ABSTRACT

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY AND NON-PROFESSIONAL LEARNING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF TEACHERS ON TRUST, PROFESSIONALISM, AND CHANGE

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the perceptions of teachers in Professional Learning Community (PLC) and Non-PLC schools regarding trust, professionalism, and change. The study included teaching staff of 10 Illinois elementary schools: five PLC schools and five non-PLC schools identified as demonstrating increasing levels of student achievement as measured by the annual state assessment (ISAT). Sampling was stratified in order to limit the population based on specific sets of characteristics. The study was limited to schools with demonstrated growth and success. Additionally, schools implementing PLCs that have been identified by Solution Tree were included in this study and labeled as PLC schools. Non-PLC schools were selected based on similarity to PLC schools (after PLC implementation) in student achievement levels, expenditures, enrollment, minority populations, and socioeconomic status.

Descriptive statistics, bi-variate analysis, correlation analyses, ANOVA, and regression analysis were used to address the five research questions for this study. Bi-variate analysis through the utilization of a *t* test showed no significant differences between the means of PLC and non-PLC groups existed in the variables of trust, professionalism, and change. Correlational findings included a moderate significant positive relationship for all participants

(Whole Group) in the study for the variables of trust and change. The PLC participant group also showed higher moderate significant positive correlation between the variables of trust and change. An ANOVA test was utilized to measure the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience among groups within the PLC and non-PLC schools, showing a significant difference between groups was found in the variable of trust. Regression data showed that the trust components contributing to an increase in change were perceptions of teacher-to-teacher trust, parental support, parental reports, and student secrecy. The regression data findings further showed the component of professionalism that was likely to contribute to an increase in change was reading for courses during the summer months. Finally, the regression data showed the components of trust and professionalism most likely to contribute to increases in change when analyzed together included welcoming feedback on teaching, summer reading, withdrawing from departmental discussion of curriculum and/or assessment, trust in parents, and parental support.

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Doctoral Director:
Teresa Wasonga

DEDICATION

To Shea, Caleb, and my wife Lisa,

who always provide me with light on the horizon.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Background

In 1983, the United States Department of Education report, *A Nation at Risk,* was published and highlighted a litany of deficiencies within the United States' public education system. This report spurred school districts across America to implement reforms aimed at improving outcomes for students. The report also provided predictions of grim outcomes for students if reform efforts were not undertaken. Within this U.S. Department of Education report were some chilling statistics. The report found that 13 percent of 17-year-olds were functionally illiterate, SAT scores were declining, and there was an increased need for students enrolling in college to take remedial courses. Over the subsequent 25 years, school reform has been a discussion topic politically, educationally, and morally. In 2008, The U.S. Department of Education published a follow-up summary to *A Nation At Risk* entitled *A Nation Accountable*, including many startling statistics. For example, if 20 children were born in 1983, only 14 would have graduated from high school on time in 2001. According to the report *A Nation Accountable*, 10 of the 14 would have started college in the fall of 2001, but only five would have earned a bachelor's degree by 2007. Because of these findings, many efforts have been made to reform the American system of education, including legislation mandating standardized testing to measure student progress.

In 2001, the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act was enacted to close achievement gaps between subgroups and to ensure that all students learn at high levels. NCLB established performance-based accountability measures based on standardized assessment performance and required all states to break out assessment results by subgroups, including race, disability, limited English proficiency, ethnicity, and poverty. Schools that did not meet the established accountability thresholds as measured by standardized test scores could face actions and/or sanctions intended to improve the schools' achievement. However, Elmore (2004) criticized accountability measures that are performance based, asserting that there is no well-conceived theory of how to improve learning and teaching through performance-based accountability. In addition, Wagner (2008) asserted that there is growing evidence showing America's education system is not making progress toward closing the achievement gaps targeted by the NCLB. Further, Wagner argued that NCLB may be expanding the gap between what students are taught and what students are tested on in comparison to what students will require to be successful and productive citizens in today's global economy. Wagner refers to this phenomenon as the global achievement gap, where students are learning information to be proficient on multipl- choice assessments but are not learning critical "soft" skills essential in schools, the workplace, and beyond.

A more recent reform effort in the American public education system is Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, and Many (2006) define a PLC as

> educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators. (p. 217)

PLCs were originally implemented at Adlai Stevenson High School in Lincolnshire, Illinois, in the early 1980s. In 1998, DuFour and Eaker published *Professional Learning Communities at Work*, providing insight into the PLC reform efforts made at Stevenson. DuFour (2009) described PLCs as a systems approach to improving schools. PLCs foster systems thinking and interdependence that increase the capacity of the entire organization to improve learning. The PLC effort is an attempt to adapt quickly to student needs by ensuring high levels of learning for all students, a more systemic approach to change the outcomes and reality of students and educators alike (DuFour, et al., 2006). Fullan (2005a) and Marzano, Waters, and McNulty (2005) concurred that people will experience discomfort when asked to change the way they act and behave, but people learn most when comfort zones are disrupted. Fullan (2007) supports a learning organization approach, stating that successful schools are places where teams of teachers meet regularly to focus on student work through assessment and change their instruction to get better results. DuFour (2007) asserted that the PLC effort requires schools to embrace change over time instead of reaching for a quick fix. Senge (2006) argued that organizations tend to focus on parts instead of the whole. In school reform, this would be illustrated by focusing on improvement of one area at one grade level instead of looking at the entire system or all grade levels and how they can improve performance. Senge believed that systems thinking is a process of seeking understanding of the whole organization and the relationships between the parts.

PLCs are aligned with the thinking and work of Senge (2006), who researched learning organizations. Senge argued that a learning organization, be it business or education, is better able to adapt and excel in a changing environment because people at all levels within the

organization are learning to learn together. Senge distinguished a learning organization through the organizational mastery of what he described as five disciplines or components: Systems Thinking, Personal Mastery, Mental Models, Building Shared Vision, and Team Learning. The team learning component is emphasized in PLCs and DuFour (2004) believed that a collaborative culture cultivates interdependence, making the monitoring of student learning easier; creates flexibility in learning and implementation for staff members; allows open and honest discussion and meeting on a regular basis; and defines content and school goals through communication. Staff has more input into curricular delivery and changes based on the collective analysis of student learning and assessment results. DuFour (2009) contended that PLCs focus on interdependence, a collaborative culture, in direct contrast to the traditional school model of isolation.

DuFour and Eaker (1998) asserted that the PLC philosophy was a shift away from the traditional model of a school structure, which is heavily hierarchical and political in nature, to a model of interdependence, building a collaborative culture focused on learning for all, which includes the staff. DuFour argued that the traditional model of education, also known as the factory model, structures schools as factories and the students as the raw materials. Hargreaves (2003) contrasted the traditional model with the PLCs, saying that traditional models of schools are illustrated by transferring of knowledge, intensive training, and imposed requirements, whereas the PLC model shares inquiry, engages the system's members in ongoing learning, transforms knowledge, and constructs communities of practice. Schmoker (2006) asserted that traditional school structures encourage isolated teaching and discourage collaboration. For example, if a team of fifth-grade teachers noticed a trend of underachievement in math, the team

would analyze the data and determine the key component missing for the students. In a traditional model, the fifth-grade team would develop instructional interventions focusing on the students needs. In a learning organization, the fifth-grade team dialogues with all grade levels to share their issue, to look at how the organization as a whole can respond and learn, and to implement strategies building-wide to eliminate the problems. In a learning organization, problems are not solved by using the solutions used in the past. Instead new and creative ways to solve problems are developed by teams of people within the organization. Fullan (1993) believed that the traditional educational system is much more likely to retain the status quo, leading to little to no change in student outcomes or the educational system, due to the fundamentally conservative nature of teacher training, hierarchies of schools, and decisions made by politicians regarding the educational system.

DuFour (2004) asserted that non-PLC reform initiatives have historically followed a pattern of initial excitement, short-lived implementation due to conceptual confusion about the reform initiative, and abandonment. For example, a school may have selected a traditional reform model to increase student achievement by utilizing an assessment software package. The software package contains already-written tests for teachers to use to assess student learning. Initially, this reform model would be presented with great enthusiasm as it has the potential to help teachers know what the students are learning. Teachers begin using the assessment software in the beginning. As the assessments are delivered and teachers look at the results, the results may not provide information that the teachers were looking for as the assessments were not aligned to what was being taught. This confusion between the use of the assessment software and the instruction students are receiving may cause the reform initiative to fade away

and eventually be abandoned in search of another reform initiative. This type of school reform initiative reinforces Senge's (2006) argument that instead of focusing on the organization as a whole, this reform example focused on a part, which led to failure.

In a PLC reform initiative, instead of selecting a singular focus such as an assessment system, the school focuses on developing a collaborative culture, using data to drive instruction, and a commitment to high levels of learning for students and staff. The PLC initiative is multi-pronged, focused on student outcomes through the actions of educators, their behaviors such as collaboration, data use, and instructional decision making. While the PLC initiative does focus its reform efforts on multiple facets of what and how educators work, it is not a 360-degree reform involving parents and students in the decision-making process.

Like DuFour, Collins (2001) found that change does not occur as a result of a single action. Instead change stems from a consistent and developing process over time. This may be attributed to what Schlechty (2005) noted, that change in schools has a fundamental problem, the lack of effort and persistence. As a result, education has not seen the desired results. Saranson (1996) stated that the reason for failed reform efforts was the refusal of the educational system to let go of the traditional factory model of education that was not appropriate for the needs of students or schools. Saranson (1996) reported failure after a decade of U.S. education reform efforts. Fullan (1997), discouraged by educational reform efforts, stated that the reform efforts attempted to date had not resulted in any substantial changes. Fullan believed that America must face a new reality; reforming the education system may be a lost cause. For example, NCLB attempted to implement accountability measures forcing schools to improve student achievement scores on standardized assessments or face punitive consequences if improvement quotas were

not met. As Elmore (2004) asserted, punitive-based accountability measures have not provided the desired reform results in all schools.

Conversely, Robinson (2009) provided some context to failed school reform efforts, arguing that school systems should move away from a factory model based upon standardization, conformity, and linear thinking. Instead, Robinson argued that schools should work to transform education by developing school environments that personalize learning. Schools, Robinson (2009) argued, should monitor individual student progress while using a flexible curriculum that meets each student's needs and interests. Instead of measuring school reform success based upon standardized test scores, schools should monitor individual student growth over time. Instead of measuring school-wide success and comparing it to other schools, success would be measured one student at a time (Robinson, 2009). School reform, Robinson argued, should be based upon individual student growth results, student by student, measured over time. Additionally, schools should be set up systematically to encourage professional collaboration (Robinson, 2009). Regardless of the school improvement initiative a school may select, PLC or another reform initiative or focus, change must begin by developing a sense of teacher interdependence (Little, 1990) based upon professionalism (Kleine-Kracht, 1993) and trust (Louis & Kruse, 1995) using data to measure the progress and growth of each student (Robinson, 2009).

Conceptual Framework

In defining PLCs, the originators (DuFour et al., 2006) implied that change would result from collaborative work grounded in trust and professionalism. Research on trust (Louis & Kruse, 1995), professionalism (Senge, 2006), and change (Fullan, 2007) show that synergy among these concepts results in school improvement and increased student outcomes. In order to research the synergy of trust, professionalism, and change in schools, PLC and non-PLC schools needed to be identified. In this study, PLC Schools were identified by Solution Tree, a professional development organization seeking to assist educators create schools where all student's performance increases while embedding Professional Learning Communities. For the purposes of this study, PLC schools are defined as

> schools that must 1. Demonstrate a commitment to PLC concepts; 2. Implement those concepts for at least three years; 3. Present clear evidence of improved student learning; 4. Explain practices, structures, and culture of the school and submit for consideration to the PLC Review Committee. (All Things PLC, n.d.)

For the purposes of this study, non-PLC schools are defined as schools that have demonstrated clear evidence of improved student learning similar to those schools identified as PLC Schools over the same period of time as measured by a common standardized assessment, ISAT. Schools that follow the PLC model are assumed to practice trust and professionalism, leading to desired change. Conceptually, these variables are presented in Figure 1.1.

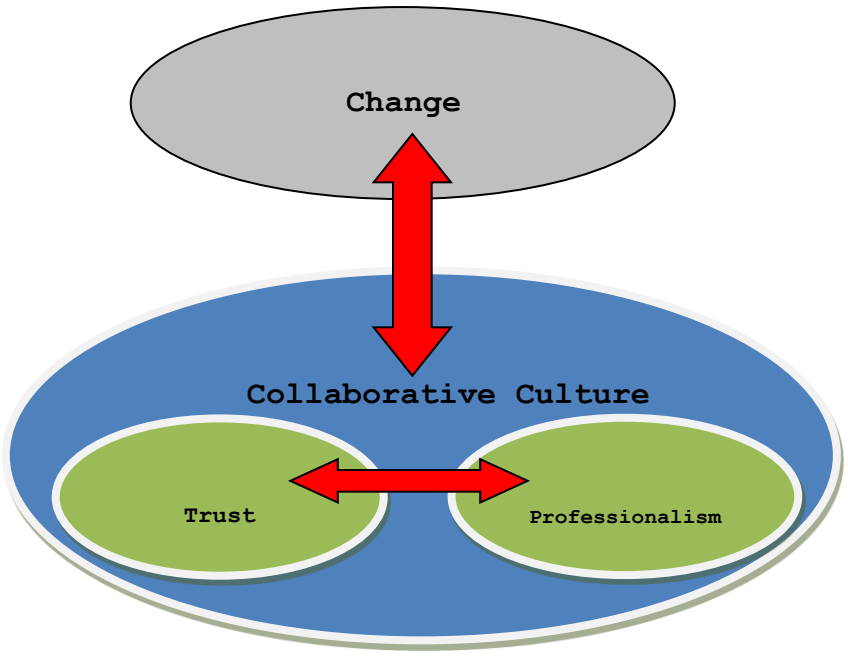

Figure 1.1: Trust, Professionalism, Collaborative Culture (TPC) Change Model

Collaborative Culture

Collaboration is defined as

> a systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results. In a PLC, collaboration focuses on the critical questions of learning: What is it we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient? (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008, p. 464)

For change to occur and trust to develop, teachers must move beyond camaraderie and develop a collaborative culture allowing organizational members to have professional dialogue in an environment of mutual respect and sharing (DuFour, 2004). Thus, teachers must be willing

to openly share and challenge thinking, moving beyond collegiality to truly build a collaborative culture.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) argued that building collaborative cultures and professional communities is essentially an issue of changing the culture of education from individualism to collaboration or collectivism. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) asserted that developing a collaborative culture creates a teaching environment in which colleagues challenge ineffective practices and share what works. Decisions are made collectively as opposed to individually. In other words, to change current educational practices of isolation, collaborative cultures must be established in schools. Furthermore, Little (1990) argued that education must move from teaching practices that are independent to pedagogical interdependence. Teacher success and professional growth are partially dependent on their participation in professional communities (Little, 1990). Fullan (1999) supported Little's assertions, contending that collaborative cultures encourage a diversity of thought to solve problems. DuFour (2004) stated that opening up personal practices to colleagues helps create a collaborative culture geared toward change and improvement. Kleine-Kracht (1993) asserted that contributions to a collaborative culture, a professional responsibility, must be made by everyone because the sharing of knowledge breaks down the traditional hierarchy of who knows more than others. DuFour and Kleine-Kracht supported the creation and contribution to collaborative cultures, noting that the contributions model professionalism.

Laine (2000) researched organizational change using systems leadership in education reform. The data showed that collaboration had the highest correlation to school improvement. In other words, a collaborative culture is more likely to result in school improvement. Newmann

and Wehlage's (1995) research on school reform showed that students achieved at higher levels in reading, math, science, and history in schools where teachers had higher levels of professional responsibilities or shared leadership, creating increased levels of ownership, interdependence (a collaborative culture), and support.

Trust

Trust, termed "faculty trust" by Hoy (2009), is defined as

> an individual(s) or group(s) willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open. (Hoy, 2009)

In order for change to occur, staff members must have high levels of trust and respect for one another (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Louis and Kruse further asserted that people must be willing to accept constructive feedback and pursue improvement. Collegial improvement is supported by an environment of trustworthiness and mutual respect. Thus, teachers must have a trusting environment to truly collaborate with colleagues. DuFour (2004) supported the researchers and argued that trust is critical to creating change as teachers must open up their practices to others, including strategies, concerns, results, and more. In other words, teachers must be willing to share their data, plans, resources, thoughts, and teaching strategies with others. Tschannen-Moran (2001) hypothesized that the level of trust in schools was related to the level of collaboration. Her research showed a significant correlation between collaboration and trust, strengthening the argument for schools to develop collaborative cultures. Tschannen-Moran (2001) contended it is unlikely that collaboration will occur without trust.

Trust between teachers is critical in a collaborative environment. A trusting relationship with building leadership is also important. Wasonga and Murphy (2007) highlighted trust and trustworthiness as one of eight identified leadership dispositions for co-creating leadership, a collaborative effort to recognize and achieve organizational goals through use of the full potential of stakeholders' knowledge and relationships. The researchers emphasized the importance of a trusting relationship between teachers and administrators. Further, Hoerr (1996) argued that teachers and administrators must share leadership within the school, thereby helping one another to improve professionally. Trust, Hoerr (1996) argued, helps to level the playing field by allowing teachers and administrators to work toward the same goal: school improvement. Trust in school leadership is a critical piece to forming an effective PLC (Louis & Kruse, 1995). Hord (1997) concurred that relationship building and modeling what is meant by trust, support, and encouragement by administrators are continuous building blocks of PLCs and change. Conversely, Kleine-Kracht (1993) argued that the traditional separation of teachers and administration was counterproductive to school improvement and change. Smith, Hoy, and Sweetland (2001) reported that teachers want to work in a school environment that has trusting and healthy interpersonal relationships. They believed a healthy work climate helps to develop trust and that the relationship between trust and a healthy work climate is reciprocal, a finding that coincides and reinforces Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000). Finally, Midgley and Wood (1993) asserted that trust in leadership is a key component, as teachers need a learning environment that enables and empowers risk taking, improvement, and supports hard work.

Building on the concept of trust, open communication within the organization is crucial. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) contended that a high level of organizational trust allows

people to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings. High levels of organizational trust create better communication, identification of problems, development and implementation of solutions. Similarly, Hoy, Smith, and Sweetland (2002) asserted that faculty trust is a critical component to an open and healthy school climate.

Along the same lines, trust has been a focal point in business as well as schools. A prominent management theory regarding organizational climate relating directly to issues of trust is Ouchi's Theory Z. Ouchi (1981) believed that workers in a Theory Z organization desired strong and close working relationships with those they work with and for. Workers with strong and close relationships have a sense of loyalty to the organization, are self-motivated to work hard, and can be trusted to perform at peak levels as long as organizational management can be trusted to support and look out for the well-being of the workers.

Similar to schools and the constant pursuit for improvement of student outcomes through reform and change efforts, Brittle (2006) argued that businesses are dealing with major change processes as well as pressures to improve productivity. In 2006, Brittle surveyed 1,389 Minnesota healthcare industry employees focusing on the importance of trust and fairness as it related to organizational change. The results showed the perceptions of non-management groups' trust in the senior leadership team during change efforts. The data indicate that the non-management group showed decreased levels of trust during organizational change. Brittle identified common concerns voiced by survey participants highlighting the development or deterioration of trust, including individual outcomes, individual work environment, organization-level work environment, and organization outcomes and future.

Outcomes are important in businesses, as discussed above, and are equally important in education. The working environment must be one of trust and collaboration to achieve the desired results. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) stated that trust is crucial to improvement efforts in schools and is crucial to organizational functioning. Bryk and Schneider (2002) researched the link between faculty trust and student achievement. Their research led to conclusions that high levels of faculty trust led to collaborative decision making. As trust levels are strong, organizational structures, including collaboration and the ability for teachers to make necessary changes to support improved student achievement, are more evident.

Professionalism

Professionalism is defined as

> the extent to which teachers live up to the expectations of performance and conduct that pervade their practice. The four key elements of teacher Professionalism are academic engagement, self-regulation of professional standards, effectiveness, and contribution to a professional community. (Hoy, 2009)

To illustrate the importance of teacher professionalism, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) studied 16 different school districts. The study utilized correlational analysis and showed that the strength of the teacher learning community was strongly related to the level of teacher professionalism. This study showed that teachers participating in learning communities have higher levels of professionalism.

Relating professionalism to PLCs, multiple researchers have discussed the importance of contributions to learning communities, investment in the improvement process, and teacher leadership. In a PLC, teachers feel empowered; share responsibilities, leadership, and

expectations; and have influence regarding the support necessary to implement change to impact student learning (Louis, Kruse, & Marks, 1996). Louis and Kruse (1995) described the behavior of colleagues in a PLC as non-evaluative; they noted that instead colleagues are helping colleagues improve their practice, professionalism in action. Professionalism, DuFour (2004) states, of staff supports change initiatives through sharing instructional practices, active involvement and contribution of team members, and a willingness to learn together. DuFour et al. (2006) argued that organizational improvement is impossible without members committed to ongoing professional learning.

Tschannen-Moran (2009) studied how teacher professionalism is fostered in schools. Her work showed the level of teacher professionalism in schools is directly related to the administrative authority and professional orientation of principals, meaning their willingness to share responsibility and decision making. The data showed that the professional orientation of principals and faculty trust were related to the level of teacher professionalism. In other words, the professionalism of leadership influences the professionalism of teachers. For example, a leader who is collaborative and contributes to the professional learning environment is likely to have a faculty that is collaborative and contributing to the learning environment.

Outcomes of professionalism, including creativity and autonomy, have also been a focal point (Collins, 2001). Collins (2001) believed that professionalism in the workplace fosters creativity and autonomy within boundaries and parameters that are clearly defined. Freidson (1986) argued that one of the most important criteria of professionalism is the amount of control and power the practitioners have in the workplace. Ingersoll (2007) agreed, arguing that school improvement outcomes are connected directly to the amount of control and power distributed. In

other words, teacher professionalism has an impact on school improvement, including increased control and creativity in problem solving. Student outcomes and professionalism have also been researched. In 1995, Newman and Wehlage performed a review of the School Restructuring Study, a study done in 1991-1994 that included 24 high, middle, and elementary schools. The study showed that student achievement and the level of professional conduct, or professionalism, were correlated. In other words, the level of teacher professionalism had a direct impact on the level of student achievement. The authors of the School Restructuring Study conducted a two-week observation in each school. Narrative reports summarizing the observations were combined with one year's worth of data including student surveys, student achievement on conventional assessments and teacher-assigned assessments aligned to standards. The authors found that students learning in schools with high levels of professionalism scored 27 points higher on the School Restructuring Study than students learning in schools with low levels of professionalism.

Professionalism was determined by the collaborative cultures of the school personnel as well as the sharing of both power and knowledge. In other words, how staff members conducted themselves was influenced by the manner in which collaboration took place, including interactions between staff, sharing of knowledge and resources, and the ability to contribute to and develop instructional strategies, assessments, and selection of resources. In 2005, a study by DiPaola and Hoy further supported the findings of Newman and Wehlage (1995) by demonstrating that student achievement and high levels of professionalism are positively correlated. These research studies showed that high levels of teacher professionalism in schools can increase student achievement.

Problem Statement

Many educational reform efforts have been made since the 1983 Department of Education report, *A Nation at Risk.* To date, the reform efforts' goal of improving the academic achievement of all students have not yielded the desired results. Recently, Professional Learning Communities have become a popular approach to reform schools and improve results for students. There is currently a great deal of literature written about PLCs; however, there is limited quantitative research on PLC implementation as an effective reform effort leading to change in terms of school improvement and student achievement. The support for PLC implementation as an effective school reform effort is primarily anecdotal, and there is limited researched to establish the impact of PLCs on student achievement. Trust and professionalism rooted in a collaborative culture and change are not concepts exclusively found in PLCs and can exist in other schools. The purpose of this study is to analyze the relationships among and between teacher perceptions of levels of trust, professionalism, and change among schools that identify as PLC schools and those that do not.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant to the educational field for many reasons.

1. The literature about PLCs is insufficient.
2. This study will help to determine if teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change are different in PLC and non-PLC schools.
3. This study will help to establish empirical research on PLCs.

4. This study will provide leaders and educators with information that may guide selection of a school reform model.
5. This study will assist educators in choosing whether to or not to implement PLCs as a school reform model.

Purpose of the Investigation

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change as measured through survey responses by teachers from five Illinois PLC elementary schools and five Illinois non-PLC elementary schools.

Research Questions

1. What are the levels of trust, professionalism, and change among teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
2. What are the differences in perceptions on the levels of trust, professionalism, and change between teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
3. What are the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools?
4. What are the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience?
5. What are the impacts of trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools?

Delimitations of the Study

The proposed study was limited to the teaching staff of 10 Illinois elementary schools, five PLC schools and five non-PLC schools, identified as demonstrating increasing levels of student achievement as measured by the annual state assessment (ISAT). Sampling was stratified to limit the population based on specific sets of characteristics (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The study was limited only to schools with demonstrated growth and success on ISAT scores. Additionally, schools implementing PLCs that have been identified by Solution Tree, a professional development organization focusing upon the implementation of PLCs, were included in this study and labeled as PLC schools. Non-PLC schools were selected based on similarity to PLC schools (after PLC implementation) in student achievement levels, expenditures, enrollment, minority populations, and socioeconomic status. Staff members responded to a survey focusing on the three common variables of trust, professionalism, and change.

Definition of Terms

Change – As measured by the Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS), a 19-item Likert-type survey that measures the faculty's perceptions of change in schools. The FCOS focuses on teachers' perceptions of three aspects of change important in a school:

1. Faculty openness to change
2. Principal openness to change
3. Community press for change (Kearney & Smith, 2008)

Collaboration – A systematic process in which people work together, interdependently, to analyze and impact professional practice in order to improve individual and collective results. In a PLC, collaboration focuses on the critical questions of learning: What is it we want each student to learn? How will we know when each student has learned it? How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning? How will we enrich and extend the learning for students who are proficient? (DuFour, DuFour, and Eaker, 2008, p. 464)

Faculty Trust – "Trust is an individual(s) or group(s) willingness to be vulnerable to another party based on the confidence that the latter party is benevolent, reliable, competent, honest, and open." (Hoy, 2009)

Non-PLC Schools - Schools that have demonstrated clear evidence of improved student learning similar to those schools identified as PLC schools over the same period of time as measured by a common standardized assessment (ISAT).

Professionalism – "Professionalism is the extent to which teachers live up to the expectations of performance and conduct that pervade their practice. The four key elements of teacher professionalism are academic engagement, self-regulation of professional standards, effectiveness, and contribution to a professional community." (Hoy, 2009).

Professional Learning Community – "Educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators." (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 217)

Professional Learning – Teams create professional learning directly related to student learning goals and embed a variety of methods for professional learning into PLC work (e.g., lesson study, action research, peer coaching, book study, etc.). PLC teams identify their own needs for support. (Conzemius & O'Neill, 2002)

PLC School – Schools that must 1. Demonstrate a commitment to PLC concepts; 2. Implement those concepts for at least three years; 3. Present clear evidence of improved student learning; 4. Explain practices, structures, and culture of the school and submit for consideration to the PLC Review Committee. (All Things PLC, n.d.)

Summative Assessment – "An assessment of learning (Stiggins, 2002) designed to provide a final measure to determine if learning goals have been met (Ainsworth & Viegut, 2006). Summative assessments yield a dichotomy: pass or fail, proficient or not proficient. Additional support is typically not forthcoming." (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 218)

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

"No reality transforms itself, transformation occurs through the critical action of the people in the reality through praxis." --Freire (1998, p. 35)

To understand the impact of Professional Learning Communities on student achievement, it is critical to review the literature surrounding PLCs. It is important to understand the themes operating within a PLC environment as well as the components of collaborative teams. The literature provides characteristics of high-functioning PLCs common in the education field and discusses the model, its precepts, and the benefits that schools utilizing the model have experienced. PLC literature is mostly anecdotal, meaning stories from the field of education of successful PLC implementations. The literature revealed three variables of PLCs, including trust and professionalism (Hord, 1997) rooted in a collaborative culture (DuFour, 2004) and change (DuFour et al., 2006). Trust and professionalism rooted in a collaborative culture and change are not concepts exclusively found in PLCs and can exist in other schools. This research was conducted to help quantify the existence of trust, professionalism, and change in schools implementing PLCs as a reform initiative and high-achieving non-PLC schools to show the similarities and differences as well as the implications of their existence. Despite the fact that authors (DuFour, 2004) have written about PLCs, empirical research does not exist on the impact of PLCs on student achievement. Anecdotal stories would not be enough for educators seeking research to support or negate the selection of the impact of PLCs as a reform initiative.

For the purposes of this study, the review of relevant literature will be presented as it relates to Professional Learning Communities and a collaborative culture, trust, professionalism, and change.

Professional Learning Communities and Collaborative Cultures

A professional learning community is defined as

> educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve. Professional learning communities operate under the assumption that the key to improved learning for students is continuous job-embedded learning for educators. (DuFour et al., 2006, p. 217)

For the purposes of this study, and due to the ambiguity of terminology associated with PLCs, additional search terms were used, including learning communities, teacher community, PLCs, critical friends groups, and communities of practice.

DuFour et al. (2006) advocated for a collaborative culture to improve schools and outcomes for students working in stark contrast to the traditional model of education that promotes isolation and independence. In contrast, DuFour et al. (2008) described a traditional or factory model of education as a model of standardization and uniformity in which students, viewed as raw materials, will arrive at the outcome determined by the embedded hierarchy if they follow the directions and the processes laid out by the bosses—the teachers. DuFour described education as an assembly line where information is given to others and teachers work in a culture of isolation. DuFour and Eaker (1998) purported that PLCs represent a transformation from factory-model schools to learning environments that are dramatically different from the ideas and assumptions that have historically guided schools. Schmoker (2006)

asserted that traditional organizational system flaws, such as scheduling systems that are inflexible and eliminate teacher collaboration, inhibit a teacher's ability to meet the needs of students. In traditional schools, the system structures do not typically allow for engagement and reflection (Hargreaves, 2003). Therefore, without time for reflection and collaboration, problems that become evident or cyclic often are approached with similar solutions. Hargreaves argued that schools repair issues singularly and in reactionary mode. Traditional schools typically recycle old solutions to problems, creating the likelihood of the problem returning again. Working in isolation, teachers are less likely to acquire new ideas and techniques (Elmore, 2004). Aligning with Elmore, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) argued that schools should move away from a culture of isolation and create cultures of collaboration.

PLCs and the collaborative culture are aligned to the team learning work of Senge (2006), who researched learning organizations (DuFour, 2004). Senge believed that learning organizations are places where the members are constantly seeking to improve their ability to improve results. Senge argued that a learning organization, be it business or education, is better able to adapt and excel in a changing environment because people at all levels within the organization are learning to learn together. According to Senge (2006), in a learning organization, problems are not solved by using the solutions used in the past. The people within a learning organization are active participants working collaboratively to recreate their reality by acting on the systems of which they are a part. The sharing of ideas, critique of assumptions, and willingness to change distributes power to the system as a whole, allowing reality to be shaped by those within the system (Senge, 2006). New and creative ways to solve problems are

developed by collaborative teams of people within the organization as system members act in concert and learn collaboratively (Senge, 2006).

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) asserted that PLCs, while not all alike, typically share three variables of collaboration: reflective dialogue, shared norms, and open practice. Reflective dialogue is characterized by teachers discussing their practice using a common set of vocabulary. Shared norms are crucial to focused discussion on instruction. Wahlstrom and Louis did note that focused discussion on instruction could be dependent on the teachers having a shared agreement regarding effective teaching practices. Open practice is characterized by seeing peers practice in action. Wahlstrom and Louis argued that the variables of effective collaboration support and enhance teaching practices and professional learning.

Fullan (2007) supports a learning organization approach, stating that successful schools are places where teams of teachers meet regularly to focus on student work through assessment and change their instruction to get better results, thus improving the results for students and the organization in turn. DuFour et al. (2006) argued that organizational improvement is impossible without members committed to ongoing professional learning. PLCs are rooted in ongoing improvement, a key component to learning organizations (Senge, 2006). Servage (2008) asserted that PLCs embody distributed leadership, team learning, and shared decision making through dialogue and collaboration. Additionally, Servage stated that the PLC model demonstrated its importance as a precondition to create system-wide change through collaboration. PLC team members are engaged in collective inquiry seeking to improve student achievement as well as develop new learning for their pedagogy (Fullan, 2007). Fullan contended that professional learning occurs within the teams through people sharing instructional

practices, data, and assessments to further the growth of the team members. PLCs seem to embrace the tenet of a learning organization: team learning.

In *A Nation Prepared* (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986), an emphasis was made to highlight the importance of collaborative cultures and building time into the school day for allowing teachers to plan, reflect, and collaborate with colleagues. The National Commission on Teaching and America's Future (NCTAF, 1996) supported collaborative cultures, stating that school structures are set up to emulate factories and teacher isolation. The NCTAF report went on to say that schools need to use time flexibly, use staff more efficiently, and create better learning environments through improved relationships and collaboration. Fullan (2001) argued that without collaborative relationships and skills, continuous learning and improvement is not possible. Hughes and Kritsonis (2007) asserted that PLCs empower school faculty through collaboration to improve both instruction and student learning. Improving schools requires a culture of collaboration. There are many advantages for teachers to work in collaborative PLC team structures, including implementing new and shared ideas, support for new teachers, better solutions to problems, and student achievement gains (Little, 1990). In 2005, Fullan authored a book entitled *Leadership and Sustainability*. His work explained the collaborative process as lateral capacity building for teachers, which results in large gains in amassing new additions to the collective pool of intelligence. In other words, teachers build lateral capacity by acquiring teaching strategies and additional information through collaboration that increases their ability to help students achieve. Fullan (2005a) argued further that the shift in focus from teaching to learning requires a commitment not only to student

learning but to adult learning in concert. Collaboration fosters learning and sharing through the process of learning socially and in the context of the organization (Elmore, 2004).

Breakthrough High Schools Lessons Learned (2006) was a grant-funded project by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The study focused on high schools that had turned around from low- to high-achieving schools and demonstrated high levels of achievement regardless of race, low income, or other demographic characteristics. The project showed the school climates in all the studied schools to be relevant, personal, and collaborative. The collaborative cultures of the buildings allowed teachers to feel empowered and increased their sense of responsibility for all students learning. Newmann and Wehlage (1995) suggest that a professional community is fostered by tearing down barriers that have traditionally inhibited collaboration and that fostering professional community through collaboration will impact student achievement.

Strahan (2003) published a three-year study focusing on three elementary schools implementing PLCs, specifically tracking progress of students of minority status and students from low-income families. The student scores rose from 50 percent to 75 percent proficient on state achievement assessments. Interviews conducted with the faculty of these three schools indicated that the collaborative culture developed through PLC work was a common variable attributed to increasing levels of success.

A study focusing on PLC implementation published by Hughes and Kritsonis (2007) of randomly sampled schools found PLC workshop attendees who identified their schools as a functioning PLC environment showed an increase in both math and English/language arts scores on standardized assessments. The assessment growth was measured using scores on

standardized assessments prior to PLC implementation and compared with standardized assessment scores after PLC implementation.

Supovitz and Christman (2003) studied the implementation of PLCs and the impact on schools. Using data compiled over a four-year period in an urban school district (Supovitz, 2002), the researchers found that implementing PLCs will have a positive impact on the culture but that a lack of instructional focus will not have a positive impact on student achievement. In other words, Supovitz and Christman found that PLCs must focus on improving instruction, a results orientation, not simply on improving the collaborative culture of the school. Fullan (2001) agreed with Supovitz and Christman, concluding that schools wishing to be effective must establish professionally collaborative cultures that shift the focus away from individuals and devote efforts to develop PLCs. Additionally, Fullan further asserted that effective PLCs are characterized by respect and support among faculty members, mutual trust, and inclusive membership focusing on results.

In PLCs, a results orientation is critically important (DuFour et al., 2006). According to Senge (2006), a results orientation is crucial to the effectiveness of the organization, team effectiveness, and ongoing improvement and serves as a significant motivator. A results orientation focuses the organization on outcomes. Schaffer and Thomson (1998) contended that effective organizations have an improvement process that is driven by results. Effective organizations are constantly measuring progress, seeking areas to improve, making adjustments, and informing practices based on data. The leaders of effective organizations are relentlessly driven to produce results (Collins, 2001). In a school, this means that all efforts within the system should be targeting increased achievement for students.

Schools focus on results by having specific student learning goals and by consistently monitoring those goals through ongoing assessment. In a PLC, the data from assessments is used to redirect instruction to meet the needs of the learners to effectively increase student achievement (Cawelti & Protheroe, 2001). Marzano (2003) found the primary distinction between effective and ineffective schools is the organizational ability to use data. Effective schools utilize frequent assessment and data more often, and they use the data to act in the best interests of student learning. Student achievement is used to gauge how the students are performing as well as what instructional steps are necessary for improvement.

According to DuFour et al. (2006), the collaborative process of PLCs allows teachers to discuss what is most important and identify why. Collaborative teaming also allows professionals to share their knowledge by creating a common pool of intelligence as opposed to having silos of knowledge working in isolation. DuFour asserts that a change in how teachers practice their craft and the teaching environment require trust in leadership, colleagues, students and parents. A change also requires the system/organizational participants to be open to change. Finally, change requires people to act and behave differently to maintain professional relationships and model professionalism. Fullan (1999) asserted that collaborative cultures encourage a diversity of thought to solve problems.

Trust

Trust is a concept that is a critical underpinning of change (Louis, 2006). According to Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003), trust is multi-faceted in schools and includes trust in leadership, trust in colleagues, and trust in students and parents. Areas that feed into trust and its

development include decision making, relationships, honesty, competency, openness, and reliability. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran defined faculty trust as "a person's ability to make him/herself vulnerable to others based on perceptions of honesty, competency, and openness of the other party" (Hoy, 2009). As a result of their research, Hoy and Tschannen-Moran developed the Omnibus T-Scale, a Likert-scale survey that measures the three subscales of trust. The survey is reported to have a reliability range of .90 to .98.

Wahlstrom and Louis (2008) researched trust in schools and found that schools with high levels of faculty trust demonstrated higher levels of collaborative decision making. Additionally, schools with high levels of trust showed a greater likelihood to have widespread commitment to reform initiatives as well as increases in student achievement. Further, the findings suggest that the development of trust is supported more in the literature than shared leadership. They found that leaders should continue to expand the roles of non-administrators in decision making as an important step to improving instruction.

In a study focusing on collaboration and the need for trust, Tschannen-Moran (2001) hypothesized that the level of trust in schools was related to the level of collaboration. The research data showed a significant correlation between collaboration and trust, strengthening the argument for schools to develop collaborative cultures. She further supported teachers' pursuit of greater collaboration with colleagues. In a similar study, Louis (2006) found that trust between teachers is critically important by serving as a foundation for collaboration and instructional improvement. As Tschannen-Moran (2001) stated, it is unlikely that collaboration will occur without trust.

Looking at components of faculty, parent, and student trust, Bryk and Schneider (2002) performed a three-year longitudinal study of schools and found that school improvement was driven by relational trust. Further, the findings showed that cooperation and trust among students, parents, and teachers influenced pedagogical changes, school attendance for students, and student learning persistence. This work demonstrated the importance of trust among faculty, parents, and students for improving student achievement.

Busman (1991) researched how principal authenticity, teacher participation in decision making, and the perception of the decision-making participation influenced faculty trust development. Two hundred fifty-four middle school teachers in Michigan were surveyed, with results showing that leaders who emphasized principal authenticity and shared decision making demonstrated an increase in faculty trust levels. The study findings further showed that principal authenticity was enhanced in schools that had daily grade-level teaming when teachers believed the principal could be trusted and decision making was shared between the principal and staff. Additional findings indicated that the perceived levels of principal authenticity influenced all aspects of faculty trust, which in turn was influenced by shared decision making.

Hoy, Smith and Sweetland (2002) asserted that faculty trust is a critical component to an open and healthy school climate. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) stated that trust is crucial to improvement efforts in schools and organizational functioning and that open lines of communication require trust. They also stated that a high level of organizational trust allows people to share their ideas, thoughts, and feelings and creates better communication, identification of problems, development and implementation of solutions. Servage (2008) agreed, stating that schools that work to build trust and encourage reflection among PLC

members can move beyond the concerns of daily pedagogy. Servage argued that increased trust between collaborative team members (PLC) can have an increased value by reaching deeper toward the core of problems and hurdles that impede the efforts of the PLC.

Smith, Hoy, and Sweetland (2001) reported that teachers want to work in a school environment that has trusting and healthy interpersonal relationships. Smith et al. found that a healthy work climate helps to develop trust and that the relationship between trust and a healthy work climate reciprocates. As a result of the survey findings, Smith et al. (2001) developed a hypothesis that trust is positively related to a school's health. Paralleling Smith et al., Louis et al. (1996) asserted that an environment of trust and respect is critical for teachers to feel safe participating in mentoring, pedagogical discussions, innovative curriculum creation, and classroom observation and feedback. Bryk et al. (1999) concurred, positing that social trust among faculty members directly supports collaboration and is the strongest facilitator of professional community.

Running parallel to education, a 2006 study of trust in the business setting and the importance of trust related to change was published by Brittle (2006). Brittle surveyed 1,389 Minnesota healthcare industry employees, focusing on the importance of trust and fairness as it related to organizational change. One hundred and fifty-five employees responded, giving the survey a 12% return rate. The non-management group showed a decrease in the level of trust for the senior leadership team during change efforts, but there were no differences in trust for senior leadership before the change effort. Brittle identified some common themes voiced as concerns by the survey participants that helped the researcher understand the development or deterioration of trust, including individual outcomes, individual work environment, organization-level work

environment, and organization outcomes and future. Businesses, much like schools, have wavering levels of trust. In times of change, Brittle argued, trust is paramount to success. Brittle's argument has relevance in education in that trust in leadership allows employees to invest in change efforts.

A prominent management theory regarding organizational climate relating directly to issues of trust is Ouchi's (1981) Theory Z. Ouchi wrote that the Theory Z management style involves shared decision making, staff development, and a company philosophy that has a strong and supportive culture. Ouchi found that workers in a Theory Z organization desire strong and close working relationships with those they work with and for. Workers have a sense of loyalty to the organization, are self-motivated to work hard, and can be trusted to perform at peak levels as long as the organizational management can be trusted to support and look out for the well-being of the workers. The emphasis of trust in Theory Z, as it relates to business organizations, is similar to the trusting relationships in schools. Teachers and administrators who adhere to a Theory Z management style share decision making and have confidence and trust in one another to work at high levels.

Similarly, Wasonga and Murphy (2007) highlighted trust and trustworthiness as one of eight identified leadership dispositions for co-creating leadership, a collaborative effort to recognize and achieve organizational goals through use of the full potential of stakeholders' knowledge and relationships. As organizational trust increases, the organizational climate shows high levels of productivity, commitment to the organization and its goals, and adaptability to change. DuFour et al. (2006) argued that collaborative cultures can be powerful agents of

change. In order for change to occur in a PLC, DuFour et al. argued that collaborative cultures must be built with a foundation of trust.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) researched the link between trust and student achievement. Their research led to conclusions that high levels of trust between teachers leads to collaborative decision making, participation in the school community, and development and investment in the common moral imperative, thereby increasing student achievement. Trust was also linked directly to professionalism in this study. As trust levels are strong, organizational structures including collaboration and the ability for teachers to make necessary changes to support improved student achievement are more evident. The study asserted that professionalism requires trust.

To summarize, trust is multifaceted and crucial to change and an open and healthy work environment. As trust levels increase, it influences positive increases in collaboration, commitment and adaptability to change, communication, problem identification and solution development, productivity, and student achievement.

Professionalism

For the purposes of this study, contribution to a professional community (collaboration) will be the focus. McMahon and Hoy (2009) defined professionalism as "the level of conduct and performance evident in teachers' practices to meet organizational expectations" (Hoy, 2009). McMahon and Hoy identified four key elements of teacher professionalism, including academic engagement, effectiveness, professional standards self-regulation, and professional community contributions. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued that teachers have a professional responsibility

to participate in a learning community and, in so doing, will be empowered through collective sharing and action once releasing individual autonomy.

In 1995, Newmann and Wehlage performed a review of the School Restructuring Study. The study was a combination of multiple longitudinal studies. The first data set included a study of over 800 high schools, totaling over 10,000 students. The first data set was then combined with a second study that included 24 elementary, middle, and high schools. The combined data were collected between 1991 and 1994. Newmann and Wehlage found that a direct relationship existed between student achievement and the level of professional community, defined by contributions to the collaborative learning environment. In other words, the level of teacher professionalism had a direct impact on the level of student achievement. In fact, the study compared average students between schools with high and low levels of professional community, or collaboration. The students learning in the school with high levels of professional community, or collaboration, scored 27 percent higher on the School Restructuring Study measure than the students learning in the school with low levels of professional community. In 2005, a study by DiPaola and Hoy further supported Newmann and Wehlage's findings, demonstrating that student achievement and high levels of professionalism are strongly correlated.

In a similar study, Louis and Marks (1998) found that students achieved at higher levels in schools with positive professional communities. Wiley (2001) studied the achievement in math in relation to professional community. Wiley found that high school students achieved at higher levels in schools that had high levels of professional community. Tschannen-Moran (2009) studied how teacher professionalism is fostered in schools. The hypothesis of this work

was that the level of teacher professionalism in schools is directly related to the administrative authority and professional orientation of principals as demonstrated through trust and discretion given to teachers to conduct their work and make decisions. In other words, as principals demonstrated trust in teacher discretion and decision making, the level of teacher professionalism increased. Surveys were completed by teachers at 80 middle schools. The data showed that the professional orientation, or willingness to share responsibilities, of principals and faculty were related to the level of teacher professionalism. Tschannen-Moran recommended that school leaders would be wise to avoid adopting bureaucratic leadership styles because they foster distrust and inhibit collaboration.

McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) studied 16 school districts. A survey of teachers showed that the strength of the teacher learning community was strongly related to the level of teacher professionalism. This study shows that teachers participating in collaborative professional communities have higher levels of professionalism. In this study, professionalism focused on teacher investment through shared decision making, collaboration, and sharing best instructional practices. McLaughlin and Talbert argued that building collaborative cultures and professional communities is essentially an issue of changing the culture of education from individualism to collaboration. Further, they stated that teachers are much more likely to contribute to collaborative communities when the contexts of their needs are considered while selecting professional readings, a component of professionalism that has shown significance in change. McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) asserted that developing a collaborative culture creates a teaching environment in which colleagues challenge ineffective practices and share what works. Decisions are made collaboratively as opposed to individually.

Characteristics of professionalism needed for effective collaboration were also studied by Lambert (2003). Lambert asserted that caring and mutual regard were critical characteristics necessary for effective collaboration of teachers. Stoll et al. (2006) argued that school communities must work collaboratively, which is characterized by participation, interdependence, sharing of multiple perspectives, and interaction between and among collaborative team members – all of which lead to deep and meaningful relationships in a professional environment. Stoll et al. contended that schools should continue to focus on professionalism, specifically the areas of developing shared knowledge and skills, student needs, and professional judgment.

Little (1990), focusing on changing the current educational system from the traditional model, argued that education must move from teaching practices that are independent to pedagogical interdependence. Little found that teacher success and professional growth are partially dependent on professionalism as defined by participation in collaborative professional communities.

In summary, professionalism, or teacher contributions to a professional community, has a direct relationship with student achievement. Additionally, teachers' professional growth increased as levels of professionalism increased. Leaders should continue to develop an environment of shared decision making and shared knowledge to increase levels of professionalism.

Change

School reform efforts have focused on how to improve student achievement through change for many years (Ravitch, 2010). Change is an overarching theme of school reform and PLCs (DuFour, 2009). DuFour (2004) stated that PLCs ask teachers to learn in context, share their practices openly with colleagues, and collaborate actively.

Leadership during a change process has been a focal point of research. The transformational leadership model is defined as a process of interaction between the leader and organizational members, enabling both groups to achieve goals (Northouse, 2004). Vision is an essential element of transformational leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1988). Transformational leaders are directly involved in change processes as they empower organizational members and delegate responsibilities to build the capacity of the members (Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989). Trust between the leader and an organization's members is also a key element of transformational leadership (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001). A transformational leader focuses on developing motivation of the following members to achieve goals. This leadership model requires the leader to remove obstacles from the organization's members' paths so goals can be achieved (Shamir, House, & Arthur, 1993).

Laine (2000) researched organizational change using systems leadership in education reform. The survey sought to identify an organization's potential to develop into a learning organization capable of creating and sustaining change. Laine developed a systems leadership model to crystallize understanding of the learning organization's potential in five areas: 1) leadership qualities and characteristics, 2) organizational trust, 3) importance of collaboration, 4) shared goals and vision, 5) shared leadership. The data showed that collaboration, with a

foundation of faculty trust and professionalism, had the highest correlation to school improvement. In other words, for change to occur, a collaborative culture must be built on trust and professionalism.

Leadership has been demonstrated to have influence, albeit indirect, on student achievement during changing conditions in schools. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) researched how the impact of leadership correlated with changes in classroom pedagogy and student achievement. The study was an extension of a previously completed study published by the same researchers in 1999. The 2006 study, which included nearly 2,300 teachers, concluded that 25-35% of changes in instructional pedagogy were directly related to leadership, demonstrating a significant impact.

In 2003, Dolan, Garcia, and Auerbach developed a complexity theory of strategic change. They asserted that organizations are complex due to the rules that govern the interactions within the environment. Dolan et al. argued that organizations often try to eliminate chaos and provide direction by changing and controlling the rules. Grobman (2005) supported the 2003 theory, stating that members of the organization feel more secure when rules are in place and uncertainty is reduced. However, Grobman found that organizations that attempt to control the rules are change resistant.

Kearney and Smith (2008) developed a 29-item Likert-scale Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS) to measure the faculty's perceptions of change in schools. The scale has focal points in three areas: faculty openness to change, principal openness to change, and community press for change. The survey had a reported reliability range of .95 for faculty openness to change and .87 for both principal openness to change and community press for change. The

survey was combined with two other surveys and utilized in this current study of PLC and non-PLC elementary schools.

As DuFour (2009) stated, change is an overarching theme of school reform and PLCs. Hord (1997) argued that PLCs can be powerful agents for staff development leading to school improvement and change. Huffman (2003) asserted that one of the largest challenges school leaders face is increasing the capacity of faculty to engage in change efforts that are meaningful to student learning. Hughes and Kritsonis (2007) further asserted that faculty collaboration focusing on inquiry, new ideas and strategies, and developing practices on a deeper level are elements that drive people within professional learning communities. In other words, DuFour et al. (2006) assert that PLC implementation can assist with the change process.

Application to this Study

The purpose of this study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools. The investigation provides the educational field with empirical research on Professional Learning Communities, an area that is minimally investigated at this time. The links among trust, professionalism, and change will also be analyzed to determine if teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change are different in PLC and non-PLC schools. The research findings will contribute to the educational field helping schools and districts select school reform efforts.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

Overview

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change as measured through survey responses from teachers of five Illinois PLC elementary schools and five Illinois non-PLC elementary schools. Trust, professionalism, and change are common variables identified within the literature on PLCs (DuFour et al., 2006) and Senge's (2006) work on learning organizations. For the purposes of this study, PLC schools were selected using the All Things PLC webpage operated by Solution Tree, a professional development organization providing, for a fee, tools, resources, and learning while fostering the implementation of PLCs. PLC schools are defined as

> schools that must 1. Demonstrate a commitment to PLC concepts; 2. Implement those concepts for at least three years; 3. Present clear evidence of improved student learning; 4. Explain practices, structures, and culture of the school and submit for consideration to the PLC Review Committee. (All Things PLC, n.d.)

For the purposes of this study, non-PLC Schools are defined as schools that have demonstrated clear evidence of improved student learning similar to those of schools identified as PLC schools over the same period of time as measured by a common standardized assessment, ISAT.

Quantitative methodology was used to collect and analyze data for this study. The study included five research questions:

1. What are the levels of trust, professionalism, and change among teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
2. What are the differences in perceptions on the levels of trust, professionalism, and change between teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
3. What are the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools?
4. What are the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience?
5. What are the impacts of years of experience on trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools?

Research Design

The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change as measured through survey responses from five Illinois PLC elementary schools and five Illinois non-PLC elementary schools that had similar demographic characteristics, including student achievement on the ISAT, expenditures, enrollment, minority populations, and socioeconomic status, selected through the Illinois Interactive Report Card data set (Illinois Interactive Report Card, n.d.). The five PLC elementary schools were identified by Solution Tree, a professional development organization fostering the implementation of PLCs (All Things PLC, n.d.). The schools chosen for this study had for three consecutive years demonstrated an increase in achievement and growth as measured by the ISAT coupled with implementation of the philosophical tenets and practices commonly associated with PLCs.

Quantitative methodology was used to analyze data and to determine what, if any, relationship(s) exist among the variables (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008) and if there are any differences in the levels of practice of these variables between PLC and non-PLC schools. Quantitative methodology was selected because larger trends can be described using quantitative data. Quantitative methodology has three advantages (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008):

1. contextual flexibility allowing the phenomena to be studied in multiple settings and contexts.
2. bias reduction that may be infused when studying subjects who experience the phenomena.
3. deeper analysis of multiple factors within the study.

This study utilized a correlational design. Correlational designs use statistical processes to determine and describe what, if any, relationships exist between variables or data sets (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008).

Sampling

Stratified sampling was used in this study to control for socioeconomic status, diversity, achievement, expenditures, and enrollment of the schools for a total of ten elementary schools in Illinois. Stratified sampling is used to control the population based on a specific set of population characteristics (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The data from the Illinois Interactive Report Card (n.d.) were used as a tool to assist in the stratification of the population.

Stratification began by identifying only public elementary schools for the study. Private elementary schools were excluded because they are not required to take the Illinois Standards

Achievement Test (ISAT), which was utilized to provide assessment data for the study. This reduced the pool of elementary schools.

All magnet schools were excluded from this study. Magnet schools are defined by Ravitch (2010) as schools that focus on specific disciplines, which may include the arts, science, math, or technology. Magnet schools were excluded from this study because they have the ability to select, recruit, and deny access to students.

PLC schools listed on the Allthingsplc.info website were required to complete an online application detailing the implementation of the PLC process as well as data to support student growth. The five PLC schools were selected based on the identification and listing on the Allthingsplc.info website. In addition, schools already identified as PLC schools were selected by the people at Solution Tree as having three consecutive years of growth as measured by the ISAT as well as for implementing the tenets and foundations of professional learning communities. Solution Tree is a professional development organization fostering the implementation of PLCs in schools. Solution Tree provides schools with professional learning, tools, and resources for a fee. The Illinois elementary schools identified as PLC schools were given pseudonyms for purposes of confidentiality and protection.

Non-PLC elementary schools were then selected to match the demographic of PLC schools. Demographics considered were socioeconomic indicators, specifically the percentage of students in the school receiving free and/or reduced lunch fees; student achievement; and percentage of minority populations. Socioeconomic indicators were used to limit the impact of the schools' relative wealth. Free and/or reduced lunch percentages for each school for the 2008 fiscal year were utilized to control for the impact of socioeconomic factors on student

achievement. This statistic measures the percentage of students enrolled who qualify for free and/or reduced lunch fees as calculated by an income formula developed by the State of Illinois. The Illinois Interactive Report Card (n.d.) was used to stratify schools.

Next, academic performance was used to select five non-PLC elementary schools. The 2008 Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) was administered to all elementary school third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade students in the state of Illinois. The ISAT scores were used as a measure to determine if schools are making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP). For the purpose of this study, non-PLC schools were defined as schools that had commensurate achievement scores to the five PLC schools as measured by the ISAT but did not use the tenets of PLC as the organizing philosophy. A personal phone call was made to the administrators of the non-PLC schools to verify they were not implementing PLCs at the time of this study.

PLC and non-PLC schools were selected based on indicators, which were used to match the learner homogeneity of the school. Enrollment and expenditure indicators for each school for the fiscal year 2008 were utilized to control for the impact of enrollment and expenditure factors on student achievement. This statistic measured the percentage of students enrolled and the per pupil expenditures.

All teachers in the ten selected elementary schools received the survey (see Appendix A). Approval of the building principal to allow the study was essential.

Table 3.1 below provides a summary of the results of the stratification and selection of the ten schools and divides the schools into two groups: a Non-PLC Schools group and a PLC Schools group.

Table 3.1

Sample Group Profiles

Profile Characteristics:	PLC Schools:	Non-PLC Schools:
Number of Schools	5	5
Teachers	246	294
Surveys Returned	95	56
Return Rate	39%	19%
Enrollment (Mean)	418	521
Expenditure (per pupil)	$10, 889	$10, 207
ISAT Math (Mean) % meets/exceeds	95%	93%
ISAT Reading (Mean) % meets/exceeds	89%	88%

Data Collection Instrument

Three survey instruments were combined to create a single instrument measuring faculty perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change (see Appendix A). The Faculty Trust Omnibus T-Scale survey (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) was combined with the Professionalism Index

(P-Index, McMahon & Hoy, 2009) and the Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS, Kearney & Smith, 2008). This process led to a 53-question survey.

Faculty Trust Omnibus T-Scale Survey

The Faculty Trust Omnibus T-Scale survey (Hoy & Tschannen-Moran, 2003) is a 26-item Likert-type scale that measures three subscales: faculty trust in the principal, faculty trust in colleagues, and faculty trust in clients. The survey has reported reliabilities ranging from .90 to .98. Responses vary along a six-point scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6).

Professionalism Index (P-Index)

The P-Index (McMahon & Hoy, 2009) is an 8-item Likert-type scale measuring the degree of teacher professionalism. Responses vary along a six-point scale from Strongly Disagree (1) to Strongly Agree (6). McMahon and Hoy reported four elements of teacher professionalism, including academic engagement, effectiveness, self-regulation to professional teaching standards, and contributing to a professional community. The reliability of the scale is reported to have an Omega coefficient of .81.

Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS)

The FCOS is a 19-item Likert-type measure of the faculty's perceptions of change in schools. The FCOS focuses on teachers' perceptions of three aspects of change important in a school: faculty openness to change, principal openness to change, and community press for

change. Teachers were asked to describe the change orientations, or openness to change, of the teachers, the principal, and community along a six-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The higher the score, the greater the openness to change or the greater the community press for change. The reliabilities of the three scales are strong, with the following alpha coefficients as shown in Table 3.2 (Kearney & Smith, 2008).

Table 3.2

Survey Reliability Scales

Faculty openness to change	0.95
Principal openness to change	0.87
Community press for change	0.87

Validity of the FCOS has also been supported in a series of factor analytic studies and predictive studies (Kearney & Smith, 2008). The Survey Instrument Key is shown in Table 3.3 below (Kearney & Smith, 2008).

Table 3.3

Survey Instrument Key

Survey Instrument	**Question Numbers**
Faculty Trust Omnibus T-Scale Survey	20, 21, 22, 23, 2, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45
Professionalism Index (P-Index)	46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53
Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

Data Collection Procedure

The data collection instrument used (Appendix A) for this study was a quantitative survey instrument. First, teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of trust levels through Likert-type Scale style questions. Next, teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of professionalism levels through Likert-type Scale style questions. Finally, teachers were asked to indicate their perceptions of change levels through Likert-type Scale style questions. Teachers selected the answer that best represented their perceptions. Perception scale answers ranged from 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-somewhat disagree, 4-somewhat agree, 5-agree, and 6-strongly agree.

Step 1: The researcher contacted the school principal and district superintendent to explain the purpose of the research and to request permission to include and use the data collected from the school in the study.

Step 2: The survey was e-mailed or mailed directly to the school principal and school teachers at all ten schools.

Step 3: After the surveys were completed, they were collected by the school principal and mailed back to the researcher via a self-addressed stamped envelope.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics were utilized to determine the differences in mean and standard deviation in the collaborative teaming practices.

Correlation coefficients provided the opportunity to examine the perceptions of the teaching staff in PLC and non-PLC schools related to trust, professionalism, and change. The correlational relationship can either be positive or negative. Trochim and Donnelly (2008) describe a positive correlation as higher scores on one variable tend to be coupled with higher scores on the comparative variable and lower scores on one variable tend to be coupled with lower scores on the other variable. Once the correlational statistics are calculated, the level of significance must be determined to analyze if the relationship between the two variables is likely to occur or if the relationship occurred by chance.

Bivariate analysis, through utilization of a *t* test, analyzed the perception levels of teachers on trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools; the differences in teacher perceptions between the PLC group and the non-PLC group to the extent of trust, professionalism, and change; and finally, the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change at the $p<.05$ level of significance.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of the study was to investigate perceptions of teachers on trust, professionalism, and change as measured through survey responses among teachers of five Illinois PLC elementary schools and five Illinois non-PLC elementary schools. This chapter presents the data analysis. The data collected from the survey were used to analyze the relationships among and between teachers' perceptions of the levels of trust, professionalism, and change within schools that identify as professional learning community schools and those that do not. The data collected were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical software package. Descriptive and correlational statistics were completed. The data analysis is framed by the five research questions.

Respondent and School Data

The study was limited to the teaching staff of 10 Illinois elementary schools: five PLC schools and five non-PLC schools identified as demonstrating increasing levels of student achievement as measured by the annual state assessment (ISAT scores are used in Illinois). Sampling was stratified to limit the population based on specific sets of characteristics (Trochim and Donnelly, 2008). The study was limited only to schools with demonstrated growth and

success. Additionally, schools implementing PLCs that were identified by Solution Tree (a professional development organization seeking to assist educators to create schools where all students performance increases while embedding Professional Learning Communities) were included in this study and labeled as PLC schools. Non-PLC schools were selected based on similarity to the selected PLC schools (after PLC implementation) in levels of student achievement, expenditures, enrollment, minority populations, and socioeconomic status. Of the five non-PLC Schools, the Illinois Interactive Report Card data set tool was utilized to stratify the population (Illinois Interactive Report Card, n.d.). Staff members responded to a survey focusing on the three common threads of trust, professionalism, and change.

All of the teachers in the 10 selected schools had the opportunity to complete the survey. There were a total of 540 certified staff members who received the survey instrument. The response rate was 28%, as a total of 151 surveys were returned. Stratification was used to divide survey respondents into the PLC (n=95) and non-PLC schools (n=56).

Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive statistics were calculated for three groups in this study: all participants (n=151), participants from PLC schools (n=95), and participants from non-PLC schools (n=56). Calculations for minimum score, maximum score, mean, and standard deviation were calculated for trust, professionalism, and change.

The 57-question survey contained 53 Likert-type responses and 4 demographic identifiers. For the 53 Likert-type response questions, responses were based on a scale that ranged from 1=Strongly Disagree to 6=Strongly Agree.

Research Question 1

The first research question asked, "What are the levels of trust, professionalism, and change among teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?" Descriptive statistics were utilized to ascertain the levels of trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools. The mean scores for the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change were first calculated for the whole group (n=151) and are shown in Table 4.1. Findings for the PLC schools group (n=95) and the non-PLC schools group (n=56) findings are also presented in Table 4.1.

Whole Group

Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations for the Likert-type response scale for the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change for all participants, PLC school participants, and non-PLC school participants. The variable that had the highest mean among all 10 schools was trust (M=4.27). The variable with the lowest mean was professionalism (M=3.45). The variable of change had a mean score of M=3.75.

PLC Group

Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations for the Likert response scale of the PLC group for the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change. The variable that had the highest mean among all ten schools was trust (M=4.30). The variable with the lowest mean was professionalism (M=3.43). The variable of change had a mean score of M=3.73.

Non-PLC Group

Table 4.1 presents the means and standard deviations for the Likert response scale of the non-PLC group for the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change. The variable that had the highest mean among all ten schools was trust (M=4.22). The variable with the lowest mean was professionalism (M=3.48). The variable of change had a mean score of M=3.78.

Table 4.1

All, PLC, and Non-PLC Participants Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Avg Trust All	151	3.19	5.04	4.27	0.30
PLC	95	3.19	5.04	4.30	0.37
Non-PLC	56	3.96	4.42	4.22	0.09
Avg Prof All	151	2.13	5.63	3.45	0.37
PLC	95	2.13	5.63	3.43	0.46
Non-PLC	56	3.25	3.63	3.48	0.09
Avg Change All	151	3.00	4.61	3.75	0.25
PLC	95	3.00	4.61	3.73	0.31
Non-PLC	56	3.56	3.94	3.78	0.09

Research Question 2

The second research question asked, "What are the differences in perceptions on the levels of trust, professionalism, and change between teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?"

Analysis

A *t* test analyzes the differences of the means of two groups to determine if they are statistically different from one another (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). For this study, the PLC and non-PLC group means in perception levels among teachers on trust, professionalism, and change between were analyzed using a .05 level of significance. The analysis presented in Table 4.2 shows that no significant differences between the means of PLC and non-PLC groups existed in the variables of trust, professionalism, and change.

Table 4.2

Results of *t* Tests

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		*t* test for Equality of Means					*t* test for Equality of Means	
	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2 tailed	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower	Upper
Avg Trust PLC Non-PLC	52.03	.00	1.51 1.90	149 114.77	.13 .06	-.077 -.077	.051 .040	-.024 -.003	.178 .157
Avg Prof PLC Non-PLC	33.64	.00	-.789 -1.01	149 105.07	.43 .32	-.049 -.049	.062 .048	-.171 -.144	.073 .047
Avg Change PLC Non-PLC	31.87	.000	-1.06 -1.13	149 122.81	.29 .19	-.045 -.045	.042 .034	-.128 -.112	.038 .022

Research Question 3

The third research question asked, "What are the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools?" Question 3 was tested using a

correlation analysis to measure the strength of the relationship between two sets of variables (Vogt, 2005). The Pearson correlation coefficient is shown as a number between +1 and -1. The closer to +1 or -1, the stronger the correlation between the variables. Additionally, the direction of the correlation can also be determined by the positive or negative coefficient, which indicates the influence the variables have on one another. In other words, if the correlation coefficient is closer to +1, it could be argued that an increase in one variable will result in an increase in the second variable, resulting in a positive correlation. If the correlation coefficient is closer to -1, it could be argued that a decrease in one variable will result in a decrease in the second variable resulting, in a negative correlation.

The variables of trust and change showed a moderate significant positive correlation ($r = .383$, $p < .01$) for all participants (Whole Group) in the study. The moderately significant correlation between trust and change suggests that as trust increases, there is a higher likelihood of change occurring. The correlations between professionalism and trust as well as professionalism and change did not show a significant relationship (see Table 4.3).

Table 4.3

All Participants Correlations

		Avg Change	Avg Trust	Avg Prof
Avg Change	Pearson Correlation	1	.383**	.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.358
	N	151	151	151
Avg Trust	Pearson Correlation	.383**	1	-.102
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.211
	N	151	151	151
Avg Prof	Pearson Correlation	.075	-.102	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.358	.211	
	N	151	151	151

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The PLC participant group also showed higher moderate significant positive correlation between the variables of trust and change (see Table 4.4), indicating that this phenomenon is greater in PLC schools.

Table 4.4

PLC School Participant Correlations

		Avg Change	Avg Trust	Avg Prof
Avg Change	Pearson Correlation	1	.420*	.077
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.456
	N	95	95	95
Avg Trust	Pearson Correlation	.420	1	-.096
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.354
	N	95	95	95
Avg Prof	Pearson Correlation	.077	-.096	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.456	.354	
	N	95	95	95

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The non-PLC participant group did not show a correlation between any of the variables of trust, professionalism, and change (see Table 4.5). These findings indicate that any change in these schools may not be attributed to relationships among trust or professionalism or change.

Table 4.5

Non-PLC School Participant Correlations

		Avg Change	Avg Trust	Avg Prof
Avg Change	Pearson Correlation	1	-.046	-.124
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.737	.364
	N	56	56	56
Avg Trust	Pearson Correlation	-.046	1	-.075
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.737		.581
	N	56	56	56
Avg Prof	Pearson Correlation	-.124	-.075	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.364	.581	
	N	56	56	56

Research Question 4

The fourth research question asked, "What are the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience?" To answer the fourth research question, an ANOVA test was performed to measure the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on employees' (teachers') years of experience among groups within the PLC and non-PLC schools. There was a significant effect of trust relative to change [$F(4, 146) = 2.985$, $p = .021$] at the $p<.05$ level (Table 4.6). An ANOVA test is used to compare means when there are more than

two groups within the sample (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). Differences in trust were noted between teachers with 0-5 years and teachers with 6-10 years of teaching experience (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6

Difference in Years of Experience ANOVA

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Avg Change	Between Groups	.464	4	.116	1.913	.111
	Within Groups	8.844	146	.061		
	Total	9.308	150			
Avg Trust	Between Groups	1.045	4	.261	2.985	.021**
	Within Groups	12.775	146	.087		
	Total	13.819	150			
Avg Prof	Between Groups	.155	4	.039	.283	.888
	Within Groups	19.953	146	.137		
	Total	20.107	150			

Research Question 5

The fifth research question asked, "What are the impacts of years of experience on trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools?" To answer the fifth research question, regression analysis was performed to specify which factors, or components, of trust relative to change may have the most impact (Table 4.7). Table 4.7 shows the components of trust that had significant impact on change as measured at $p<.05$. The regression data suggest that the trust components contributing to an increase in change would be perceptions of teacher-to-teacher trust, parental support, belief in parental reports, and student secrecy. Change was the dependent variable in these analyses.

Table 4.7

Regression Analysis of Change Relative to Trust

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Trust Components	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other	.06	.03	.23	1.93	.05
Teachers can count on parental support	.06	.03	.23	1.91	.05
Teachers can believe what parents tell them	-.09	.04	-.26	-2.18	.03
Students here are secretive	.05	.02	.19	1.93	.05

Regression analysis was also performed to specify which components of professionalism relative to change would have the greatest impact. Table 4.8 shows the components of professionalism having a significant impact on change as measured at the $p<.05$ level. The

regression data suggests that the component of professionalism likely to contribute to an impact on change was "reading for courses during the summer months." In other words, teachers who do not read during the summer months because that is their time showed a statistically significant impact relative to change. In this case, the data suggests that teachers who read during the summer months are more likely to change than those who do not.

Table 4.8

Regression Analysis of Change Relative to Professionalism

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Professionalism Components	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
I don't read for my courses over the summer. That's MY time.	.08	.02	.31	3.22	.002

Finally, regression analysis was performed to specify the components of change relative to trust and professionalism. Table 4.9 shows the components of change having a significant relationship on trust and professionalism as measured at the $p<.05$ level. The regression data suggest that the components of trust and professionalism most likely to contribute to increases in change when analyzed together include welcoming feedback on teaching, summer reading, withdrawing from departmental discussion of curriculum and/or assessment, trust in parents, and parental support.

Table 4.9

Regression Analysis of Change Relative to Trust and Professionalism

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
Trust and Professionalism Components	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
I welcome feedback on my teaching.	.07	.04	.21	1.99	.05
I don't read for my courses over the summer. That's MY time.	.06	.03	.22	2.23	.03
I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don't pertain to my classes.	.06	.03	.18	1.95	.05
Teachers in this school trust the parents	.08	.04	.21	1.97	.05
Teachers can count on parental support	.09	.03	.33	2.51	.01

Summary of Data Analysis

The group descriptive statistics for the groups (including All Participants, PLC, and Non-PLC Schools) related to the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change indicated no significant differences (see Table 4.1). When analyzing the data, the non-PLC schools had higher mean scores for change (M=3.78) and professionalism (M=3.48) than PLC Schools. PLC schools had a higher mean score for trust (M=4.29). The bivariate *t*-test analysis (See Table 4.2) revealed no significant differences between the PLC and non-PLC schools related to change, trust, and professionalism at the $p<.05$ level of significance.

Correlation coefficients examined the relationships between the three variables of PLC schools and high-achieving non-PLC schools, including change, trust, and professionalism. The relationships were analyzed for all of the respondents (n=151). The analysis of correlations indicated a moderate significant positive relationship existed between trust and change at the $p<.01$ level of significance among All Participants and PLC schools participants groups (see Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5), indicating that in both groups as trust increases, change is likely to occur.

The ANOVA test examined the comparison of means of the three variables of trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools and the years of experience teaching. The analysis revealed a significant difference in trust and years of experience (see Table 4.6).

Regression analysis revealed the components of trust and professionalism that are most likely to have the greatest impact on change (see Tables 4.7, 4.8, and 4.9). The components of trust and professionalism were included in the Likert-type survey instrument and the components with significant impact upon change were reported. Significant relationships where the trust components contributed to an increase in change included perceptions of teacher-to-teacher trust, parental support, belief in parental reports, and student secrecy, with Change serving as the dependent variable (see Table 4.7).

The conclusions, discussion, and recommendations for further study are presented in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Overview

Chapter 5 of this study presents a summary of the study's major conclusions for the five research questions as well as the delimitations and limitations of the study and the recommendations for future research and practice.

Project Summary

This study examined five research questions:

1. What are the levels of trust, professionalism, and change among teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
2. What are the differences in perceptions on the levels of trust, professionalism, and change between teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?
3. What are the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools?
4. What are the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience?
5. What are the impacts of years of experience on trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools?

A quantitative study was designed to address the research questions. The study included a survey of teachers from 10 Illinois elementary schools: five PLC schools and five non-PLC schools identified as demonstrating increasing levels of student achievement as measured by the annual state assessment (ISAT). The study was limited only to schools with demonstrated growth and success as measured by ISAT scores. Schools implementing PLCs that have been identified by Solution Tree were included in this study and labeled as PLC schools. Solution Tree is a for-profit professional development organization providing tools, resources, and professional learning focused on the implementation of PLCS in schools. Non-PLC schools were selected based on similarity to PLC schools (after PLC implementation) in student achievement levels, expenditures, enrollment, minority populations, and socioeconomic status. Additionally, a phone call was made to the administrators of the non-PLC schools to verify they were not implementing PLCs.

Teaching staff in all 10 schools were asked to complete a 57-question quantitative survey (Appendix A). The survey asked teaching staff to rate their perceptions of faculty trust, faculty professionalism, and change. The survey was a Likert type with six possible perception ratings ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. One hundred fifty-one teachers completed the survey, with 95 teachers from PLC schools and 56 teachers from non-PLC schools comprising the total.

Research Question 1, which focused on the teachers' perception levels of trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools, was addressed utilizing descriptive statistics.

Research Question 2, which focused on the differences in perception levels of teachers on trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools, utilized a *t* test to analyze the difference in the means of teachers' perceptions in PLC and non-PLC schools.

Research Question 3, which focused on the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools, used correlation analysis to measure the strength and direction of the relationships between the variables.

Research Question 4, which focused on differences in years of experience and trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools, utilized an ANOVA test to compare means when there were more than two samples.

Research Question 5 utilized regression analysis to determine which components of trust and professionalism had the greatest impact relative to change.

Conclusions: Research Question 1

Research Question 1 asked, "What are the levels of trust, professionalism, and change among teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?"

The descriptive statistics showed the means for the variables of trust, professionalism, and change in Whole Group (PLC and non-PLC groups combined), PLC, and non-PLC schools. The Whole Group mean for trust was 4.27 (Table 4.1). The PLC Group mean for trust was higher than the Whole Group mean at 4.30 (Table 4.1). The impact of this finding shows that the teachers' perceptions of trust were highest among all of the survey participants. The variable that had the lowest mean in all three sample groups was professionalism, with the non-PLC group having the highest mean score of 3.48 (Table 4.1). Finally, the teachers' perceptions of

change showed similar mean scores in all three sample groups, with the non-PLC group having the highest mean score of 3.78 (Table 4.1). These findings suggest that high-achieving schools, regardless of identification as a PLC or non-PLC school, have similar perception levels of trust, professionalism, and change.

Conclusions: Research Question 2

Research Question 2 asked, "What are the differences in perceptions on the levels of trust, professionalism, and change between teachers in PLC and non-PLC schools?"

A *t* test was used to analyze the differences of the means between the PLC and non-PLC groups for the teacher perception variables of trust, professionalism, and change using a .05 level of significance. The findings showed no significant differences between the means of PLC and non-PLC group for the teacher perception variables of trust, professionalism, or change (Table 4.2). These findings reinforce the similarity of PLC and non-PLC teacher perception levels of trust, professionalism, and change.

Conclusions: Research Question 3

Research Question 3 asked, "What are the relationships among trust, professionalism, and change in PLC and non-PLC schools?"

Question 3 data were analyzed using a correlation analysis. Teacher perception variables of trust, professionalism, and change were compared in this study. The findings for the Whole Group showed a moderate significant positive correlation ($r=.383$, $p<.01$) between the teacher perception variables of trust and change (Table 4.3).

In the PLC group, the findings show that trust was significantly related to change orientation ($r=.420$, $p<.01$; Table 4.4). This finding indicated a moderate positive relationship between teacher perceptions of trust and change. The findings for the non-PLC group showed no significant correlations between any of the teacher perception variables of trust, professionalism, and change (Table 4.5). In other words, these findings indicated that any change in these schools may not be attributed to relationships among trust or professionalism or change.

The correlations between teacher perception levels of professionalism and trust, as well as professionalism and change, did not show a significant relationship (see Tables 4.3, 4.4, and 4.5) in the Whole Group, PLC Group, and Non-PLC Group.

Conclusions: Research Question 4

Research Question 4 asked, "What are the differences in change, trust and professionalism based on years of experience?"

An ANOVA test was performed to determine the differences in teacher perception levels of trust, professionalism, and change among the respondents by years of experience in teaching. A significant difference [$F(4, 146) = 2.985$, $p= .021$] was found in trust between groups (0-5 years & 6-10 years; Table 4.6) at the $p<.05$ level. No significant differences were found in the teacher perception variables of change and professionalism (see Table 4.6). These findings show that teachers who have been in schools for more than five years have significantly higher levels of trust compared to those with less than five years.

Conclusions: Research Question 5

Research Question 5 asked, "What are the impacts of years of experience on trust and professionalism on change in PLC and non-PLC schools?"

Regression analysis was performed to specify which factors or components of teacher perception of trust relative to change may have the most impact (Table 4.7) at $p<.05$. The regression data findings suggest that the trust components most likely to contribute to predict change are teacher-to-teacher trust ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$), parental support ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$), belief in parental reports ($R^2=.03$, $p<.05$), and student secrecy ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$). Change was the dependent variable in these analyses.

Additionally, regression findings showed the component of professionalism having the greatest impact was, "I don't read for my courses over the summer. That's MY time," as a significant predictor of change ($R^2=.002$, $p<.05$; Table 4.8).

Finally, regression analysis was performed to specify the components of change relative to trust and professionalism. Table 4.9 showed the components of change most likely to contribute to an increase in trust and professionalism as measured at the $p<.05$ level, including welcoming feedback on teaching ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$), summer reading ($R^2=.03$, $p<.05$), withdrawing from departmental discussion of curriculum and/or assessment ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$), trust in parents ($R^2=.05$, $p<.05$), and parental support ($R^2=.01$, $p<.05$).

Discussion

The purpose of the study was to investigate perceptions of teachers on trust, professionalism, and change as measured through survey responses from teachers of five Illinois PLC elementary schools and five Illinois non-PLC elementary schools. The primary aim was to determine if there are differences in teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change between high-achieving PLC schools, as selected by Solution Tree, and non-PLC schools. PLC is a school reform initiative implemented by schools to improve student achievement scores on standardized testing. The significance of this study includes adding to the literature about PLCs, determining if teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change are different in PLC and non-PLC schools; establishing empirical research on PLCs; and providing leaders and educators with important information that may guide selection of a school reform model such as PLCs. The results of this study are limited, but the study does highlight the status of professionalism, trust and change as perceived by teachers. The literature surrounding PLCs is robust, but primarily anecdotal, and this research is intended to contribute to the empirical research gap (Feger et al., 2008).

Descriptive statistics showed that the means for All Participants, PLC Schools, and Non-PLC Schools regarding trust, professionalism, and change were comparable (Table 4.1). To determine whether there were differences in teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change between PLC and non-PLC schools, a *t* test was utilized (Table 4.2). The findings indicated no significant differences existed confirming the comparative similarities of teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change in both high-performing PLC and non-PLC schools. Correlation analyses were performed to determine relationships among the variables of

trust and change and professionalism and change. These analyses found a moderately significant positive relationship between trust and change in the All Participants group ($r=.383$, $p<.01$; Table 4.3) and the PLC School group ($r=.420$, $p<.01$; Table 4.4). However, no correlations were found between the teachers' perceptions of trust and change ($r= -.046$, $p<.01$) or professionalism and change ($r= -.124$, $p<.01$) in the Non-PLC group (Table 4.5). ANOVA findings were used to determine the differences in teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change among the respondents by years of experience in teaching. Significant differences [$F(4, 146) = 2.985$, $p= .021$] were found at the $p< .05$ level in trust between groups (0-5 years & 6-10 years; Table 4.6). Finally, regression analyses were performed. Table 4.7 showed the components of trust having the greatest impact on change. Table 4.8 showed the components of professionalism having the greatest impact on change. Table 4.9 showed the components of trust and professionalism having the greatest impact on change. The regression findings are discussed further below.

Trust

Regression findings showed that teacher-to-teacher trust ($R^2= .05$, $p<.05$) was a statistically significant predictor relative to change (Table 4.7). The findings suggested that teachers are suspicious of one another. Suspicion is a component of trust that has negative implications on the environment for the staff, students, and parents. Bryk and Schneider (2003) argued that teachers are continually analyzing the intentions and efforts of other teachers and how those intentions and efforts may reflect upon their personal practice as a measure of self-esteem. Negatively perceived behaviors by other staff members cause suspicions of others' integrity, competence, respect, and regard for others to develop, which may deteriorate trust.

Conversely, positively perceived intentions and efforts break down barriers and inhibitions to take risks, share, and collaborate in teaching practices. Research has shown that teachers who work in an environment of collaboration and sharing are more likely to build trusting relationships (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (1998) believed that trust serves as both an organizational binding agent and lubricant. As a binding agent, trust brings people of the organization together. As a lubricant, trust allows for essential functions such as collaboration and developing a shared understanding. Coinciding with these findings, Bryk and Schneider (2003) believed that when teachers trust one another, teachers are more likely to feel safe to take risks in their practice. The authors further argued that school environments with strong trust between teachers are more likely to have success implementing initiatives of reform because trust helps to reduce negative feelings of risk associated with change. Additionally, trusting teachers are more likely to problem-solve openly and have higher levels of commitment to the school mission. Further, teacher-to-teacher trust showed increased willingness to confront conflict within the organization, attempt new instructional pedagogy, assume additional responsibilities, and academic improve productivity. Conversely, Bryk and Schneider did caution that trust alone does not guarantee success but that schools with no trust have no chance to improve. Additional research published by Mitchell, Forsyth, and Robinson (2008) asserted that trust is crucial to establishing healthy school climates during the daily operation of schools and at times of reform initiatives. Looking at the impact of trust as a predictor of student achievement, Goddard and Goddard (2001) studied the impact of teacher trust in students and parents in elementary schools in urban settings. The results showed trust to be a significant and

positive predictor of student achievement differences while accounting for prior achievement, socioeconomic status, and student demographic characteristics.

Teacher-to-teacher trust is critical to change (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Bryk and Schneider suggested many implications for school leaders as they work to build a trusting school environment. They believed leaders should work to build meaningful trust among staff as a foundation for school improvement. During times of change, leaders should build trust through collective decision making, which can increase teacher buy-in during times of reform. Building a shared understanding of the visions and beliefs of the school is important when building trust. Leaders who demonstrate open and honest communication with and among staff can build a trusting culture. And therefore, leaders should design thoughtful staff development activities that may involve action research to develop a deeper shared understanding of current and desired contexts (Bryk & Schneider, 2003). Also leaders can help facilitate visits to model schools and learning opportunities, allowing staff to share with one another and relating what is being learned to the current context of their school. Bryk and Schneider (2003) suggested that leaders should work to follow through on commitments, especially in support of school improvement efforts. Finally, leaders should work to stabilize the school environment, including staffing (attempting to limit staff turnover), leadership (continuity and consistency in leadership), and funding (stabilizing expenditures and working to minimize financial impacts on staff and resources). Stability in the school environment is likely to increase trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2003).

Regression findings identified trust in parents and students as predictors of change. Trust in parental support (R^2= .05, p<.05), belief in parental reports, (R^2= .03, p< .05), and student secrecy (R^2= .05, p< .05) had a significant impact on change (Table 4.7). Additionally, teachers'

trust in parents (R^2= .05, p< .05) and teachers counting on parental support (R^2= .01, p< .05) showed an impact on change and professionalism (Table 4.9). Similar findings are reported in research. For example, research on teacher-to-parent trust has demonstrated that a trusting relationship between teachers and parents is important to school functioning and to the environment (Mitchell, Forsyth, & Robinson, 2008). They also argued that trusting relationships between parents and teachers can be built on effective communication, shared decision making, and helping parents and families overcome obstacles and negotiate boundaries. Further support can be found in the work of Bryk and Schneider (1996), who asserted that trust between parents and teachers is based on perceptions that each party is using sound reasoning when making decisions and will act according to expectations. Researching trust and parent involvement, Rowan (1990) argued that a lack of parental involvement and resources could explain lower levels of teacher-to-parent trust, especially in schools with low socioeconomic status. Rowan believed that parents with a lack of resources or low levels of school involvement were not meeting the normative expectations of teachers, which can deteriorate trust.

Regression findings for trust in this study showed that student secrecy (R^2= .05, p< .05) has an impact relative to change. In this study, the Likert-type survey instrument broke trust into components that can impact the building of trusting relationships between teachers and students. Bryk and Schneider (2003) asserted that trusting relationships between teachers and students are less likely when factors of time are short and family stability in the residence is not present. For example, teachers may trust students less if they move frequently or have frequent family changes that do not allow teachers to develop longer, caring relationships with students. Further, students with family instability and transience may be perceived as secretive. In addition,

research by Tschannen-Moran (2004) and Bryk and Schneider (2002) found that the higher the number of students receiving free and reduced lunch, the lower the trust levels between teachers and students. Additionally, teachers were less likely to trust students in schools with large numbers of low socioeconomic status. Further, teachers were more likely to demand less of students academically because low socioeconomic status is associated with low student achievement. In 2001, Tschannen-Moran analyzed trust relationships while studying an urban district and showed that poverty, even more than ethnicity or race, was the primary hindrance to trust that would lead to improved student achievement. This study suggested that when teachers draw conclusions about students, poverty is a stronger dividing line than race. As a result of the conclusions drawn by teachers about students from poverty, academic expectations of students are diminished. From this, Tschannen-Moran (2001) concluded that schools with a high population of poor students would benefit from a focus on the development of trust. Coinciding with the importance of trust and student achievement, Tschannen-Moran (2004) concurred, concluding that faculty trust of students and parents is strongly related to achievement in both math and English. In this study, Tschannen-Moran (2004) found the strongest association between faculty trust in students and parents and student achievement in English ($r = .78$) and math ($r = .74$). The study also showed that faculty trust in colleagues was somewhat related to raising student achievement in English ($r = .61$) and math ($r = .57$) and that no relationship existed between faculty trust in the principal and student achievement in English. The author asserted that faculty trust is a factor in raising student achievement because when faculty members believe they can rely upon their students, the learning environment is designed to create student success (Tschannen-Moran, 2004). Additionally, Tschannen-Moran (2004)

asserted that trust helps to create better learning environments for students by building connections that are meaningful between teachers, students, and parents.

Teacher trust in parents and students is critical to the climate of the school (Mitchell et al., 2008). Mitchell et al. suggested that leaders should work to establish strong and caring relationships between staff and families in order to build trust. Mitchell et al. suggested further leadership implications, including schools should work to enhance communication with parents and students to share what is being learned and how schools and families can work together in the best interest of children. Schools and leaders should work to involve parents in decision making. Schools should work to follow through on promises made, answer questions from parents in a timely manner, and provide information and resources that parents and families can use to overcome obstacles. Teachers and schools should work to establish caring, open, and honest relationships with students that focus on academics as well as student interests in order to build trust. Providing honest and frequent feedback can increase communication and establish a trusting relationship between teachers and students.

Professionalism

In this study, the Likert-type survey instrument broke professionalism into components that can both contribute to and detract from professionalism. Regression findings for this study showed teachers' summer reading (R^2= .02, p< .05) had a statistically significant impact on change (Table 4.8). Additional professionalism findings having an impact on change included teacher withdrawal from departmental discussion of curriculum and/or assessment (R^2= .05, p< .05) and welcoming feedback on teaching (R^2= .05, p< .05; Table 4.9). Research published by

Tschannen-Moran (2009) has shown that the level of teacher professionalism is related to faculty trust. Tschannen-Moran continued asserting that trust among faculty members fosters open communication, collegiality, and collaboration, which will help build levels of teacher professionalism. Tschannen-Moran offered additional factors that can assist in building levels of teacher professionalism: honest and open communication helping to reduce feelings of anxiety during change efforts. Additionally, true collaboration helps to eliminate teacher isolation and engages faculty in discussions focused on assessment, data, curriculum, and instruction.

Another component of professionalism having a statistically significant impact on change was teachers' reading during the summer months. Teachers who read professional texts in the summer focusing on instructional strategies, change models, and other aspects of education are more likely to view change positively, as they have time to think about, digest, and consider what they are reading in the context of the school environment in which they work (Danielson, 2007).

A critical component to effective teaching is providing feedback (City, Elmore, Fiarman, & Teitel, 2009). City et al. believed that good practices cannot be reinforced and poor practice cannot be corrected without feedback. Feedback provides a path to improvement. Leaders who provide frequent and formative feedback are working to normalize the honest and trusting relationship with teachers. Additionally, establishing a trusting relationship through and developing an expectation of feedback can help to develop a professional and comfortable working relationship to eliminate defensive reactions when negative feedback is shared because the teacher and leader both have a shared understanding that the focus is on instructional

improvement. Feedback is also more likely to be welcomed by teachers if the leader is also open to receiving feedback, making the relationship reciprocal.

Tschannen-Moran (2004) offered implications for building work environments with high levels of professionalism. Tschannen-Moran argued that school leaders should work to enhance the professional environment of a school through trust building, communication, and establishing truly collaborative relationships between and among staff. Tschannen-Moran asserted that modeling and coaching can assist in building trusting and professional relationships. Further, leaders should work to establish a shared vision with staff. Leaders should model professionalism through daily interactions by showing care and respect for the staff. Leaders should extend discretion to teachers with regard to their instructional practice, demonstrating trust in their judgment. Finally, leaders can enhance the levels of professionalism in the school environment through clear and collaboratively developed sets of norms and expectations (Tschannen-Moran, 2004).

This study has shown findings that demonstrate high-achieving non-PLC schools and PLC schools have many similarities in teacher perceptions of trust, professionalism, and change. Coinciding with research on trust and professionalism, this study adds to the body of knowledge of the similarities and differences in trust and building trust within schools between staff, parents, and students as a lever for change and reform in PLC and non-PLC schools. In PLC schools, there is a significant relationship between teacher perceptions of trust and change. However, in non-PLC schools, where the relationship between teacher perceptions of trust and change exists, it is not significant. These findings suggest that there is a value-added focus on change in PLC schools.

Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to a total of ten Illinois elementary schools using a stratified sampling method. Sampling was stratified to limit the population based on specific sets of characteristics (Trochim & Donnelly, 2008). The Illinois Interactive Report Card (n.d.) data set was also used as a stratification tool.

Methodological Limitations

The comparative analysis study provided a limited scope and focus, allowing for a small sampling from to collect quantitative data. Extending the scope to high-achieving schools at the middle and high school levels in Illinois and beyond would have provided additional insight into possible differences in teachers' perceptions of trust, professionalism and change.

Another limitation of this study was the PLC school identification process. Solution Tree is an organization that provides professional learning, resources, and tools to schools and school districts for a fee while encouraging the implementation of PLCs. Solution Tree does charge school districts fees for the professional development geared toward PLCs. Because Solution Tree has a vested interest in the PLC process and implementation in schools, the private entity selecting the schools for PLC school identification may have additional interests beyond simply reporting information or developing professional learning for schools. These additional interests may include profitability of the organization as well as public perception. These additional interests may serve as both a barrier and a bias. As a barrier, a private entity with additional interests may only share information that will enhance public perception and income. As a bias,

a private entity with additional interests may only share information that provides partial context of both the positives and negatives of PLC implementation.

Recommendations for Future Practice

The findings from is study suggest four recommendations for future practice. First, when selecting a school reform model, the evidence from this study shows and supports that schools that have high levels of trust and professionalism are also likely to be adaptable and high-achieving schools. Further, schools that already have high levels of faculty trust and professionalism may not be in need of a reform model like PLC to achieve change. In other words, a high-achieving school with high levels of trust and professionalism may not need to implement the PLC model. Instead the school should continue to develop trust and professionalism. Hoy and Tschannen-Moran (2003) defined trust as "a person's ability to make him/herself vulnerable to others based on perceptions of honesty, competency, and openness of the other party" (p. 183). Using this definition, it is clear that buildings should continue to build trust within the organization as a means to remain a nimble organization capable of change.

A second recommendation involves professionalism. All environments seek to have high levels of professionalism from the faculty and staff working in the school. Each environment is unique. Knowing that each environment has its individual strengths and challenges, it is important for schools to continue to define what professionalism should look like and sound like and to clarify those expectations on a regular basis with the faculty and staff. DuFour and Eaker (1998) argued that teachers have a professional responsibility to participate in a learning community and, in so doing, will be empowered through collective sharing and action once releasing individual autonomy. In high-achieving environments, such as the ones utilized for

this study, contributing to the collective pool of intelligence as well as a willingness to consume information from colleagues to impact practice is a critical component of professionalism. Schools should continue to develop pathways for teachers to share and learn from one another as part of their expected professional practices.

A third recommendation focuses on trust. This study showed that trust and change are linked and had a significant relationship (see Table 4.3). Regardless of the reform model a school may be undertaking, trust between and among staff members is essential. The environment must set up circumstances that allow for open and honest communication, sharing of knowledge and resources, and a safe place for staff to try new instructional approaches and fail knowing that the learning can be embedded in their future practice. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000) stated that trust is crucial to improvement efforts in schools and to organizational functioning. Further, the authors indicated high levels of organizational trust create better communication, identification of problems and development and implementation of solutions.

The final recommendation focuses on building the capacity of the school/organization to change. Leaders must work to develop trust between and among faculty and staff, to establish expectations of professionalism within the environment, and to create an environment that allows risk taking to be the norm without fear of repercussion. Teachers must be able to try new instructional strategies they believe are in the best interest of student learning. In so doing, teachers will undoubtedly learn a great deal about what worked as a result of the new attempts as well as what did not. If curricula need to be adaptable to meet the students where they are and move forward, then instructional practices must be nimble as well. Building an environment that accepts failure as an opportunity to learn is essential to the change process. Additionally,

building a model of embedded professional learning that consumes best practices from within and outside of the organization will generate a constantly evolving organization that understands change is an expected and normal part of the educational process.

Recommendations for Future Research

One recommendation for future research would be to consider a larger sample of elementary schools. Future researchers could survey a larger population from both PLC and non-PLC schools.

A second recommendation would be extending the survey sampling outside of the state of Illinois. Looking at PLC and high-achieving non-PLC schools on a national scale would allow for a larger population as well as a larger perspective.

A third recommendation for future research would be to study the variable of trust in PLC schools and non-PLC schools. Perhaps looking at a mixed methodology of collecting quantitative data focusing on trust from a larger population coupled with a qualitative study on how some of the schools developed and nurtured the trusting environment could offer new insights into the similarities and differences of the PLC and non-PLC paths.

Future researchers should consider expanding the study to middle and high school levels. Studies at varying levels may offer environmental dynamics not revealed at the elementary level.

Future researchers should consider studying the characteristics of teachers in PLC schools in order to understand the context of schools and the influence those characteristics may have upon the reform implementation process.

Future researchers should consider studying the context of change in traditional top-down schools versus the systematic change process purported by PLCs.

Finally, researchers should consider studying the time in which trust and professionalism are developed when the PLC model is implemented versus schools focusing on these variables as foundations for a collaborative environment working toward change and school improvement. The PLC model may have some value added in relation to time and the establishment of trust and professionalism in schools that need to develop these variables.

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APPENDIX A

SURVEY INSTRUMENT

		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	In this school, faculty welcomes change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2	Faculty in this school embraces new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3	In this school, the principal balks at new suggestions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4	This community pushes for innovation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5	In this school, teachers are receptive to substantial changes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6	In this school, major change is resisted.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	In this school, the principal is slow to change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8	Teachers in this school readily accept changes to new rules and procedures.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9	In this school, the princopal is committed to major change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10	Faculty in this school rejects all but minimal changes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11	In this school, the principal often resists changes suggested by parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12	The principal in this school embraces change initiatives.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13	The rhetoric of change in this school is strong, but actual change is negligible.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14	Faculty in this school would rather fight than switch.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15	In this school, the faculty relishes innovation.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16	In this school, suggestions by the PTA often produce change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17	Faculty in this school is open to ideas of the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18	Most community members are happy with their schools.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19	In this school, the principal is committed to no change.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20	Teachers in this school trust the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21	Teachers in this school trust each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22	Teachers in this school trust their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23	The teachers in this school are suspicious of most of the principal's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24	Teachers in this school typically look out for each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25	Teachers in this school trust the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26	The teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
27	Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
28	The principal in this school typically acts in the best interests of the teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
29	Students in ths school care about each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
30	The principal of this school does not show concern for the teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
31	Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
32	Teachers in this school do their jobs well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
33	Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
34	Teachers in this school can rely on the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
35	Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
36	Students in this school can be counted on to do their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
37	The principal in this school in competent in doing his or her job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
38	The teachers in this school are open with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
39	Teachers can count on parental support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
40	When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
41	Teachers here believe students are competent learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
42	The principal doesn't tell teachers what is really going on.	1	2	3	4	5	6
43	Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
44	Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
45	Students here are secretive.	1	2	3	4	5	6
46	I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don't get extra compensation for it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
47	My colleagues do not give me a lot of credit for being an effective teacher.	1	2	3	4	5	6
48	I welcome feedback on my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
49	I don't read for my courses over the summer. That's MY time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
50	Professional development is usually a waste of time.	1	2	3	4	5	6
51	I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don't pertain to my classes.	1	2	3	4	5	6
52	I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
53	Teachers have a responsibility to participate in curriculum decisions in the district.	1	2	3	4	5	6

54	My age is (please check)	1) 20-25	2) 26-35	3) 36-45	4) 46-55	5) 56-65+
55	My gender is (please check)	1) Female	2) Male			
56	I have been teaching for (please check)	1) 0-5 years	2) 6-10 years	3) 11-15 years	4) 16-20 years	5) 20+ years
57	My teaching/educational assignment is (please check)	1) Primary (K-2)				
		2) Intermediate (3-6)				
		3) Special Education				
		4) Reading Specialist				
		5) Art/Music/PE				
		6) Library/LRC				
		7) Band/Orchestra				
		8) Other				
		9) Principal/Administrator				

APPENDIX B

SURVEY KEY

Survey Instrument	Question Numbers
Faculty Trust Omnibus T-Scale Survey	20, 21, 22, 23, 2, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45
Professionalism Index (P-Index)	46, 47, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53
Faculty Change Orientation Scale (FCOS)	1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19

APPENDIX C

FACULTY CHANGE ORIENTATION SCALE (FCOS)

FCOS

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. In this school, faculty welcomes change.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
2. Faculty in this school embraces new ideas.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
3. In this school, the principal balks at new suggestions.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
4. This community pushes for innovation.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
5. In this school, teachers are receptive to substantial changes.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
6. In this school major change is resisted.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
7. In this school, the principal is slow to change.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
8. Teachers in this school readily accept changes to new rules and procedures.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
9. In this school, the principal is committed to major change.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
10. Faculty in this school rejects all but minimal changes.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
11. In this school, the principal often resists changes suggested by parents.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
12. The principal in this school embraces change initiatives.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
13. The rhetoric of change in this school is strong, but actual change is negligible.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
14. Faculty in this school would rather fight than switch.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
15. In this school, the faculty relishes innovation.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
16. In this school, suggestions by the PTA often produce change.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
17. Faculty in this school is open to ideas of the parents.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
18. Most community members are happy with their schools.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
19. In this school, the principal is committed to no change.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

APPENDIX D

PROFESSIONALISM INDEX (P-INDEX)

P-Index

Directions: The following are statements about your school. Please indicate the extent to which you agree with each of the following statements along a scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Your answers are confidential so give your candid responses.	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I spend time reading and developing curriculum during vacations, even if I don't get extra compensation for it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
2. My colleagues do not give me a lot of credit for being an effective teacher.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
3. I welcome feedback on my teaching.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
4. I don't read for my courses over the summer. That's MY time.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
5. Professional development is usually a waste of time.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
6. I withdraw from departmental discussions of curriculum and/or assessment because they don't pertain to my classes.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
7. I would continue my professional development through coursework, even if my district did not require it or reward me for it.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥
8. Teachers have a responsibility to participate in curriculum decisions in the district.	①	②	③	④	⑤	⑥

APPENDIX E

OMNIBUS T-SCALE

Omnibus T-Scale

Directions: Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements about your school from **strongly disagree** to **strongly agree**. Your answers are confidential.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Teachers in this school trust the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Teachers in this school trust each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Teachers in this school trust their students.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. The teachers in this school are suspicious of most of the principal's actions.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Teachers in this school typically look out for each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Teachers in this school trust the parents.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. The teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. Teachers in this school are suspicious of each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. The principal in this school typically acts in the best interests of teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Students in this school care about each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. The principal of this school does not show concern for the teachers.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Teachers in this school do their jobs well.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. Parents in this school are reliable in their commitments.	1	2	3	4	5	6
15. Teachers in this school can rely on the principal.	1	2	3	4	5	6
16. Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.	1	2	3	4	5	6
17. Students in this school can be counted on to do their work.	1	2	3	4	5	6
18. The principal in this school is competent in doing his or her job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
19. The teachers in this school are open with each other.	1	2	3	4	5	6
20. Teachers can count on parental support.	1	2	3	4	5	6
21. When teachers in this school tell you something, you can believe it.	1	2	3	4	5	6
22. Teachers here believe students are competent learners.	1	2	3	4	5	6
23. The principal doesn't tell teachers what is really going on.	1	2	3	4	5	6
24. Teachers think that most of the parents do a good job.	1	2	3	4	5	6
25. Teachers can believe what parents tell them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
26. Students here are secretive.	1	2	3	4	5	6