable opening up about what my issues might be or what I need help from."

District groups also gave participants a variety of viewpoints. This variety provided participants an opportunity to develop positive relationships throughout the district. These meetings provided a fresh perspective, and participants enjoyed hearing realities from participants in other programs that otherwise may not have been true. Existing CFGs had to incorporate new hires into their culture, which caused some a little anxiety, as they were comfortable with their relationships and group dynamics. Pleasantly surprised participants who identified this transition as troubling found that when they reviewed the processes of doing their group business, these new additions fit in and contributed.

One challenge for groups as they transition each year with the addition of new hires was to acclimate new hires to an already existing CFG. Bonds and relationships have become deeper through the experiences of CFG work. These relationships have strengthened instructors' ability to relate and work with each other but have also allowed for personal relationships to develop. One focus group explained with emotion the

commitment and care that she and her CFG have for each other. They constantly are touching base and reflecting on their practice. Other participants recognize that their groups have developed a deeper bond; not only are they focused on developing their working relationships, they also value personal relationships. “I would say as a building community that I probably never felt so closely knit with others that I work with.” This closeness pushes them to spend personal time outside their scheduled times to get to know each other better.

Providing multiple individuals who collectively pursue a common goal helps change perspectives. One participant explained that her career goals were adjusted as she became part of this work. She explained:

And I will share with you. I didn't want to be a teacher anymore. I was pursuing other career opportunities.

Interviewer: After?

Participant: After I graduated from college then I did a year with [service organization]

Interviewer: Okay.

Participant: And I was going to go back to school or do non-profit until I heard about [building] and I met some of the people here and I had to be part of this.

Participants recognized the value in being a part of a bigger community. Each building in the district had at least one mentor imbedded in the district-level meetings. These mentors then had the responsibility to lead their building-level groups in monthly meetings. The 2013-14 school year was the first time mentors were expected to have monthly meetings within their local school. This was an expectation that was shared early in the program year with one follow-up meeting directed toward mentors. One participant noted the need for developing the structures of their time: “I would like it if our building CFGs were a little bit more tailored or perfected.”

One mentor explained her struggle of working within a building where most of the individuals she mentored were at a lower grade level. This pushed her ability to grow and she questioned her impact as a mentor. Within the same building, another teacher shared the obstacle of dealing with tough issues when the issue may be with a colleague within her group. She shared, “It’s hard to hash out your sticky issues with your building CFG if your sticky issues are with the people you are working with. So, it makes it kind of tense or tedious, depending on what it is.” Both teachers faced interpersonal growth and found ways to grow through the difficulty.

Participants conveyed that the district- and/or building-level work should not be offered only to first- and second-year hires and district-assigned mentors. Participants found that many other colleagues could contribute to their growth and wanted to be part of these CFG groups. “It’s been a help, I think not only for first-year teachers. It would’ve been helpful if you [referring to all teachers] would participate in it.” One new teacher shared the story that one of her colleagues who had taught for 10 years would have a great amount to contribute but also wanted to learn and gain great ideas from the group.

Another participant recognized this need and explained that all should be included. If the district wants to create a collaborative culture, then all should be blended to create unity. The blending of all instructors in the district leads to unity and one participant recognized the need for all to grow and proposed that this type of opportunity could make learning accessible to all. One participant shared, “No one is saying you have to change the ways you teach, but it would be nice to get everybody involved.”

Summary

This chapter began with an analysis and understanding of the district culture and perceptions of three distinct groups within the district. It also reviewed perspectives of newly hired teachers' experiences within a local public school setting and their induction CFGs. Their experiences included participation within an induction program designed around the Critical Friends Group model focused on social adult learning. Data from the School Culture Triage Survey, interviews, observations, and meeting agendas were the artifacts used in this analysis. These data provided descriptive statistical analysis and grouped interviews organized by themes. Major themes emerged from the respondents' interviews including collaboration with subcategories of culture and adult learning, structures, and leadership.

District culture had similarities on certain cultural indicators, depending on which group one was with. The SCTS identified areas possibly needing attention. Newly hired instructors generally described their collaborative culture, within their induction CFGs, as a positive experience. Evidence shows teachers appreciated meeting structures and acknowledged the necessity of meeting adaptability. It was recognized that coaches and mentors were vital in providing and creating this structure, and their need for a learning mind-set is necessary. Needing further exploration is the amount of survey indicators, by mentors and coaches, below the overall average. The leaders' ability to accept participant feedback, to make adjustments, and to show transparency are qualities valued and identified. Other qualities that emerged were the leaders' ability to empower participants, design meetings, engage adults in their learning, and create trust. Multiple

participants felt they wanted to take part in developing their skills to lead in sustaining this work.

Skills that were identified by participants throughout this research were varied. Some leadership and instructional skills participants developed were how to phrase without upsetting, protocol use and flexibility, agenda development, discipline, instructional techniques, assessment techniques, ensuring equal voice, and the importance, development, and asking of questioning in order to build on each other's work. Participants found they were able to transfer their adult learning from the CFG work into their daily instructional practices.

Interpersonal qualities were also developed and identified. Participants recognized their need for each other and identified that humility to make mistakes is part of learning. Relationships can be developed through vulnerability and an interest in getting to know others. Confidence in running meetings, protocols, and sharing thoughts was a common idea. Protocols and structure helped participants develop their listening skills. Having an open mind and interest in learning were identified as a foundation to having the right attitude and approach. This was summed up nicely by one participant as she stated, "Even though I've been teaching for many years, it's still nice to know there's something else out there different to make my classroom more effective." Participants were enthusiastic about their learning times, and all CFGs as well as the interview process showed that the ability to reflect was integral to their growth. This reflection came in two forms: the ability to give feedback and their ability to articulate their growth in writing and action.

Participants, on multiple occasions, recognized the value in having a constellation of support. This induction program had multiple coaches, mentors, and participants who played the role of mentor. Since a one-to-one mentoring approach was not implemented throughout this program, participants felt they had many options and resources. Having a vertical and horizontal design gave participants access to content experts, program experts, and building- and district-level insight. This diversity was recognized as necessary in the support of teachers. Also recognized was the comfort teachers found with individuals enduring the transition into a new district. Providing this relief was a diverse district-level group as well as a building-level group. Having both options for new hires gave them multiple perspectives and a much greater variety of support. Participants found value in having their local building-level needs met while gaining district perspectives.

In capturing this collaborative environment, participants felt comfortable sharing specific ideas for improving the integration and induction of newly hired staff. Finding a way to make it inclusive for all teachers in the district was common feedback. Identifying ways to improve feedback loops was another idea. Being mindful of meeting times and occurrences as well as being mindful of specific needs for differing experience levels is necessary. Continued development of leadership for sustainability and support for CFG leaders is also a need identified by participants.

Chapter 5 summarizes the data as it relates to this study's research questions. A discussion and interpretation of the relationship between the qualitative and quantitative findings as well as the relationship with the literature will then be discussed. Finally,

there will be recommendations for future work in the area of inducting teachers into a collaboratively engaged school culture.

CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Introduction

Professional learning within public education is a necessary phenomenon if public education and student achievement are to improve. Instruction has the largest influence on achievement; however, it is the adult's capacity to grow and learn within a collaborative culture that will have an impact in realizing the potential of good instruction. Institutional issues often create a culture where mediocre student achievement is normal and maximum student achievement is not realized. Traditional development and conventional methods of teacher induction do not create school cultures where collaborative social construction of knowledge is the norm. These development opportunities provide educators with a passive individual approach to personal growth and classroom instruction. This conventional method does not develop a collaborative culture necessary for educators to transform their individual growth, within the organization's group culture, and then maximize their potential impact on student results.

The purpose of this study was to investigate the existing school and district culture of Niles Community Schools and the processes necessary to induct newly hired teachers into an existing culture. Another purpose was to describe the structures used to effectively develop the existing learning culture. This study helps us to understand the processes, people, and mind-sets needed to create and nurture a collaboratively engaged

learning culture. Understanding the factors that develop and sustain interdependent collaboration can be extended across all organizations. Understanding the design and strategies for developing a collaboratively engaged learning culture, focused on adult learning, is necessary for advancing organizational development. Gruenert (1998) recognizes that a positive school culture correlates with high student achievement. This study helps identify ways to improve school culture with a focus on inducting newly hired teachers into an existing culture.

Conceptual Framework

Social interdependence theory was developed in the early 1900s. Positive interdependence, promotive interaction, individual accountability, appropriate use of social skills, and group processing into learning are elements of this theory. Cooperative learning groups derived from this theory and are comprised of individuals working collectively to achieve group goals. Formal cooperative learning requires an instructor to make pre-instructional decisions, explain tasks and cooperative structure, monitor learning, and intervene to provide assistance (D.W. Johnson & Johnson, 1989).

Five basic constructs create the structures for cooperative learning and are prominent and dependent on social interdependence within the Critical Friends Group learning model.

1. Positive interdependence is developed around clear tasks or goals that require group commitment.
2. All members are responsible for their share of the work, ensuring that all are committed to the group.
3. Members exhibit promotive interactions (i.e., sharing resources and

supporting, encouraging, and praising each other's work).

4. Members use social skills resulting from the development of interpersonal qualities related to effective leadership, decision-making, trust building, communication, and conflict management.

5. This discussion involves focus on whether group goals are being achieved or not, including the identification of actions leading to results (D. Johnson & Johnson, 2013).

Interactions that promote the sharing of resources, ideas, and encouragement are the foundation for the induction CFGs in this study. Within these induction CFGs, further attention is given to the design and theory of cooperative learning. This learning is goal-driven and led by instructors and coaches skilled in creating cooperative, enjoyable, and autonomous work. Embedded into the learning design are skills and perspectives that push a growth mind-set.

Professional learning communities and Critical Friends Groups are adult learning models that combine social interdependence and cooperative learning. Within the design of the induction CFGs are coaches that monitor task completion, support interpersonal and group skill development, design task structure, monitor learning, and intervene to provide additional guidance when necessary. Critical Friends Groups consist of members having a common interest, and their learning evolves through the use of protocols led by a trained facilitator (NSRF, 2012). Groups learn to work together with the aim of establishing student learning outcomes and increasing student achievement. They establish and state student-learning goals, help each other improve teaching practices, collaboratively examine student work, and identify and address school culture issues that

affect student achievement. The Critical Friends Group model is a structured means for individual and group growth dependent on ideas and the movement toward goals and learning through a social context. This interdependent work is a means for creating a collaboratively engaged learning culture.

Research Methods

This study used a mixed-methods design. Mixed methods seek to elaborate on or expand on findings of one method by using another method (Creswell, 2009). This research used multiple data sources, qualitative and quantitative data, which were triangulated (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2012; Creswell, 2009). Contextual information facilitated the discovery of cultural nuances. Quantifiable data were collected through the use of the School Culture Triage Survey (C. R. Wagner, 2006) (see Appendix B). The survey provided strengths and weaknesses and measured the degree to which cultural behaviors were present in schools within the Niles Community Schools. Seventy-six teachers completed the survey; teachers fell within one of three categories: teachers in their first 2 years involved in the induction CFG program, coaches and mentors involved in the induction CFG programming, and teachers not involved in the induction CFG work.

Qualitative ethnographic-designed research was simultaneously conducted. Ethnographic-designed studies describe, analyze, and interpret a culture sharing a group's patterns of behavior, beliefs, and language that develop over time (Creswell, 2008). The specific focus groups and interviews were multiple groups and individuals representing groups, serving the purpose of revealing insight into the cultural phenomenon of developing personal skills, collaboration, and school culture through induction Critical

Friends Groups. This study explains the processes, structures, and mind-sets necessary for collaborative development and adult learning to exist within induction groups through interviews, a survey, agendas, and observations.

Findings and Discussion

Quantitative

The quantitative findings of this study reveal the existing culture within Niles Community Schools. Perceptions were given through the use of the School Culture Triage Survey, which was completed by 35% of the teaching staff within the school district. Two hundred and sixteen surveys were given to teachers and 76 completed the entire survey. Research Question 1(a) asked, *How do teachers and staff within Niles Community Schools describe their building and district culture?* Teachers' highest rating indicated they work in a culture that discusses instructional strategies and curriculum issues (see Table 7). Second highest was the perception of empowerment to make decisions rather than wait for a supervisor. This shows the value in leadership showing trust and creating trust in their teachers. Empowering individuals to make instruction and curricular decisions is a valuable result of engagement. Empowerment to make decisions regarding curriculum and instruction has benefit for student achievement. Instruction is one of the most prominent aspects within education that influences student achievement (R. DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Fielding, 2007; Hattie, 2012).

Two of the top three rated descriptors are closely related to collaboration and the ability to work with colleagues. One of the most important aspects of adult learning is educators' ability to collaborate to construct meaning (Breidenstein, 2012; Drago-Severson, 2009; Mezirow, 1990). Teachers within Niles Community Schools feel and

describe their existing culture as one that does create a culture of collaborative engagement. If student achievement is to be maximized within a school district, developing a culture of collaborative engagement is essential (Gruenert, 1998). Autonomy in implementing instructional strategies and curricular content are two primary facets that lead to achievement. The ability to share ideas is an essential component of collaborative engagement; it is necessary for a creative and innovative adult and student-learning environment.

Teachers completing the survey in this study did not recognize that teachers enjoy each other's company outside of the workday. Although discussions exist about instructional and curricular issues, they do not seem to be carried out through social time outside of the school environment. This result could imply collaborative engagement necessary for instruction and curriculum to occur is not contingent on socializing outside the school environment. School scheduling and proactive measures are not strengths of the culture within Niles Community Schools either (see Table 7). It would be safe to conclude that school and district scheduling are not items valued when engaging in collaboration.

Research Question 1(b) asked, *Are there significant differences between the new-teacher induction teachers, mentor induction teachers, or non-induction participants?* Two of the 17 descriptors showed a significant difference. The second highest overall rating was "The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do." This descriptor was also scored significantly different for new-teacher participants in the induction CFG compared to the mentors in the induction CFG and non-induction CFG participants. This may suggest

participants in the induction CFGs have a greater confidence in their decision making due to the multiple supports and leadership. Reeves (2006) and Dumay (2009) believe a hallmark of a learning culture is the ability of staff to make decisions in an environment that fosters adaptability. It also may suggest that newly hired teachers do not feel limited in their current roles or are unaware of the limitations. This study was designed to describe the current culture. Future design may take this particular question and ask new teachers what structures and mind-sets are in place that enable them to feel empowered to make instructional decisions.

When comparing a new-teacher participant in an induction CFG, a teacher mentor in an induction CFG, and non-induction participants, there were significant differences (see Table 7). Both the mentors and non-induction participants fell within the category of *modifications and improvements are necessary*. Review of responses show the average rating by mentors was lower on 16 of the 17 culture descriptors when compared to the average scores of the other groups. This information suggests that teachers acting as mentors may have a more accurate picture of their local buildings and district, or they are possibly more critical and are hindering the positive potential that could be achieved by newly hired staff. This concept should be further explored since it may show the integral need to identify mentors who recognize the positive aspects of culture and are willing to support the initiatives, learning, and mind-sets necessary to move the culture forward. On the other hand, it shows the need to use mentors to develop the culture they realize needs to be in place but is yet to be achieved.

People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here was the other descriptor that had a significant difference. Teachers participating in the induction CFGs

scored significantly higher on this cultural descriptor. Choice and staff inclusion in learning design is an intricate foundation for growth. When staff are given choices, it leads to enjoyment and engagement; this challenges them to innovate, collaborate, inquire and further design instruction focused around goals (Miller & Rowan, 2006; Sarros et al., 2008; Saunders et al., 2009). The significance of this finding has an impact on how leaders develop this perspective and then help develop the behaviors of existing staff. If new teachers hired into a culture feel they have no choice and no joy, then how long will it take for those new hires to lose their joy for the work being done? It is an essential element that newly hired teachers find joy in their work. This also impacts the importance of developing those individual mentors and non-participants within and through learning communities.

Generally, there is a large group of existing staff not involved in an organization's induction process. Due to this structure, the question becomes, what social opportunities to develop relationships and a collaborative working environment exist for these members? If staff are not engaged in these types of activities, it may lead to teachers simply coming to work rather than finding joy in their working time. Fullan (2011), Stigler and Hiebert (1999), and T. Wagner (2004) believe it is essential for all staff to connect, which directly can cause inconsistencies relating to mediocrity. This significant difference also may be due to the recent choice of accepting employment. Newly hired teachers recently may have been provided options on where they would like to work and they chose Niles Community Schools. Veteran teachers may feel they have no choice in whether they continue their work, which may lead to a mind-set of working as a necessity rather than fueling a passion and joy.

Qualitative

The quantitative research examined the existing culture while the qualitative research examined the processes in place for inducting new hires into the existing culture. Three general categories emerged through the qualitative research: collaboration, structures, and leadership. These three categories capture the articulated perceptions of participants and their ability to share their views of the induction CFG work. Within collaboration two subcategories emerged: culture and adult learning. Research Question 2(a) asked, *How do newly hired teachers (new-teacher induction) describe the learning culture they experience in their building and district level CFG?* Perspectives articulating existing phenomena that occur within the context of induction CFGs group learning and development answer this question.

Induction Mind-sets

Dweck (2008) explains that one's ability to recognize that the hand you're dealt is the starting point for development. "This growth mindset is based on the belief that your basic qualities are things you can cultivate through your efforts—everyone can change and grow through application and experiences" (Dweck, 2008, p. 7). Intentions of the induction CFG are to cultivate adult learning through a culture of collaborative engagement. Collaboration is a combination of mind-set, skills, and an interest in peers' ability to enrich perspectives to learn. Some mind-sets, which fostered this culture of collaboration and adult learning, were grounded in certain interpersonal qualities.

Through the interview processes, participants were able to identify humility as a factor in their approach. Recognizing the need for others within their learning was a common factor for many teachers. They valued their peers and felt as if mistakes were

acceptable. With the extensive built-in reflection opportunities, this gave them opportunities to review their growth and recognize areas needing attention. Vulnerability was integral as this provided the need for relationships and, in fact, created stronger relationships. The induction CFG work fostered adult learning while helping participants through participant humility and a focus on personal growth.

Induction participants and coaches/mentors developed confidence in their skills and abilities. This confidence was found in running meetings, sharing ideas, and recognizing other valuable human resources—their colleagues. Confidence provides motivation to continue one's growth; it also can be a catalyst to provide and offer more personal talents and strengths. It was apparent that participants showed their confidence through the enthusiasm they had as they shared and articulated their insight. Enthusiasm and passion are fuel for confidence, and this energy was felt and their excitement for the work came through.

Having a growth mind-set is defined by one's ability to articulate but also to show evidence of growth. Participants recognized their development of listening skills, and it was acknowledged that individuals were better attuned to their colleagues' and building-level needs. Through the designed times, they gained valuable insight into the varying needs of those participating. Improved questioning and dialogue allowed for the expansion of thinking on topics such as instruction and discipline. Specific skills such as designing their discussion prior to carrying it out, phrasing without upsetting, and providing equal voice with each other were all identified as learning outcomes. Structured reflection times allowed participants to spend time preparing their thinking and growth prior to having structured and focused conversations.

Many participants valued the opportunity to reflect orally and in writing. They recognized that the processes of reflection gave them opportunity to move their thinking and connect learning. It was recognized that this time of reflection quantified their adult learning. This reflection, done through review questions and Plus/Deltas, provided the group an opportunity to frame their dialogue and hear other perspectives while growing together as a learning community. It gave summary to past learning and helped provide the foundation for future learning.

Most participants found value in being a part of an induction CFG. Even though some participants were hired into Niles Community Schools with many years of experience, they still found and recognized that there is “something else out there different to make my classroom more effective.” This mind-set is not only necessary, it captures the potential that adults possess if their approach is one of learning in a collaborative culture.

Developing autonomy, voice, initiative, and a sense of empowerment within newly hired teachers is important and a strength identified by the survey. It was important to participants that the flexibility and use of open-ended materials and protocols helped develop relevant discourse. Participants found value in sharing opinions but were accepting of their opinions and thinking being pushed. Drago-Severson (2009) identifies this concept as reciprocity of dialogue, which essentially suggests individuals must be in the right mind-set in order to have a conversation that collaboratively constructs meaning. Inherently, this requires more than one individual and an openness and recognition that there is a necessary social component for learning to happen.

Participants valued the opportunity to engage and learn from each other through the social context of the induction CFG times.

Structures

Research Question 2(b) asked, *What structures of the induction CFG processes impact perspectives of induction participants in the NCS?* I identified structures that were recognized in guiding newly hired teachers and their development toward induction outcomes. Structures provide the means for reaching learning goals through systematic and identifiable processes. These systematic means are program structures and strategies used within meetings to support the learning processes for participants.

Administrators set district-level goals as a guide for developing monthly learning experiences within the district. District-level induction CFGs were designed as vertical teams consisting of mentors from multiple levels of instruction as well as teachers from all levels and all buildings (see Figure 1). Participants appreciated this vertical mix because it provided them a variety of district perspectives. This design deliberately bridges multiple programs, levels, and schools. Coaches planned a minimal of 90 minutes a month in preparation for district induction meetings (see Figure 2).

Content at district meetings was generally focused on developing relationships, bridging culture, recognizing human resources, identifying materials, providing protocols, and developing collaborative skills. District coaches, comprised of building principals, planned and carried out district-level meetings. Meeting design imbedded learning opportunities that were relevant to the time of year. Some considerations were made for learning district-wide assessments, parent conferencing, and staff evaluation.

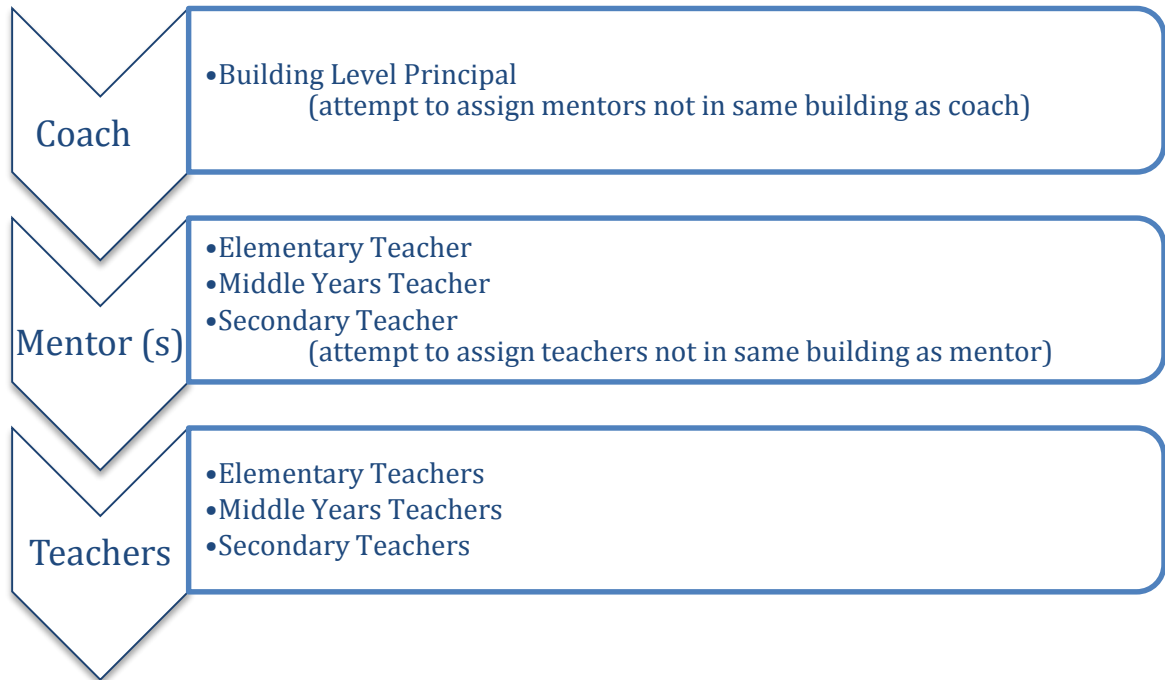


Figure 1. Niles Community Schools’ vertical CFG district design. This design includes staff members from a variety of content and instructional levels.

Also, meetings were designed around feedback from participants in order to make the time relevant and provide participant choice.

Building-level meetings existed at varying levels, buildings, and programs. Some buildings had designed meeting times, and other buildings had informal times. Building-level meetings were focused on specific building needs and goals and simultaneously supported the district-level work. Specific curriculum and material issues, instructional strategies specific to buildings, discipline, and routine building needs were addressed during these times. Building-level mentors, identified by principals, ran these meetings (see Figure 3). The mentors who led building-level work were also part of the monthly district-level meetings.

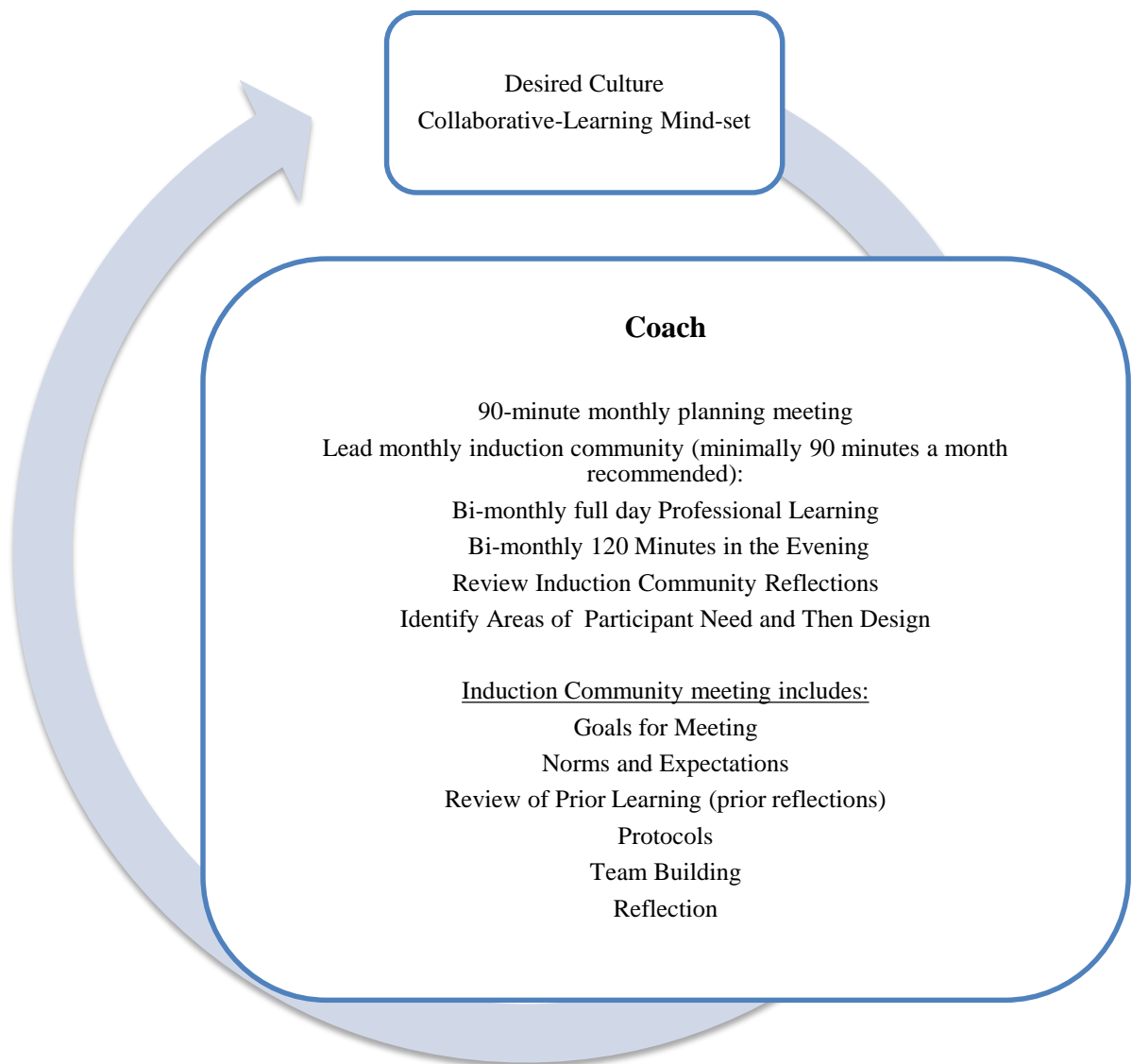


Figure 2. Coach's role.

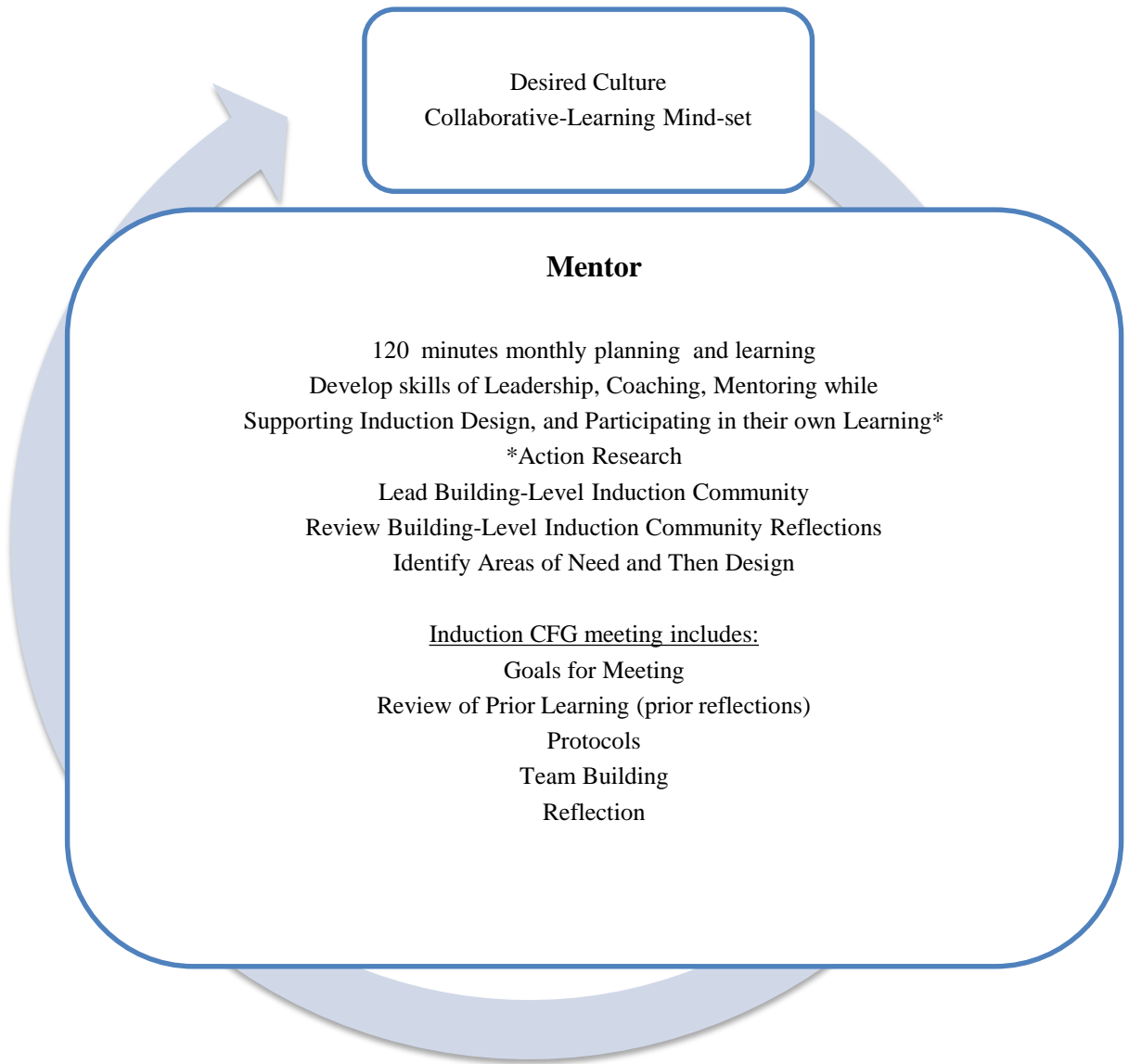


Figure 3. Mentor's role.

When presented to new hires, induction CFGs were optional. However, it was conveyed that the district valued learning and valued new-hire participation. Participants shared concern that clarity between voluntary and expected caused uneasiness. This uncertainty was a cause for some to not exactly have a clear understanding of the district- and building-level expectations. CFG work is optional learning, and within this program it was conveyed that participants had choice, but it did not feel as if they did.

Content development was the primary responsibility of the coaches at the district and building level. Participants appreciated the opportunity to provide feedback in order to guide the content being learned. This feedback was done through a protocol called Hopes & Fears where participants shared what they hoped to gain from their meeting times and what they feared. This was a guide for agenda development, and participants wanted and expected agendas to be provided and followed. Each meeting time, participants were asked to provide immediate feedback. Plus/Deltas were used for this immediate feedback, and they were also used as a means of reflection; this gave participants an opportunity to provide critical feedback on future design and needs. It was observed by participants that they appreciated the ability of their coaches to adapt meeting times to truly meet the requests of the participants.

Coaches were recognized for adapting overall agenda topics prior to meeting times but were also recognized for adjusting agenda topics and allotted time within meetings. Participants valued their coach's ability to listen; and if more time were necessary, leaders adapted the experience. This adaptation was usually while working through designed learning protocols. It was evident that participants appreciated their

coach's ability to listen and orchestrate effective meeting times; coaches prepared full-day CFGs bi-monthly and after-school experiences on the other months.

Protocols were designed to guide participants toward district and individually identified objectives. Protocols are a structure that integrates collaborative skills through a systematic and timed process. This allows for maximized engagement, organization, and time efficiency. Protocols were valued and at times caused anxiety if not given what participants perceived to be an appropriate amount of time to explore concepts. Protocols were given to participants with the expectation teachers would adapt them within the context of their teaching environment. Participants appreciated the resource as well as appreciated the amount of content covered within a short, structured period of time.

Integrated within their time were the social expectations that individuals would follow their set norms. These norms articulated the behaviors and expectations for interacting and participating within the group. It was evident on agendas and in meeting minutes that groups reviewed the norms and worked at carrying out the expectations. Participants appreciated the norms, which addressed certain behaviors such as confidentiality, trust, equal voices, respect, sensitivity, and humor. Some groups kept a working document of norms while others presented them on agendas. Most groups shared that they consistently reviewed the expectations at each meeting and spent time elaborating on the meaning of certain expectations.

Induction Leadership

Research Question 2(c) asked, *Who contributes to the success of the participants in the induction CFG work within NCS?* Many participants recognized the value in their

induction coach (administrators), induction mentor/coach (teacher), administrator(s) (building level), and fellow district- and building-level colleagues. They recognized the constellation of individuals who provided multiple levels of support necessary for them to be successful (see Figure 4).

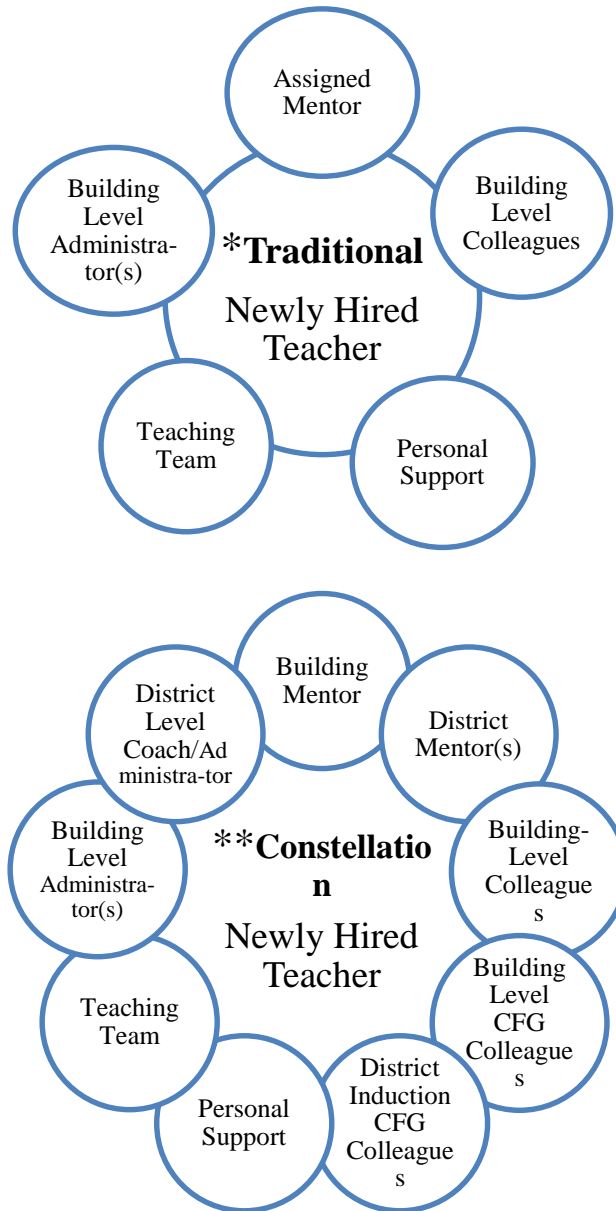


Figure 4. Traditional model compared to Niles Community Schools constellation model.
 *Provides between 6-10 individual supports. Many are informal and must be sought out.
 **Provides between 18-40 individual supports and options. Many are formal and provided as choices.

Participants recognized the value in the individuals planning and supporting their adult learning. Riggio, Chaleff, and Lipman-Blumen (2008) explain that learning is to a significant degree a collaborative experience between the formal leader (the teacher/induction coach) and the informal followers (the students/induction participant). The learning experience is directly enhanced by the degree to which effective participation by students/participants contributes to their classroom groups, and this requires good leadership and good followership (Riggio et al., 2008). Much like in a classroom, it is the ability of the leader within induction work to bring along the followers. This is done through intentional design and strong relationships.

Including all new hires to the district, whether they have experience or not, is recognized as a positive and is necessary for new hires to be acclimated into the district culture. It also was recognized as limiting for individuals who may be coming to the district with great knowledge and experience. The challenge was posed to integrate newly hired teachers with experience into the leadership and planning. Another need shared was that veteran teachers within the district wanted to be part of this work (see Figure 5). Non-participants recognized the joy and excitement stimulated by participants and wanted to be engaged in this collaborative environment.

Quantitative and Qualitative Connection

The quantitative portion of this study provides the perceptions of three distinct groups of individuals within Niles Community Schools. Teachers comprising the induction CFG, which was the focus of this study, scored an overall score falling in the category of *monitor and maintain making positive adjustments*. New teachers within

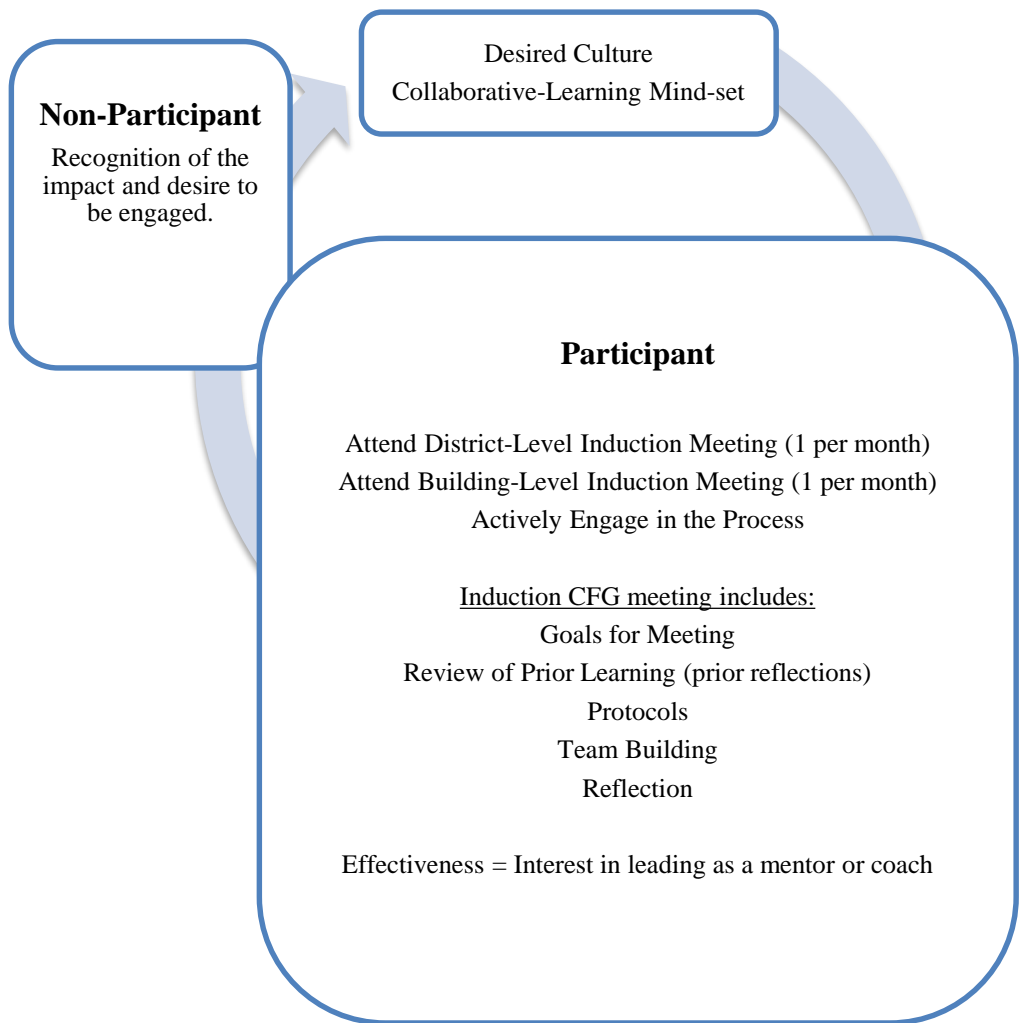


Figure 5. Participant's role.

Niles Community Schools showed significant difference sharing *They work here because they enjoy and choose to be here*, and teachers feel *Empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do*. This general perception, based on the School Culture Triage Survey, suggests that new hires within the district have certain structures that support their learning along with a strong mind-set that they can be successful within their school and district. Together, finding joy in their work and feeling good about choosing to be in the district is a strong foundation and internal compass that provides motivation and drive to grow and learn.

New-teacher participants shared their perspectives during the interviews by conveying the same joy and empowerment they identified as strengths in the quantitative survey. Participants articulated many necessary structures and mind-sets to develop an efficient and effective induction program. They were also able to recognize other qualities necessary to implement a program that meets their varying needs.

Since this study was a mixed-method process, it was observed that certain programs having higher overall School Culture Triage Survey scores also had members with a greater depth of knowledge regarding the impact and need for effective collaboration. Some of this depth was articulated through the amount of time spent with each other within the context of their work. Correlating with the survey, all groups scored the lowest when describing their lack of time outside of the school setting for visiting, talking, and meeting. Through the interview process, it was articulated that participants spend much time within the school building with each other but not externally. Participants shared the need and desire to consistently access their colleagues

when needs arose and not wait until meetings. This attention to identifying their colleagues was a means for deeper relational development.

Another finding was that the mentor group scored below the other group averages on 16 of 17 descriptors on the SCTS. This result should challenge leadership to explore this phenomenon further. Are the mentors more critical of the desired culture and scored it lower with the desire to improve it and make it better? Did mentors score the indicators low because their perceptions of the culture are more accurate, and culture needs attention? Do the mentors comprise a mind-set that district culture needs modifications and improvements, and are mentoring to make that change? Are the mentors holding the district's progress back because they have a perception that the culture needs development? Does the district leadership find value in developing the mentors within the district? As the researcher, I cannot make a determination the mentors' impact from the survey data; however, mentors were asked to mentor based on central office recommendations, were not given much district-level guidance, and were asked to lead building work.

Mentors are a key component in the district induction process. They provide building-level coaching and one-on-one mentoring. Mentors are also looked upon as leaders within the organization. The coaching and mentoring component is integral to the successful mind-set development of future employees. Due to their longevity, expertise, and earned trust, these individuals convey, good or bad, what the culture of the district will be. They are the ones who spend the most time with newly hired teachers, and they are the ones who form the mind-sets that are integrated into a building and district

culture. The value and need for mentor development will be discussed in the recommendation section.

Multiple times through the interview process, teachers shared their appreciation for having multiple mentors and staff surrounding them with support. Some even shared they had veteran teachers wanting to be a part of their induction CFG. This is intriguing since the district created Critical Friends Groups with a foundational principle that they were voluntary for teachers wanting to be part of a learning culture. The district adapted the concept into a guided expectation that adult learning and collaboration are valued and one should take part in this work. This caused confusion; but when this research was done, individuals showed their eagerness to be a part of it and wanted to participate.

A few new teachers, who took part in the interview process, explained their interest in the induction work and wanted to be part of the process in the future. They showed interest in becoming coaches to help develop sustainability with the processes. It was conveyed that past induction experiences were nothing like what they encountered within Niles Community Schools. This joy for learning and being part of district growth is an example of why participants scored significantly higher on working in their roles because they choose to.

One impactful component mentioned by many induction CFG participants is the concept of having a variety of supports. Individuals form a web of support, unlike many traditional one-to-one mentoring models that provide a constellation-mentoring system. This approach provides them many options for guidance, support, coaching, and directing. These options may directly influence their feelings, conveyed through the

survey as empowerment. The network system provides the potential for multiple mentors, depending on the specific need at the time the need arises.

Hoyt's Model of a Collaboratively Engaged Culture

Model of Induction

Through interviews, participants of the induction process shared the importance of all individuals within the induction program. They recognized that the coaches, mentors, and fellow participants played an active and important role in their success within their classroom, building, and district. It was also recognized that the non-participant teachers could also and, in fact, did play an important role in their success. This program not only impacted the newly hired instructors to the district but it also had an impact, or potential impact, on all teachers within the district (see Figure 6).

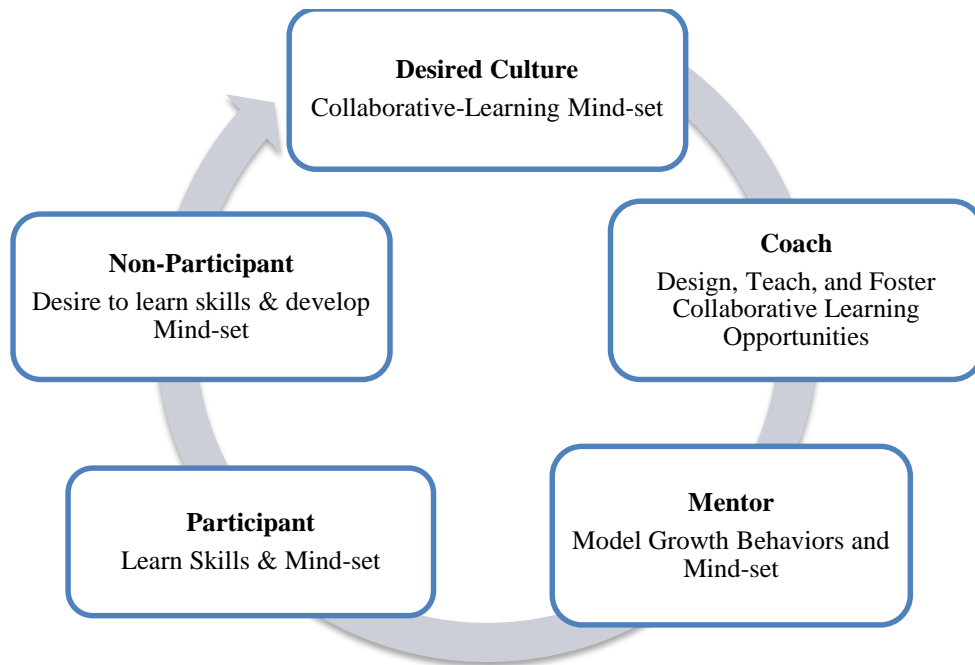


Figure 6. Collaborative engagement through induction.

Model of a Collaboratively Engaged Organization

To create a desired culture of collaboratively engaged adult learners, it takes intentional design with a balance of skill development and mind-set. The Niles Community Schools have coaches, through the use of research and participant feedback, who develop integrated plans that move newly hired teachers through the process of dialogue, relationships, learning, and leading (see Figure 7).

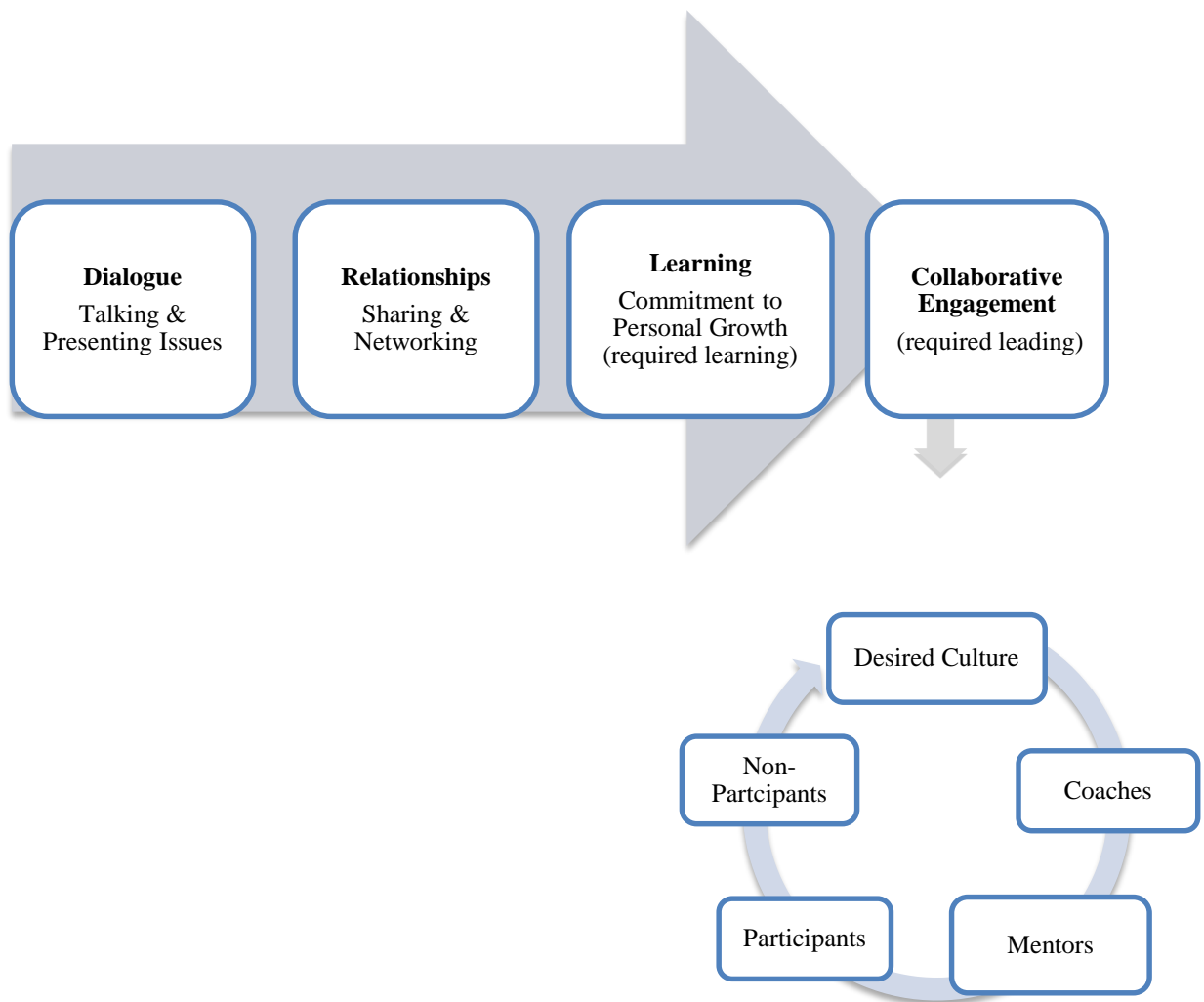


Figure 7. Desired mind-set and structure for maximizing a collaboratively engaged organization.

Each of these concepts is necessary in order to meet the needs of newly hired teachers, integrating them into the current culture, and moving the current culture forward. It is the ability of the leaders to foster and develop skills while challenging individuals in a socialized collaborative environment, such as the induction CFGs, that can foster and maximize a culture of collaboration and learning.

Recommendations

Leadership

Niles Community Schools' induction CFG program relies heavily on leadership. This leadership is designed by administrators as self-authoring (Breidenstein, 2012), collaborating around their belief systems, along with the input from induction mentors and participant teachers. It is necessary to understand that the impact of this induction program relies heavily on the responsibilities of the leaders to understand culture, adult learning, and structures needed to develop opportunities to create a collaborative learning organization. Leaders responsible for directing the induction of newly hired personnel must provide the structures, grounded in the appropriate mind-sets, for adult learning and ultimately student achievement to be realized. Barrier and others (2002) recognized initiatives should be tailored to the specific organization, employees should be engaged in defining work, and leadership should be committed. Niles Community Schools recognizes this need as well.

In this section, I will share recommendations for leaders to develop appropriate structures for serving newly hired personnel that can directly impact the mind-sets. When designed with a joy and love for teaching and learning, the process can impact newly hired professionals to a potential not yet realized in the educational profession. It can also

nurture and develop an entire organization's culture. Senge (2000) worked with businesses, and Sabah and Orthner (2007) adapted Senge's work and identified four structures necessary for a learning organization. Adult collaboration, identification of measurable goals, ability to share successes and resources, and providing time to engage are four components that should be incorporated into inducting and developing staff. Niles Community Schools has developed an organizational model that encompasses these structures.

Administrators and Principals

Effective planning and programming are essential elements within the design of inducting new staff into an existing culture. However, the planning processes must be grounded with common underlying understanding of the desired organizational culture. A collaborative learning culture guides this recommendation and becomes the guide for program goals. Within the design process, through collaborative means, is where coaches and district leadership have the responsibility to define and plan for program outcomes. Commitment by all participants to give energy and loyalty to an organization's goals and values is essential to the success of an organization (Buchanan, 1974; Kanter, 1972). Cultural beliefs are the principles that are integrated and disseminated through coaches, mentors, participants, and ultimately non-participants within a district and within the induction program. This dispersed mind-set then becomes an organization's cultural identity.

Coaches have a responsibility to design work based off the needs of mentors and teachers. These needs are identified through systematic reflections on learning as well as feedback within meeting times. It is the responsibility of the coach to collect, reflect, and

assess the needs of the adult learners in order to design meeting times to move their group's learning. Meeting times should integrate protocols that are goal oriented and efficiently designed to move thinking from current thoughts to a place desired. Integrated within these protocols are collaborative skills necessary for learning groups as they develop their mind-set toward identified topics. Identified topics may relate to academic, social, or cultural issues within their classroom, building, or district. Protocols allow for personal skill development that can be used in other collaborative settings as well as develop a mind-set toward identified topics. By strategically designing a collaborative environment, the approach of decentralizing authority becomes real, and individuals develop the autonomy and are empowered to make decisions by building on current thinking and existing practices.

Leaders should not limit the capacity of their newly hired personnel. Assigning a one-to-one mentor without providing any other individuals or structures could be detrimental for a teacher or employee to reach their maximum potential (Chassels & Melville, 2009; Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011). The maximum potential could be the skill set of their mentor or more disadvantageous could be taking on the mind-set of their mentor. If there is no program to support, develop, and nurture mentors, then they may not emulate the true spirit of the culture leaders are interested in creating within an organization. It is my recommendation to develop a multi-faceted webbing of support for newly hired teachers (see Figure 4). The graphic is designed to show the immediate impact on a newly hired instructor. In the traditional model, the mentor is assigned and becomes the person who guides and coaches the newly hired professional as they become inducted into the building and district. From my experiences, this mentor begins to

define the newly hired instructor's approach and understanding of district culture immediately. If this mentor has not had the training and direct coaching on their impact, it could detrimentally impact the organization.

Leaders may make assumptions that their group will naturally interact and possess the necessary skills to effectively collaborate. This assumption can limit the group's potential and does not allow for interpersonal growth and group development. I recommend two sets of norms be introduced, taught, and developed over time. The first set of norms I suggest be called standard norms. These norms are general, which allow the group to have common behavioral and interpersonal expectations for the given learning time. Some examples include that the group should be honest, sensitive, respectful, maintain confidentiality, humor is good, stick to start/stop times, and use cell phones responsibly. Each of these norms can be expanded and further understood when time is taken at each meeting to review them. "How does honesty look and sound within the context of our work?" "Someone give an example of showing respect." Identifying norms is not enough to help the development of one's collaborative environment and skills; it is important that the entire group spends time exploring the meaning behind each concept.

Furthering the development of each concept is the discussion and practices necessary to manage the norms. It takes awareness, practice, and commitment by members to challenge and hold each other accountable to the set norms. It is important to identify strategies and team members who can be responsible for the instruction, learning, and development of the norms and their implementation. This becomes natural, and

groups will self-monitor if there is a commitment to their development at each meeting time.

Nagel (2013) suggests 11 process norms that further extend the standard norms. These process norms are heavily focused on developing individuals' ability to collaborate. They are a mix between interpersonal qualities and skills that support the development of learning teams and those that specifically help individuals develop skills for improving their collaborative learning. These 11 norms are:

1. Fostering a culture of questioning
2. Ensuring the discussion and dialogue stays on topic
3. Focusing on change in adult behaviors
4. Delayed response
5. Rephrasing
6. Examining ideas and thoughts for clarification
7. Conscientious and intentional brainstorming
8. Safety in sharing ideas, thoughts, and inferences
9. Being aware of verbal and nonverbal communication
10. Assuming the best in others
11. Perpetuating continuous learning.

I recommend that at the beginning of each meeting a review of the 11 norms should occur. To extend the learning opportunity, take one and ask a question about the meaning behind the norm or ask someone to expand on the norm by giving their perspective on the meaning and application. Another way to develop these norms is to have a meeting focus and at the end of the meeting reflect on how well the group did as it

relates to the norm identified. This reflection could have them review specific examples of when the skill was used effectively or ineffectively. These norms also give guidance for mentors and coaches to deliberately teach a skill within the context of the content being explored while using protocols.

Within the design of the induction work, it is necessary to develop the skills of collaboration while working through the designed content. This becomes the skill development aspect of the professional learning work (Timperley & Alton-Lee, 2008). Many protocols hold the assumption that individuals will share information while others listen, process, and interact with the content. Developing an ability to listen can be fostered by the ability to ask questions. Asking questions is a skill that can be taught coupled with the interpersonal understanding that managing ourselves can better impact the group.

For example, when individuals ask each other for clarity on a shared topic, an expanded adult learning opportunity around questions may be appropriate. One's ability to identify and understand the difference between a clarifying or probing question is an important skill that needs to be developed. This leads to the teaching and learning that body language of an individual may change depending on the depth and type of question posed. Generally, a clarifying question is answered with confidence and little thought. A probing question may cause deeper thought with an adjustment of their body, a look away, or a long pause. Developing these process skills within the context of learning design intentionally supports adults in their interpersonal growth, which leads to creating and developing a learning culture.

Participants appreciate the time given to get to know each other. They value team builders and unstructured times to discuss issues relevant to them. This becomes a delicate balance of creating productive and efficient learning times and meeting this need. Although this social time does not need to be away from the school house, it can happen through intentionally designed times before the meeting starts. Another idea is to invite newly hired personnel to a social with administrators, board members, or other community groups. Providing snacks or dinner for the group could meet this need. It also allows individuals the opportunity to network and informally spend time with each other.

Within the context of designing meeting times, it should be recognized that newly hired teachers find comfort in knowing their colleagues deal with similar issues. This is a natural phenomenon, and allowing time for sharing, not necessarily problem solving, is important to participants. Protocols allow for focus yet can provide time to engage with personal professional issues. This should be coached, however, so it does not become a complaint session that leads to digression rather than progress. The use of workshop learning opportunities where resident experts share their work, challenges, failures, and success could be one way to deal with this phenomenon. Another strategy is to use a protocol that is designed to solve each other's problems in a systematic way that does not devalue the issue but turns the mind-set into one of learning from the issue and moving forward.

Mentor Teachers

Mentors are generally assigned positions, and if districts follow the traditional state-required model, it is traditionally a one-to-one assignment. Mentors historically in

Niles Community Schools were assigned one-to-one as well until recently. This movement away from a one-to-one approach requires clarity with expectations. Mentors within the context of Niles Community Schools' model were integrated into the monthly district-level CFG meetings. They were there in support of the work and were expected to return to their local building and provide support and guidance for building-level needs. Mentors were expected to lead monthly meetings within their own buildings with a focus around district conversations and local building needs. For a couple of years, mentors struggled with the expectations and there was uncertainty on their specific roles. The expectations for mentors should evolve within a district.

Mentors are an integral component, and building-level administrators should have a good understanding of those teachers with certain skills and mind-sets to cultivate a newly hired instructor. When identifying mentors, it is my belief they should represent the ability to be coached, which is evident in their interactions and ability to grow. This quality is a foundational principle in developing a collaborative learning culture. Assigning a one-on-one mentor could limit the capacity of teachers; more research is needed in this area. It is my recommendation that leaders should identify multiple mentors, provide the forum for new teachers to engage with these individuals, and let them access these individuals as needs arise. Zellers et al. (2008) and Luna and Cullen (1995) refer to instructional coaching and mentoring as constellations or mosaics. This process allows for adult choice, which is essential in learning; and it gives newly hired teachers an opportunity to have a variety of assets at their disposal.

Organizations should develop a framework, or job description, to guide a mentor's mind-set and behaviors. Such a framework would provide a common

expectation for administrators determining who should be identified as a mentor. It is suggested mentors meet monthly, outside the context of district-level induction CFGs, as their own mentoring community. This time should be devoted to developing their skills to lead monthly meetings, and understanding cultural mind-sets necessary to lead learning and thinking with their colleagues and also participate and push their own learning. Mentors should participate in the design and development of the district work and collaborate with each other on building-level work. This relationship is a symbiotic relationship where learning is reciprocated between groups (Cuddapah & Clayton, 2011; Gallucci et al., 2010). It is recommended that they actively research and learn around topics related to adult learning, mentoring, coaching, induction programming, and leadership. To create sustainability, coaches should foster mentors into highly skilled coaches.

Teachers

Participants are the measure of how successful coaches and mentors carry out their responsibilities. If participants find the value in the work being done, within the induction learning and through the individual coaches and mentors leading, then participants will convey the expected learning and collaborative culture necessary for improved achievement and growth within the organization. One measurement that defines the success of an impactful induction program is if participants want to participate and be part of the sustainability after attendance is no longer required. Sustainability can be achieved through transformative leadership principles of distributing leadership shifting from dependency to empowerment (Grant, 2006).

If leadership can create this result, then this sustainable model will impact the entire culture of the organization. Ultimately, if the newly inducted individuals can emulate a growth mind-set through their thinking, skill development, and application of learning, they have the desired tools that allow the organization to continue growth, innovation, and creativity. To create sustainability, mentors should foster induction participants into highly skilled mentors.

Non-participants become the final component needing attention if a district is interested in developing the collaborative learning culture within the entire organization. If the structures and mind-sets produce and foster effective administrator-coaches, teacher-coaches, teacher-mentors, induction participant-teachers, and non-participant teachers, an organization has provided a learning community culture that will continually meet the demands and rigor of the teaching profession and consistently maximize the potential of their human resources. This design will have a direct impact on an entire organization's ability to continue the social construction of knowledge within it.

Organizational Design

A constellation approach maximizes the potential and reduces the obstacle of isolation. Teachers often find themselves isolated in their own classrooms within the context of their building (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; T. Wagner, 2008). We also have organizational isolation where teachers are isolated within the context of their building within district culture. This model integrates newly hired instructors with individuals from all levels within a district but also with all buildings and programs. This collaborative approach allows for district dissemination of culture as well as better communication and understanding of what each district entity is doing. Our mental

models are expanded if we can integrate our social learning with colleagues who are not routinely in our path. This expands our thinking and provides additional experiences and conversations that help build our capacities as individuals within an organization (DuFour & Eaker, 1998).

Learning potential is maximized when choice is provided. Induction designs generally limit the participants who can take part in the learning processes to those being inducted into an organization. The current program within Niles Community Schools is limited to new hires, mentors, and coaches. It is recommended that induction CFGs be offered to all staff. At first, this may seem counterproductive; however, through my research I learned that veteran teachers were interested in taking part of this evolving and enticing process. If individuals want to be included and understand the expectations, then it should be made available to them. Daly (2009) recognized that through trust, empowerment, and involvement in decision-making, learning cultures are less rigid when responding to change. This gives opportunities to learn within the organization and support the learning of newly hired teachers but also supports all in their own learning. Ultimately, it would revolutionize an entire organization's culture (see Figure 8).

Critical Friends Groups were set up with the founding principles outlined by the National School Reform Faculty. CFGs were morphed from Professional Learning Communities; in order to lead a CFG, you were to be trained. All existing coaches in this research were trained in the CFG philosophy and protocols. As this program evolves and programs evolve within the context of an organization, I recommend the CFG concept be evolved to meet the demands of specific organizations. Since Niles Community Schools adopted the CFG philosophy and adheres to the guiding principles, it defined their

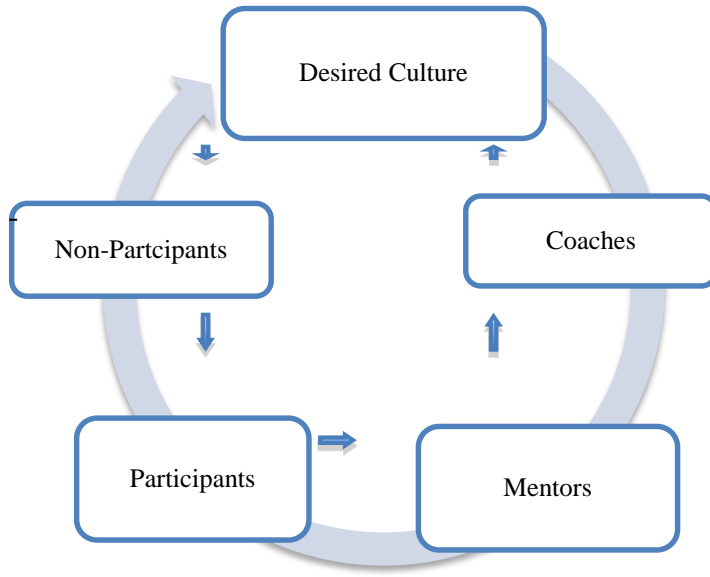


Figure 8. Sustainability through personal development.

induction work as a CFG. As mentors and other leaders emerge with the right qualities, mind-sets, and abilities to implement structures, it may be appropriate to identify these groups as a learning community. For example, rather than calling the community an induction CFG, it could be identified as *Niles Learning Community*, *Niles Induction Community*, or *Niles Mentoring Community*. This takes on a personalized focus for the organization and does not limit potential, creativity, and an innovative spirit to design a program that meets varying organizations' needs.

Future Research

Continued research regarding the impact of inducting new personnel into an organization should further look at the impact a one-to-one mentoring approach has on the potential to develop and change an existing culture. A comparison between a one-to-

one model and a constellation model would further strengthen the need for identifying which model supports organizational growth.

Further research should be conducted on the mind-sets and skills of assigned mentors. Within this study, mentors scored the lowest on all categories, compared to the other two groups. With this result, further insight on the mentors' mind-sets and skills could possibly explain the potential of an induction program based on the mentors.

Observing the actual meeting times is a challenge. Actually watching the meeting design unfold is a necessary need in future research. Humans develop many of their collaborative skills within the context of other individuals. I could not watch as many groups since one norm was confidentiality, and some were sensitive to having an outside observer. Meeting design is important, but how the meeting actually unfolds and evolves is an intricate part of understanding the social phenomena of collaborative learning.

Summary of the Study

Adult learning is the cornerstone for organizational development. It is relevant and necessary for organizational structures that allow for creativity, innovation, and development. Resulting from these is an increased personal satisfaction, which develops a culture suitable for achievement and goal attainment. Along with structures, leaders must develop, nurture, and recognize their individual need to learn and grow. Within the organizational structures this recognition of a growth mind-set allows the collaborative culture to evolve.

If educators are to get to the pinnacle of their profession and represent a mind-set of growth and learning, all must deliberately take part in the active research and development of personal interest. A learning culture can be manifested through

individuals actively developing the potential to lead learning groups or show they are researching and implementing effective structures and mind-sets with their colleagues and students they serve. This joy for learning will manifest itself within the structures of collaborative engagement, and will impact the achievement of our organizations and the children we serve.

APPENDIX A

DISTRICT VISION

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

Superintendent
111 Spruce Street
Niles, Michigan 49120



Vision: Niles Community Students... Inspired Locally to Excel Globally.

Mentoring Program

With the rapid changes in the relevant knowledge and techniques required for most jobs, nearly everyone will have to continue their learning and intermittently relearn aspects of their professional skills. (Ericsson, 2005)

The goal of the mentoring program is support the transition of our new teachers into the realm of full-time teaching. We want to encourage the aspects of life-long learning, risk taking, and professional learning communities.

As a profession, we know more about how to prepare and support new teachers than we normally practice. One of the key components for a new teacher is to watch a great teacher in action. It really does not matter what grade level that teacher is assigned because great teaching permeates all levels.

From **Influencer** we learned that deliberate practice is essential if anyone wants to improve skills. We also recognize the need for a coach. In order to grow in what we do we all need practice and a coach. All performers pass through a series of steps that leads to a level of skill attainment that is either sufficient or insufficient (Ericsson, 2005). It is impossible for educators to acquire the needed skills without first gaining an understanding of what a skilled performance looks like. The idea of replicating the methods of skilled performers has not been a part of the literature on educators training.

The culture of our profession needs to become more conducive to collaboration. We want to reduce the isolation of our new teachers and build a community for them that supports their growth and learning. The core value of every profession is that everyone in the profession has the knowledge and skills necessary to be effective and responsible.

Group Design

There will be five CFG groups with specific leaders and mentors assigned to a list of new teachers. The following groups will be in place. (updated 8-27)

Program Design

Measurement of Effectiveness

1. 1st & 2nd Year IDP goals will correlate with the above mentioned goals for the program. SMART goals will be developed for measuring student achievement.
2. Surveys will be given twice throughout the year collecting perception data from participants.
3. Plus/Deltas will be used at each meeting for program development.

Meetings

Each meeting will begin as a CFG. Norms will be in place. Protocols will be followed. All meetings will be lead by the CFG leader and the participants will enjoy the opportunity to be active in their own learning.

Meetings will be planned in advance by the five CFG coaches meeting one time each month after all coaches have met with their CFG. Each session will have clearly defined goals.

Others will be invited to the CFG meetings to talk about special subjects. This will include Special Education, Superintendent, Board Member, Principal, Community Member, etc. Bi-monthly meeting times will include extended opportunities for teacher observations, district professional development, and additional skill practice.

Building meetings will be scheduled by mentors in order to meet the specific needs of their building and allow for relationship development. Mentors will be responsible for setting up these monthly meetings and will engage building principals when necessary.

Week of 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9, 1/6, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7

Mentor Meeting

A meeting will be established at the beginning for the mentors. The mentors will be held to an accountable level with an understanding of the purpose of the CFG along with their role to be a coach for deliberate practice.

Mentor Meeting Goals:

1. Fully understand the purpose behind the New Teacher CFG and become a part of that group.
2. Set a personal goal for improving the instructional capacity of the mentor teacher.

APPENDIX B

SURVEY QUESTIONS

CISC Center for Improving School Culture
CREATING BETTER PLACES TO LEARN

SCHOOL CULTURE TRIAGE SURVEY

Directions: Please circle a number to the right of each statement that most closely characterizes the practice in your school.

Rating: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Always or Almost Always

Professional Collaboration

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Teachers and staff discuss instructional strategies and curriculum issues. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Teachers and staff work together to develop the school schedule. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Teachers and staff are involved in the decision-making process with regard to materials and resources. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. The student behavior code is a result of collaboration and consensus among staff. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The planning and organizational time allotted to teachers and staff is used to plan as collective units/teams rather than as separate individuals. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Affiliative Collegiality

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. Teachers and staff tell stories of celebrations that support the school’s values | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. Teachers and staff visit/talk/meet outside of the school to enjoy each others’ company. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Our school reflects a true “sense” of community. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Our school schedule reflects frequent communication opportunities for teachers and staff? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Our school supports and appreciates the sharing of new ideas by members of our school. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. There is a rich and robust tradition of rituals and celebrations including holidays, special events, and recognition of goal attainment. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

Self-Determination/Efficacy

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. When something is not working in our school, the faculty and staff predict and prevent rather than react and repair. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. School members are interdependent and value each other. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. Members of our school community seek alternatives to problems/issues rather than repeating what we have always done. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. Members of our school community seek to define the problem/issue rather than blame others. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. The school staff is empowered to make instructional decisions rather than waiting for supervisors to tell them what to do. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. People work here because they enjoy and choose to be here. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |

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Scoring the triage survey

The lowest triage score is 17 and the highest score is 85. After utilizing the triage questions in several program evaluations, our data suggests the following:

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 the culture.

41 – 59 = Modifications and improvements are necessary. Begin with a more intense assessment of your school's culture to determine which area is in most need of improvement.

60 – 75 = Monitor and maintain making positive adjustments.

76 – 85 = Amazing! A score of 75 was the highest ever recorded.

School culture is of such importance that it requires constant monitoring. Yet before engaging in an elaborate and extensive analysis of the school culture, this quick assessment of current status can assist in determining the wise allocation of time and resources.

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APPENDIX C

FOCUS GROUP SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

How was the time developed in your building level CFG?

The work that you do in there, how is that created or who comes up with that?

Do you feel that what you came up with at the beginning of the year was carried out throughout the year?

Describe what you believe to be a high-functioning professional learning group.

What impact has your CFG had on your ability to collaborate?

What impact does your CFG have on your relationships?

What impact has your CFG had on your ability to facilitate learning for your children?

Do you believe how you provide feedback is effective for your building and district work?

What advice do you have for the continued development of creating a collaborative school culture?

Is there anyone, meaning a person, or anything that sticks out that really has prompted a change in what you do in your work?

What do you feel is still needed to help you gain even more confidence as a mentor, as a coach, as a facilitator of learning with adults?

How would you describe your building group that you are mentoring?

How would you describe your role in the district group that you are involved in as a mentor?

What process did you use to gain feedback from your participants?

APPENDIX D

PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

Induction
PLC through the Critical Friends Group Process
8-20-2013



- I. Welcome
- II. Introduction of Coaches:
- III. Background--**“You can’t increase a school’s performance without increasing the investment in teachers’ knowledge, pedagogical skills, and understanding of students...”**
 - ~ Richard Elmore - Harvard Magazine, Sept-Oct 2010
 - a. Professional Learning Communities—
 - i. Educators are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students we serve.
 - ii. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators
~DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many (2006)
 - b. Critical Friends Groups—Beliefs
 - i. Educators are the Experts—We must learn from each other
 - ii. Time is our Greatest Resource—We must focus our work to be efficient
 - iii. All Voices equal—Democratic processes must guide our work
- IV. Overview
 - a. Goals
 - i. To use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district.
 - ii. To inspire everyone to be learners.
 - iii. To build effective facilitators for student learning.
 - b. Components
 - i. Mentoring/Coaching (Content, Grade level, Building)

- ii. Intergenerational learning teams (Content, Building, District)
 - iii. Administrative involvement (Professional Learning Community & CFG)
 - iv. Leadership Opportunities (Your career path)
- V. 2013-14 Plan
 - a. CFG's
 - b. Times & Dates
 - i. All Day PD/CFG work takes place at Westside from 8:00-3:30--
Lunch is at 11:30-12:00
 - ii. Evening Events take place at Ring Lardner from 4:00-7:30 –
Dinner is from 4:00-4:30
- VI. Expectation For Now
 - a. Find your Name
 - b. Find your Coach
 - c. Find the Dates to Put on your Calendar
 - d. Begin working with your principal to get a sub for the full days of PD/CFG work

APPENDIX E

MENTOR/COACH OVERVIEW

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

Induction—Mentors/Coaches
PLC through the Critical Friends Group Process
1:00-3:00 @ Westside
8-29-2013



“Mentoring the most popular induction strategy, may perpetuate traditional norms and practices rather than promote high-quality teaching” **-Marge Scherer-**

- Welcome
- Introductions
 - Coaches:
 - Mentors:
- Set Norms for Our Work Today
- Reflecting on Practice--Why do your students reach their goals and you get results?
- Text Base Protocol—4 A’s
- Frame for our work--Background on PLC & CFG work--**“You can’t increase a school’s performance without increasing the investment in teachers’ knowledge, pedagogical skills, and understanding of students...”**
- ~ Richard Elmore - Harvard Magazine, Sept-Oct 2010

Professional Learning Communities—

- i. Educators are committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research in order to achieve better results for the students we serve.
- ii. PLCs operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators
~DuFour, DuFour, Eaker & Many (2006)

Critical Friends Groups—Beliefs

- iii. Educators are the Experts—We must learn from each other
- iv. Time is our Greatest Resource—We must focus our work to be efficient
- v. All Voices equal—Democratic processes must guide our work
- vi. It is your choice to join & learn

VII. Overview

	Goals	Outcomes	Components
Induction as Cultural Transformation	1) To use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district. 2) To inspire everyone to be learners. 3) To build effective facilitators for student learning.	1. Continuous learning of all teachers (reflection, journaling, reading literature, action research, skill development) 2. Collective responsibility for teaching and learning 3. Quality learning environment for students and adults 4. Increased student achievement (NWEA, MEAP, MME, AP). 5. Rewarding career path for teachers 6. Transformed learning culture 7. Protocol use within classroom & meetings 8. Reduce teacher isolation 9. Incorporate new teachers to the district, into an integrated school community that supports continuous learning of all staff. 10. Promote more effective teaching and learning for all students and teachers. *(Grow) a collaborative culture of learning professionals who are highly skilled and successful serving our Niles Community Schools' students. (2012)	Mentoring/Coaching (Content, Grade level, Building) Intergenerational learning teams (Content, Building, District) Administrative involvement (Professional Learning Community) Leadership Opportunities SBCEU's

VIII. 2013-14 District Level CFG's (Not the most updated ZH must do)

Times & Dates

- i. All Day PD/CFG work takes place at Westside from 8:00-3:30--
Lunch is at 11:30-12:00
- ii. Evening Events take place at Ring Lardner from 4:00-7:30 –
Dinner is from 4:00-4:30

IX. Building Level Expectations

- a. Meet monthly
 - i. Discuss building level needs
 - ii. Follow up on district level CFG work
 - iii. Develop relationships

Dates-Building : Week of 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9, 1/6, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7

Building Name:

Mentor (s):

Teacher (s):

- X. What specifically will you do/ what have you done (your stories)?
- a. Good Mentors: Listen, Observe--verbal and non-verbal, Available, Honest Feedback
 Sensitive, Non-judgmental, Openness, Warm, Caring, Empathetic ASK thought provoking questions, Provide direction, Guide, Celebrate successes, Mentor outside the CFG, Remember the little things, Support, Give affirmation, Communicate, Recognize the value of the mentee, Shares mistakes, Are transparent, Consult other mentors and resources, Are authentic, Invite the new ones to participate in school and out of school, Are welcoming

	Mentor	Coach
Focus	Individual	Performance
Role	Flexible agenda	Specific agenda
Relationship	Self-selecting	Comes with the job
Source of Influence	Perceived value	Position
Personal Returns	Affirmation /Learning	Teamwork/performance
Arena	Life	Task related

- XI. Parking Lot and additional needs
 XII. Plus/Deltas

Four “A”s Text Protocol

The group reads the text silently, highlighting it and writing notes in the margin on post-it notes in answer to the following four questions (you can also add your own “A”s

- What Assumptions does the author of the text hold?
- What do you Agree with in the text?
- What do you want to Argue with in the text?
- What parts of the text do you want to Aspire to?

2. In a round, have each person identify one assumption in the text, citing the text (with page numbers, if appropriate) as evidence.

3. Either continue in rounds or facilitate a conversation in which the group talks about the text in light of each of the remaining “A”s, taking them one at a time – what do people want to argue with, agree with, and aspire to in the text? Try to move seamlessly from one “A” to the next, giving each “A” enough time for full exploration.

4. End the session with an open discussion framed around:

What does this mean for our work with our Newly hired professionals and students?

5. Debrief the text experience.

Published Online: March 23, 2010

Better Mentoring, Better Teachers

Three Factors That Help Ensure Successful Programs

By Dara Barlin

For more than a decade, clear and consistent research has shown that the quality of teachers is the most powerful school-related determinant of student success. Capitalizing on this now-large body of evidence, many education leaders have begun to invest in new-teacher mentoring. It’s a smart bet.

When mentors are well-selected, well-trained, and given the time to work intensively with new teachers, they not only help average teachers become good, but good teachers become great. And because new teachers are most often assigned to the poorest schools and the most challenging classrooms, instructional-mentoring programs provide a

powerful lever for closing the teacher-quality gap and ensuring that all students, regardless of their backgrounds, have a real opportunity to succeed.

In the more than two decades that my organization, the [New Teacher Center](#), has been helping districts and states develop comprehensive instructional-mentoring programs, we've seen some programs soar, some struggle, and many fall somewhere in between. We recently reviewed a number of these programs and identified three critical factors that seem to be making a positive difference:

Finding the right teachers to be mentors. This is the sine qua non of a high-quality instructional-mentoring program. The mentors' effectiveness ultimately determines to what extent programs will support new teachers in helping kids succeed. Successful mentors have many important aptitudes, but above all they are exceptional educators with a track record of fostering significant student learning gains in diverse settings. The path to finding the right mentors, however, is complex. Many districts don't have the structures in place to assess who their most skilled educators are, or which of their teachers are having a strong, positive impact on student outcomes. Even in districts that are able to identify their high-performing educators, there can be resistance to recruiting these master teachers away from their classrooms.

There are some programs, however, in which school and district leaders allocate the time needed to develop systems that identify top-performing educators. They also put a priority on communications about the longer term and stress the larger-scale gains that can be made through effective mentoring. These are the programs that are hiring the highest-caliber mentors—and realizing the greatest gains in student learning.

Aligning instructional-support efforts. Think of instructional support as a communal tree that's supposed to be watered once a week. Although many well-intentioned people may want to water it in the hope of fostering growth, the tree is more likely to drown than to thrive if no one coordinates these individual efforts. The same holds true for instructional support.

One of a mentor's chief jobs is to help a new teacher close the "knowing-doing" gap by learning to apply knowledge of best practices to daily classroom routines. The rise of various instructional-support models in many school systems, however, often forces new teachers to navigate dozens of different perspectives, frameworks, and pieces of advice on teaching. A lack of coordination among these myriad advisers—literacy and math coaches, university supervisors, data specialists, special education counselors, technology coordinators, and many others—can result in conflicting messages that overwhelm beginning teachers and exacerbate attrition rates.

Programs seeking to address this issue have integrated mentoring into the district's larger learning goals and human-capital strategies. They try to ensure that all messages, tools, and strategies aimed at supporting teacher development are consistent and aligned. When this is done, new (and in fact all) teachers are better able to make sense of the various layers of information they receive, to understand clearly the expectations being placed on them, and to develop a personal road map for improvement consistent with a single, unified vision for quality teaching.

Partnering with principals. The job description of principals has been evolving away from operations and management and toward instructional leadership. Yet only a few emerging structures are in place to help them make this transition. Most principals still report that they don't know how to conduct an effective classroom observation, and many have never received information on how to transform school conditions in ways that allow new teachers to flourish. The education system at large has not yet stepped in to provide the tools, training, or guidance necessary to help fill these critical knowledge gaps.

When mentoring programs partner extensively with administrators, however, they provide an entry point for addressing these problems. While maintaining confidentiality with their new teachers (a key element in developing mutual trust), mentors can support the principal's understanding of effective observation and coaching strategies to use with new teachers, while they also learn about and create action plans for applying the principal's instructional vision and priorities in the classroom. The mentor and the principal, working together, can also discuss and implement other induction-related activities that help the school advance teacher growth.

The exciting news is that a number of districts have already identified and begun to build on these factors for success. The recent book *New Teacher Mentoring: Hopes and Promise for Improving Teacher Effectiveness*, which I co-authored, profiles four districts on the cutting edge this new brand of thoughtful implementation of instructional-mentoring programs. What they're doing, detailed in the book, may provide ideas for others.

Boston, for example, has revamped its entire process for teacher recruitment and is working to align a districtwide mentoring program with the Boston Teacher Residency program. The aim is to fill traditional gaps between teacher preparation, recruitment, and induction.

Chicago is seeking to overcome historical roadblocks to collaboration in large urban districts and make consistency of instructional support a reality. Its plan involves ensuring that mentors, principals, and content coaches all share the same instructional-support strategies.

Mentors in Durham, N.C., support only one or two schools at a time. This gives them heightened opportunities to help new teachers with instructional skills, while also working with principals to create school conditions that better enable new teachers to succeed.

The New York City Department of Education, which has integrated teaching standards into school accountability measures, has empowered former mentors to provide training in the standards' use. This has allowed principals and staff members to concentrate on helping all educators improve their effectiveness—rather than just assess progress periodically.

These are only a few examples of efforts being made in these and other school systems to implement instructional-mentoring programs and integrate them into district wide visions for change. Reports from those involved indicate that not only are such activities beginning to gain traction, but they are also showing surprisingly strong results.

Districts that once had revolving-door relationships with their new teachers have cut attrition rates in half. Entire cohorts of beginning teachers have begun to foster student gains similar to or greater than their veteran peers' results. And mentors are reigniting their own passion for teaching.

When mentoring programs thrive, schools systems are also more likely to develop a comprehensive vision for assessing and supporting instructional excellence and to reconfigure their evaluation and tenure structures around that vision. More important, they have a much greater chance of transforming their schools into vibrant learning communities capable of helping all teachers, and all students, succeed.

Dara Barlin is the associate policy director of the New Teacher Center, a national, nonprofit teacher-development organization with headquarters in Santa Cruz, Calif. She is a co-author, with Ellen Moir, Janet Gless, and Jan Miles, of *New Teacher Mentoring: Hopes and Promise for Improving Teacher Effectiveness* (Harvard Education Press, 2009).

Phases of First-Year Teaching

Recognizing the phases new teachers go through gives us a framework within which we can begin to design support programs to make the first year of teaching a more positive experience for our new colleagues.



17 Aug 2011 - Ellen Moir
Articles

First-year teaching is a difficult challenge. Equally challenging is figuring out ways to support and assist beginning teachers as they enter the profession. Since 1988 the Santa Cruz New Teacher Project has been working to support the efforts of new teachers. After supporting nearly 1,500 new teachers, a number of developmental phases have been noted. While not every new teacher goes through this exact sequence, these phases are very useful in helping everyone involved -- administrators, other support personnel, and teacher education faculty--in the process of supporting new teachers. These teachers move through several phases from anticipation, to survival, to disillusionment, to rejuvenation, to reflection; then back to anticipation. Here's a look at the stages through which new teachers move during that crucial first year. New teacher quotations are taken from journal entries and end-of-the-year program evaluations.

ANTICIPATION PHASE

The anticipation phase begins during the student teaching portion of preservice preparation. The closer student teachers get to completing their assignment, the more excited and anxious they become about their first teaching position. They tend to romanticize the role of the teacher and the position. New teachers enter with a tremendous commitment to making a difference and a somewhat idealistic view of how to accomplish their goals. *"I was elated to get the job but terrified about going from the simulated experience of student teaching to being the person completely in charge."* This feeling of excitement carries new teachers through the first few weeks of school.

SURVIVAL PHASE

The first month of school is very overwhelming for new teachers. They are learning a lot and at a very rapid pace. Beginning teachers are instantly bombarded with a variety of problems and situations they had not anticipated. Despite teacher preparation programs, new teachers are caught off guard by the realities of teaching. *"I thought I'd be busy, something like student teaching, but this is crazy. I'm feeling like I'm constantly running. It's hard to focus on other aspects of my life."*

During the survival phase, most new teachers struggle to keep their heads above water. They become very focused and consumed with the day-to-day routine of teaching. There is little time to stop and reflect on their experiences. It is not uncommon for new teachers to spend up to seventy hours a week on schoolwork.

Particularly overwhelming is the constant need to develop curriculum. Veteran teachers routinely reuse excellent lessons and units from the past. New teachers, still uncertain of what will really work, must develop their lessons for the first time. Even depending on unfamiliar prepared curriculum such as textbooks is enormously time consuming.

"I thought there would be more time to get everything done. It's like working three jobs: 7:30-2:30, 2:30-6:00, with more time spent in the evening and on weekends." Although tired and surprised by the amount of work, first-year teachers usually maintain a tremendous amount of energy and commitment during the survival phase, harboring hope that soon the turmoil will subside.

DISILLUSIONMENT PHASE

After six to eight weeks of nonstop work and stress, new teachers enter the disillusionment phase. The intensity and length of the phase varies among new teachers. The extensive time commitment, the realization that things are probably not going as smoothly as they want, and low morale contribute to this period of disenchantment. New teachers begin questioning both their commitment and their competence. Many new teachers get sick during this phase.

Compounding an already difficult situation is the fact that new teachers are confronted with several new events during this time frame. They are faced with back-to-school night, parent conferences, and their first formal evaluation by the site administrator. Each of these important milestones places an already vulnerable individual in a very stressful situation.

Back-to-school night means giving a speech to parents about plans for the year that are most likely still unclear in the new teacher's mind. Some parents are uneasy when they realize the teacher is just beginning and many times pose questions or make demands that intimidate a new teacher.

Parent conferences require new teachers to be highly organized, articulate, tactful and prepared to confer with parents about each student's progress. This type of communication with parents can be awkward and difficult for a beginning teacher. New teachers generally begin with the idea that parents are partners in the learning process and are not prepared for parents' concerns or criticisms. These criticisms hit new teachers at a time of waning self-esteem.

This is also the first time that new teachers are formally evaluated by their principal. They are, for the most part, uncertain about the process itself and anxious about their own competence and ability to perform. Developing and presenting a "showpiece" lesson is time-consuming and stressful.

During the disillusionment phase classroom management is a major source of distress. *"I thought I'd be focusing more on curriculum and less on classroom management and discipline. I'm stressed because I have some very problematic students who are low academically, and I think about them every second my eyes are open."*

At this point, the accumulated stress of the first-year teacher, coupled with months of excessive time allotted to teaching, often brings complaints from family members and friends. This is a very difficult and challenging phase for new entries into the profession. They express self-doubt, have lower self-esteem and question their professional commitment. In fact, getting through this phase may be the toughest challenge they face as a new teacher.

REJUVENATION

The rejuvenation phase is characterized by a slow rise in the new teacher's attitude toward teaching. It generally begins in January. Having a winter break makes a tremendous

difference for new teachers. It allows them to resume a more normal lifestyle, with plenty of rest, food, exercise, and time for family and friends. This vacation is the first opportunity that new teachers have for organizing materials and planning curriculum. It is a time for them to sort through materials that have accumulated and prepare new ones. This breath of fresh air gives novice teachers a broader perspective with renewed hope.

They seem ready to put past problems behind them. A better understanding of the system, an acceptance of the realities of teaching, and a sense of accomplishment help to rejuvenate new teachers. Through their experiences in the first half of the year, beginning teachers gain new coping strategies and skills to prevent, reduce, or manage many problems they are likely to encounter in the second half of the year. Many feel a great sense of relief that they have made it through the first half of the year. During this phase, new teachers focus on curriculum development, long-term planning and teaching strategies.

"I'm really excited about my story writing center, although the organization of it has at times been haphazard. Story writing has definitely revived my journals." The rejuvenation phase tends to last into spring with many ups and downs along the way. Toward the end of this phase, new teachers begin to raise concerns about whether they can get everything done prior to the end of school. They also wonder how their students will do on the tests, questioning once again their own effectiveness as teachers. "I'm fearful of these big tests. Can you be fired if your kids do poorly? I don't know enough about them to know what I haven't taught, and I'm sure it's a lot."

REFLECTION

The reflection phase beginning in May is a particularly invigorating time for first-year teachers. Reflecting back over the year, they highlight events that were successful and those that were not. They think about the various changes that they plan to make the following year in management, curriculum, and teaching strategies. The end is in sight, and they have almost made it; but more importantly, a vision emerges as to what their second year will look like, which brings them to a new phase of anticipation. *"I think that for next year I'd like to start the letter puppets earlier in the year to introduce the kids to more letters."*

It is critical that we assist new teachers and ease the transition from student teacher to full-time professional. Recognizing the phases new teachers go through gives us a framework within which we can begin to design support programs to make the first year of teaching a more positive experience for our new colleagues.

This article was originally written for publication in the newsletter for the California New Teacher Project, published by the California Department of Education (CDE), 1990.

PLUS/DELTAs

Reflections

+Plus: What worked for you today in our meeting? What represented new learning or prompted your thinking differently about your work? How did this help you to grow? How will today's work support your success or your school's achievement? How did today's meeting move us closer to improving our schools or district?

+ Delta: What recommendations do you have for improving our meeting time? What does the planning team need to know about this experience? What are the next steps for your learning? What ideas do you have for improving our work as a learning community?

APPENDIX F

UPDATE FOR SECOND-YEAR PARTICIPANTS

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

**Induction 2013-14—Process Overview 2nd year to Niles
PLC through the Critical Friends Group
9-5-13**



Welcome,

Niles Community Schools is fortunate to have 68 teachers in their first or second year in our district. With this blessing comes a commitment by the district to provide each of you the support necessary to be highly effective educators serving our children, parents, students, each other, and our community. As we discussed at our orientation we are inviting all first and second year teachers within Niles Community Schools to be part of a Critical Friends Group. As our program develops, through your feedback, we have adapted to meet your needs. A few changes and additions include:

1. Every other month you will be out of the classroom for observing, CFG work, and Professional learning.
2. Every other month will be an evening event where all CFG members eat dinner together and participate in CFG work.
3. You will have the opportunity to earn State Continuing Education Clock Hours (SCECHs).
4. You will be surveyed twice a year of goal progress.
5. You will experience embedded PD covering district initiatives.
6. Mentors will now be offering building level support for new teachers by building.
7. CFG's will mix the 2012 cohort with new 2013 hires.
8. We have added two additional coaches and six more mentors.
9. Your Individual Development Plans (IDP) will correlate with the 3 CFG goals and district achievement goals.

Below, you will find an overview of our program, the CFG you are invited to attend and commit to, times, dates and locations for meetings (begin lining up subs with your

building principals), and an overview of the weeks you should schedule to meet with your building mentors to discuss district level CFG work and building level needs.

XIII. Overview

XIV. 2013-14 District Level CFG's (updated as of 12-01-2013)

Times & Dates

- i. All Day PD/CFG work takes place at Westside from 8:00-3:30--
Lunch is at 11:30-12:00
- ii. Evening Events take place at Ring Lardner from 4:00-7:30 –
Dinner is from 4:00-4:30

XV. Building Level Meetings

Dates-Building : Week of 9/9, 10/14, 11/11, 12/9, 1/6, 2/3, 3/3, 4/7

APPENDIX G
OBSERVATION PROTOCOL

CFG New Teachers
Peer-Observation Protocol
2013-14



Consult with your building principal on who they believe would be a colleague to observe. When you join the classroom culture use your observational skills and record what you see and hear.

What did you hear?

What did you see?

What does this information tell you?

What type of culture has been built or is being built? What evidence do you see and hear that creates this classrooms culture?

What were the objectives? Do you feel objectives were met? Evidence that objectives were met?

Questions to guide your reflections

- What evidence do I see in this classroom that might address my questions?
- What particular content or strategies in the classroom are striking to me? Why? As I leave this class, what have I learned about myself as a teacher, about our students, or about teaching? What new questions or insights do I have

APPENDIX H

JIGSAW PROTOCOL

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L

New Hire CFG 2013-14

1-23-2014

4:00-6:00 PM @ Ring Lardner



The only person who

Carl Rogers, American psychologist

District Goals:

- Data Teams, Collins Writing, Culture, (Secondary--Reading Apprenticeship)

CFG Goals:

1. Use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district.
2. Create a culture that inspires, promotes, and encourages continual learning.
3. Develop effective facilitators for student learning.

***Vision:** Niles Community Students...
Inspired Locally to Excel Globally.*

***Mission:** Niles Community Schools provides dynamic learning experiences and innovative opportunities. We empower ALL to create, disseminate, discover, model, and apply knowledge in a diverse intellectual culture. We inspire leaders who challenge the present and enrich the future, striving for civic growth for our schools and community.*

Today's Goal (s):

- Develop Relationships (Differentiated Topics-choice)
- Protocol "Learning from Peer"

Schedule:

4:00-4:05 Arrive/ Snacks

4:05-4:15 Keynote-***** "BHAG How will WE get there?"

4:20-5:45 Peer Presenters--Plan your course

5:45-6:00 CFG Debrief MV-1, MA-2, DE-23, ZH-24, MB-Lib.

4:20-4:45

MV 1	Mentor--	"Stepping to the Edge-Teacher Leadership"
MA 2	Mentor--	"Creating Culture Through Team Building"
MB 24	Mentor--	"Complex Text Using Whole Brain"
DE 23	New Teacher--	"Guided Reading--Book Introduction"
Library	Director of Instruction--	"NWEA, Collins Writing, PD support"

4:50-5:15

MV 1	Mentor--	”Integrating CCSS through Specials”
MA 2	Mentor--	”Project Based Learning @ the Elementary”
MB 24	Mentor--	”How to Have a Difficult Conversation”
DE 23	Mentor--	”Parent/ Teacher Correspondence”
Library	(WS)--	”NWEA, Collins Writing, District PD”

5:20-5:45

MV 1	New Teacher--	”Building Relevance Through Community Involvement”
MA 2	Mentor--	”Authentic Engagement Through Community Projects”
MB 24	Mentor--	”Rigor in PBL.”
DE 23	Open	

Protocol: Learning From Peer

Goal: To keep a focus, to foster listening and to provide an opportunity to construct knowledge both individually and collectively.

Prior: Coaches will have communicated with the presenter the desired topic. Presenter minimally must:

Process:

1. Presenter will be prepared to share his/her best practice(s) with a small group of New Teacher CFG members. (10 minutes)
 - a. Your learning story (as it relates to the topic)--What caused you to begin using this strategy? How you came to know what you are doing is effective.
 - b. Presenter shares best practice and how they know this is effective (research or data).
 - c. Facilitator explains the next steps for their work.
 - d. Provide an artifact/handout that captures your work-so someone else can do it. Be sure to include contact information on handout (name, assignment, level, building) (Prepare materials for 25).
2. Learners ask the presenter any clarifying questions. (3 minutes)
3. Learners use “I like...” statements to connect to the practice presented. “I like” statements are shared aloud with the presenter/whole group. (2 minutes)
4. Learners use “I wonder...” statements to challenge thinking and/or make an extension on the practice presented. “I wonder” statements are shared aloud with the presenter/whole group. (3 minutes)

5. Next steps: Learners write their own reflection on how this strategy or a variation of this strategy can be used in their learning environment. (2 minutes)
6. Debrief protocol (this will be done at the end of the evening).

PLUS/DELTA
January 23, 2014

+Plus: What worked for you today in our meeting? What represented new learning or prompted your thinking differently about your work? How did this help you to grow? How will today's work support your success or your school's achievement? How did today's meeting move us closer to improving our schools or district?

+ Delta: What recommendations do you have for improving our meeting time? What does the planning team need to know about this experience? What are the next steps for your learning? What ideas do you have for improving our work as a learning community?

We want you to have an opportunity to share your effective strategies. What instructional approach or strategy are you implementing, in your sphere of influence (students, parents, colleagues, etc) that we all could benefit from (please include your name for our future planning--if you feel comfortable)?

February 20th is our next schedule CFG. It currently is in the evening--Is it ok to keep it as an evening event? If no, please explain.

APPENDIX I

DISTRICT MEETING PRIOR TO CONFERENCES

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

New Hire CFG 2013-14
10/30/2013
4:00-7:30 @ Ring Lardner



District Goals.

- Data Teams, Collins Writing, Culture, (Secondary--Reading Apprenticeship)

CFG Goals:

- *Use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district.
- *Create and nurture a culture that inspires, promotes, and encourages continual learning.
- *Develop effective facilitators for student learning.

Today's Goal (s):

- Develop Relationships
- Protocol use to guide learning through reflection.
- Developing the skills to navigate "Crucial Conversations"

***Vision:** Niles Community Students...
Inspired Locally to Excel Globally.*

***Mission:** Niles Community Schools provides dynamic learning experiences and innovative opportunities. We empower ALL to create, disseminate, discover, model, and apply knowledge in a diverse intellectual culture. We inspire leaders who challenge the present and enrich the future, striving for civic growth for our schools and community.*

Norms: Be respectful of ideas/people (eye contact, listen to hear not to respond, no sidebars, share airtime (3 before me), Be positive (rephrase and put things in a positive way issue with solutions) Stay focused on the goals, Hold each other accountable, Technology (laptops - self regulate cell phones - vibrate), Confidentiality (our work is public and our conversations are private.)

Needs: Binder for work, Lap top, Journal, reflection from September

Welcome!

a. 4:00-4:30 Dinner in Cafeteria

b. 4:30-5:00 Keynote-[Superintendent] Fears & Conversations!

c. 5:00-5:10 Break & Break out CFG MV-1, DE-2, MB-library, MA-23, ZH-24

+ Review Norms above

+ Read Plus/Deltas

- + Documenting our learning? _____
- + Check In/Reflection/Connection Time- (10 minutes)
 - writing (5 minutes)
 - popcorn out (2 minutes)
 - Teaming up (identify a D/E partner _____ & a F/G partner _____)

Must be a different level and building.

- + Team Builder - “I Have Never” (10 minutes max)
- + Check In with D/E partner (2 minutes)--Shark Tank & Protocol Use
- + Reflection--Facts & Story--As conferences approach reflect on which conversation you anticipate will put you in your “risk” or “danger” zone?, write the facts about this situations and begin to create your story/dialogue that you would like to present to the parent.
- + Crucial Conversations - “Watch for Three “Clever” Stories” and Three Levels of Text Protocol (50 minutes)
 - debrief
- + Check In with F/G partner (2 minutes)--Board Social & Building CFG/PLC
- + Conference Triad Protocol (50 minutes)-Review warm and cool feedback
 - debrief
- + Plus/Deltas
- + Final word--
 - i. Observation Protocol-are you getting in other classrooms, use this to help you document/reflect
 - ii. Future Meetings
 - iii. Team Builder for December?
 - iv. Survey--coming soon

THREE LEVELS of TEXT PROTOCOL:

Purpose:

To deepen understanding of a text and explore implications for participants’ work.

Facilitation:

Stick to the time limits. Each round takes up to 5 minutes per person in a group. Emphasize the need to watch air time during the brief “group response” segment. Do 1–3 rounds. Can be used as a prelude to a Text-based Discussion or by itself.

Roles:

Facilitator/timekeeper (who also participates); participants

Process:

1. Sit in a circle and identify a facilitator/timekeeper
2. If participants have not done so ahead of time, have them read the text and identify passages (and a couple of back-ups) that they feel may have important implications for their work.
3. A Round consists of: One person using up to 3 minutes to:
LEVEL 1: Read aloud the passage she/he has selected
LEVEL 2: Say what she/he thinks about the passage (interpretation, connection to past experiences, etc.)
LEVEL 3: Say what she/he sees as the implications for his/her work. The group responds (for a TOTAL of up to 2 minutes) to what has been said.
4. After all rounds have been completed, debrief the process.

CONFERENCE TRIAD:

Purpose: To practice skills of conversation with a parent regarding their child; with a focus on changing our behavior, thoughts, and mindset in order to keep the conversation moving toward positive results. This protocol integrates a coach working to provide warm and cool feedback to the practitioner, providing focused ideas for continued success and adjustments for improved outcomes.

- a. Prepare your conference content (use your reflection from previous work)--5 minutes
- b. Break into a Triad & identify the following roles: Teacher, Parent, Coach
- c. Teacher will present their “Story/Facts” of what they think the parent believes.
 - i. Teacher will then open and begin conferencing--7 minutes
 - i. Parent will engage with teacher
 - ii. Coach will observe the dialogue paying special attention to:
 - a. Pacing
 - b. Articulation
 - c. Energy
 - d. Nonverbal (Tone, Body Language, Eye Contact)
 - e. Active Listening
 - f. Phrasing
- d. Coach will provide Warm & Cool Feedback (no other participant may talk)--2 minutes
- e. Parent will provide Warm & Cool Feedback (no other participant may talk)--2 minutes
- f. Teacher will have final word reflecting on feedback--1 minute

TEAM BUILDING: “I Have Never”

Preparation:

1. **Get Chairs/Seats.** Gather enough chairs or seats for the amount of players minus one. For example, if you have ten players you will have nine seats.
2. **Make a Circle.** Make a circle or an enclosure with the chairs. Leave enough room for some shuffling or some running around inside the circle.

Activity:

1. **Pick.** Pick one person to be the first to go.
2. **Begin.** Have that person stand in the middle of the circle and have the rest of the players sit in the seats.
3. **Make a Statement.** The person in the middle will now say "I've never" and will then say something that he/she has never done.
4. **Switch Chairs.** Everyone who HAS done what the person in the middle has not done must get up and find a new seat. The person in the middle will also take a seat. One person will be left without a seat, and that person will now say what they have never done.
5. **Continue.** Repeat the previous two steps.

CHECK IN:

October 30, 2013

D. Check In-- Each of you presented an issue in the "Shark Tank"; what was your resolution?

E. Check In-- Protocol Use--What protocols or team builders are you using and how are you using them?

F. Check In--Board Social--Who did you meet at the board social and what was your conversation?

G. Check In--Building CFG/PLC--How is it going?

PLUS/DELTA

October 30, 2013

Thoughts and reflections on [Superintendent's]keynote...

+Plus: What worked for you today in our meeting? What represented new learning or prompted your thinking differently about your work? How did this help you to grow? How will today's work support your success or your school's achievement? How did today's meeting move us closer to improving our schools or district?

+ Delta: What recommendations do you have for improving our meeting time? What does the planning team need to know about this experience? What are the next steps for your learning? What ideas do you have for improving our work as a learning community?

(Would you prefer to rotate sites for CFG work?)

(Your thoughts on the evening events being differentiated based on interest. These break out events would be led by "district experts" including you if you have something to share.)

TEAM BUILDING/ICE BREAKER

Adjective Name Game

Purpose: To get to know each other.

Procedures:

1. Team members write down an adjective describing them (the adjective must start with the same letter as the person's first name). Use the word in a sentence explanation.
2. Members go around to each person in the group and record their sentence.

When all complete the group will share out name, word, and paraphrase.

APPENDIX J

DISTRICT MEETING PRIOR TO EVALUATIONS

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

New Hire CFG 2013-144:00-6:00 PM @ Ring Lardner
4-17-2014

“The mediocre teacher tells. The good teacher explains. The superior teacher demonstrates. The great teacher inspires.”
— [William Arthur Ward](#)--

District Goals:

- Data Teams, Collins Writing, Culture, (Secondary--Reading Apprenticeship)

CFG Goals:

- *Use our CFG and Protocols to build a collaborative culture in the classroom, school & district.
- *Create a culture that inspires, promotes, and encourages continual learning.
- *Develop effective facilitators for student learning.

Today’s Goal (s):

Review and plan for personal evaluation
Protocol “Evaluation Tuning”

Schedule:

4:00-4:05	Arrive/ Snacks
4:05-4:15	Dr. *****--Welcome
4:15-4:35	District Curriculum Update Time Permitting--Future CFG work
4:45-6:00	MV-1, MA-2, DE-23, ZH-24, MB-Lib.

Questions for Interim Superintendent:

Questions for Director of Instruction:

4:45-6:00

Materials: Copies of Danielson Book, copies of rubric

Review Norms:
Review Plus/Deltas
“Evaluation Planning”

Framing Questions: What was your goal for the first evaluation? What is your goal for the second evaluation? If your goal has changed, how do you plan to get there? What things have you considered in your goal revision? What steps have you taken to reach your adjusted goal?

Purpose: To get feedback from your colleagues about the degree to which the activities you have structured seem likely to get your desired goals. Your plan is “in tune” when your goals and activities (artifacts & actions) are most in alignment.

Goal: Develop a plan based off of your goals you have set and the approach you have/will take to meet your desired objectives as it relates to your personal evaluation.

Group Decision: Decide whether your CFG will work in small groups or as a whole.

Introduction/Reflection (8 min.): (1-planning & prep., 2-Environment 3-Instruction, 4-Professionalism)

-Reflect on your pluses in each of the domains be specific with components and pg. #'s (include artifacts or evidence)

-Reflect on your deltas in each of the domains be specific with components and pg. #'s(include potential artifacts)

Four Groups (cross-section of levels) **(16 min.):**

-One member share your pluses for domain 1 include evidence (2 min.)

-Same member share your deltas include evidence (2 min.)

-One member share your pluses for domain 2 include evidence (2 min.)

-Same member share your deltas include evidence (2 min.)

-One member share your pluses for domain 3 include evidence (2 min.)

-Same member share your deltas include evidence (2 min.)

-One member share your pluses for domain 4 include evidence (2 min.)

-Same member share your deltas include evidence (2 min.)

What does **“Implementing the Framework for Teaching in Enhancing Professional Practice”** (20 min.)

-Assign a reader

-Each participant read their delta (s)

-Assigned reader turn to the ToolKit and read the descriptors for proficient

& distinguished

-Record strategies that fit your approach

-Participants continue this until all deltas are addressed

Reflect

-Participant return to your original reflection and add any additional insight and learning to your plan.

Group Reflection:

-What did this do for you individually?

-What did this do for us as a group?

-How will you use your learning?

PLUS/DELTA

April 17, 2014

+Plus: What worked for you today in our meeting? What represented new learning or prompted your thinking differently about your work? How did this help you to grow? How will today's work support your success or your school's achievement? How did today's meeting move us closer to improving our schools or district?

+ Delta: What recommendations do you have for improving our meeting time? What does the planning team need to know about this experience? What are the next steps for your learning? What ideas do you have for improving our work as a learning community?

APPENDIX K

PLUS/DELTA

PLUS/DELTA

March 2014

+Plus: What worked for you today in our meeting? What represented new learning or prompted your thinking differently about your work? How did this help you to grow? How will today's work support your success or your school's achievement? How did today's meeting move us closer to improving our schools or district?

Delta: What recommendations do you have for improving our meeting time? What does the planning team need to know about this experience? What are the next steps for your learning? What ideas do you have for improving our work as a learning community?

APPENDIX L

MENTOR MEETING

N I L E S C O M M U N I T Y S C H O O L S

New Teacher –CFG
Mentors
4:00-5:00 @ Westside
11-21-2013



“Critical Friends Groups are voluntary but very necessary for nurturing, developing, and changing school culture” **-unknown-**

Reflection Question & Goal: Are we using the CFG work to nurture, develop and change our existing culture (s)?

-Welcome--Introductions

-Norms: “let’s learn something!”

-Critical Friends Groups—Beliefs

- a. Educators are the Experts—What are you learning?
- b. Time is our Greatest Resource—We must focus our work to be efficient
- c. All Voices Equal—Democratic processes must guide our work—What are you conveying in your “voice” ?

-Reflecting on Practice—Chalk Talk (coaches may not participate)

- d. What excuses/reasons hold us back from educating our children to attain high levels of achievement?
- e. What skills & attributes are needed to be a highly effective educator?

-Respondology—Role Play

-Building Level Expectations—pass around agendas

“Good” Mentors: Listen, Observe--verbal and non-verbal, Available, Honest Feedback
Sensitive, Non-judgmental, Openness, Warm, Caring, Empathetic, **ASK thought provoking questions**, Provide direction, Guide, Celebrate successes, Mentor outside the CFG, Remember the little things, Support, Give affirmation, Communicate, Recognize the value of the mentee, Shares mistakes, Are transparent, Consult other mentors and

resources, Are authentic, Invite the new ones to participate in school and out of school,
Are welcoming

- f. Meet monthly—What questions can be asked around each of these tasks?
 - i. Discuss building level needs—
 - ii. Follow up on district level CFG work--
 - iii. Develop relationships--

Building CFG agendas:

-What Role (s) are you taking on?

	Mentor	Coach
Focus	Individual	Performance
Role	Flexible agenda	Specific agenda
Relationship	Self-selecting	Comes with the job
Source of Influence	Perceived value	Position
Personal Returns	Affirmation /Learning	Teamwork/performance
Arena	Life	Task related

-Needing Your Attention

- g. Google doc with all the times you are instructing—ZH will be sharing
- h. 12/2, 12/3, 12/5, 12/6, 12/10 we will be sending teachers to your classrooms.
 - i. MB—NNT, MA—HO, DE—BA, ZH—NS, MV—NNT beginning at 8:00 AM.
- i. Take the survey and ask your CFG if they have taken it (40 of 85)
- j. Text—*Teaching Is Leading*

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