BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY: CHALLENGES OF CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND VETERAN TEACHERS IN A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

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Digital Object Identifier: https://doi.org/10.13023/etd.2018.229

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BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY: CHALLENGES OF CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND VETERAN TEACHERS IN A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

Dissertation

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in the College of Education at the University of Kentucky

By

J Lail

Director: Dr. Lars Bjork, Professor, Department of Educational Leadership Studies

Lexington, Kentucky

2018

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ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION

BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY: CHALLENGES OF CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND VETERAN TEACHERS IN A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

Recently, changes in graduation requirements in some states have made it more important than ever for students to be literate in all content areas. State assessments not only measure student academic ability, but they are a necessary component of graduation from high school. After completing required courses, students are expected to take assessments covering the content of those courses. In order to safely meet the graduation requirement, students must score at least 3 points per assessment on a 5-point scale. This has proven difficult for over 50% of students expecting to graduate.

Students at Midwestern-American High School (MAHS) have been struggling to achieve the required minimum scores on the state achievement assessments, as have many others in the region. A review of the report card data for MAHS reveals the area of greatest need (i.e. category of lowest performance) is in science. Research suggests a leading cause for these struggles is waning teacher efficacy and lack of ability to build capacity in staff members due to high mobility in teacher populations, especially in urban communities serving high-poverty and minority populations. For these reasons, it is necessary for leaders to have the skill to quickly build effective instructional teams.

During the 2017-2018 schools year, I utilized the Community of Practice (CoP) framework to establish entities that align closely with the criteria of CoPs. I used mixed methods research throughout the bounded period (August 2017 – May 2018) to conduct the proposed study. Data sources included: meeting agendas and minutes, participant interviews, survey results and reflections on the action by researcher and participants. I used the information gathered from this study to continue or modify the action and/or propose new strategies for the capacity building of staff.
Keywords:
Communities of Practice, Collective Efficacy, Teacher Self-Efficacy, Focus Groups, Maturing, Coalescing
BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY: CHALLENGES OF CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND VETERAN TEACHERS IN A TOXIC WORK ENVIRONMENT

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DEDICATION

As with all things in my life, I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my wife, Mindy. She has been supportive, caring and understanding throughout the process of researching, writing and defending this dissertation. Much of this was written on camping trips, at band competitions and over long weekends. She has listened to me complain, seen me struggle and let me vent. Mindy has not become frustrated with my preoccupation and has not fallen victim to the rancor such distraction can often cause. She has instead been my champion, my rock, my cheerleader, my unicorn. Without her, this is all a meaningless pursuit; I dedicate all I am and all I earn to her. Everything else is just noise.

I also share my success with my children; every single one of the thousands I have had the honor to educate and those I have yet to meet, but especially my own: Alexandra, Casey, Zach and Mason. As I write these words, my life is undergoing a considerable change. I have had my first chapter accepted for publication in an international book, I have reached the end of a magnificent journey in higher education (culminating in my doctoral studies) and I have signed a contract to become the new superintendent of Medicine Lake School District #7 in Montana. So many wonderful things I have dreamed of and have toiled long and hard to achieve are all becoming a reality. I was told when I was younger that I “can’t do things like other people can” and that I will likely “go to hell in a hand basket.” My mother and my grandmother said these hateful and hurtful comments to my face - not very maternal. Those opinions helped drive me; gave me focus. I had to let anger and spite propel me through life and I do not want that to be the case for any of my children. So I say this to you, my children:
Work hard and write your story; do not let anyone dictate your tale to you. Never fear the blank page – it’s an endless world of possibilities.

Be careful, but take risks. There are magnificent rewards that can only come with taking a gamble and a satisfaction that can only be found on the other side of chance.

Most importantly, never forget this... you cannot do things like other people can. You can do them much, much better!
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This work is, indeed, the work of many. First, I would like to thank Dr. Lars Bjork for agreeing to chair my committee. My first experiences in this doctoral program were all with Lars. He taught six of my first seven classes in graduate school and it quickly became apparent that he would be the one I would need to help me navigate the program. It is with his guidance, support and assistance I was able to persevere in this endeavor.

I have had the pleasure of working with Dr. John Nash in his Design Thinking class. The class was certainly engaging; partnering with other class, hands-on work, collaboration, lots of “movement” in class. While planning my dissertation, he used his insight into innovation to help drive me. My ideas were trite and unfocussed. John forced me to consider my ideas, reconsider my ideas, trash them, crush them, fold them and mold them. He forced me to see beyond what I wanted to say so I could push through to what I had to do. He helped me couple my ideas with action to create positive change.

Dr. Tricia Browne-Ferrigno was not only a professor who led me through creative processes and building communities of practice, but she was also a caring ear for my woes when I hit a rough period in my life while trying to complete this leg of my educational journey. Tricia’s organizational abilities and attention to detail have helped me regain and maintain focus on this project. For these reasons, she was an obvious choice to help guide me through this process. Her support of me personally and professionally has meant the world.
Dr. Rosetta Sandidge came very highly recommended as a team member, rightfully so. He professionalism and support during this study has been crucial. She helped me focus on the field of education as a whole and identify an area of tremendous need for study.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgments ........................................................................................................ iii

List of Tables ............................................................................................................... vii

List of Figures ............................................................................................................. viii

Chapter One: Leadership Context, Supporting Literature, and Challenge of Leadership Practice
   Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
   Context of Study ....................................................................................................... 2
   Purpose of Action Research Project ......................................................................... 3
   Review of Supporting Literature .............................................................................. 4
       Shift from Professional Learning Communities to Communities of Practice…. 11
   Summary ................................................................................................................. 14

Chapter Two: Study Context and Research Design
   Context of Research Study ...................................................................................... 15
       Graduation Requirements .................................................................................. 17
       Revised and Altered Assessments .................................................................. 19
       Challenge of Leadership Practice ..................................................................... 22
   Leadership Roles and Responsibilities ................................................................ 25
       Role of Researcher as Participant ...................................................................... 25
       Role of Teacher Leaders as Participants .......................................................... 29
       Role of New Teachers as Participants ............................................................... 29
   Action Research Plan .............................................................................................. 30
       Research Action .................................................................................................. 30
       Early Planning ..................................................................................................... 31
       Phase I: Coalescing ............................................................................................. 37
       Phase II: Coalescing ............................................................................................ 39
       Phase III: Maturing ............................................................................................. 40
   Participants .............................................................................................................. 41
       MHS Leadership ................................................................................................. 42
       Teachers ............................................................................................................... 42
       Teacher Leaders ................................................................................................. 42
       CoP External Membership ................................................................................ 43
       Role of Researcher as Coordinator .................................................................... 44
   Research Plan .......................................................................................................... 45
       Research Questions ............................................................................................. 47
       Definitions of Key Terms .................................................................................. 50
Chapter Three: Results, Recommendations and Reflections

Introduction .............................................................................................................64
Results .....................................................................................................................67
Collective Efficacy .............................................................................................69
Self Efficacy .......................................................................................................70
Review of Results ...................................................................................................90
Barriers to Success .............................................................................................93
Declining Sense of Efficacy .............................................................................100
Implementation and Recommendations .............................................................101
Protected Time ..................................................................................................101
The Gathering Storm .........................................................................................102
Teacher Anxiety ...............................................................................................103
Lessons Learned ...............................................................................................104
Reflection ..............................................................................................................105
Contrasting Communities of Practice ..............................................................106

Appendices

Appendix A: IRB Approval Letter .................................................................110
Appendix B: Lit Survey .................................................................................111
Appendix C: Collective Efficacy Survey .....................................................112
Appendix D: Self-Efficacy Survey ...............................................................113
Appendix E: TES Scoring Guide .................................................................114
Appendix F: Meeting Reflection Sheet .....................................................115

References ............................................................................................................116
Vita .......................................................................................................................122
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1.1 – Stages of Group Formation ................................................................. 6
Table 1.2 – Comparison - PLC/CoP ................................................................. 13
Table 2.1 – ACT/SAT Remediation-Free Scores .............................................. 20
Table 2.2 – State Assessment Pathways ............................................................ 22
Table 2.3 – Student Literacy Data ................................................................. 23
Table 2.4 – 5 Stages of Creating CoP ............................................................... 33
Table 2.5 – Long Form Questions ................................................................. 51
Table 2.6 - Quantitative Measures ................................................................. 52
Table 2.7 – Qualitative Measures ................................................................. 54
Table 2.8– Data Collection – Phase I ................................................................. 56
Table 2.9 – Data Collection – Phase II .............................................................. 56
Table 2.10 – Data Collection – Phase III .......................................................... 56
Table 2.11 – Teacher Status Codes ................................................................. 57
Table 2.12 – Categories for Qualitative Data ............................................... 61
Table 3.1 – Subcategories for Teacher Efficacy Survey .................................. 66
Table 3.2 – Participants ............................................................... 69
Table 3.3 – Collective Efficacy Rating – Overall .......................................... 70
Table 3.4 – Discipline Data, School Year 2017-2018 ...................................... 100
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 – Reeves’s Leadership for Learning ................................................................. 8
Figure 2.1 – Curriculum Requirements ........................................................................ 18
Figure 2.2 – Theory of Action .................................................................................... 46
Figure 3.1 – Collective Efficacy Rating, Fall to Spring .............................................. 69
Figure 3.2 – Adaptability, Fall to Spring ..................................................................... 71
Figure 3.3 – Effort, Fall to Spring .............................................................................. 73
Figure 3.4 – Management, Fall to Spring .................................................................. 75
Figure 3.5 – Preparation, Fall to Spring ..................................................................... 77
Figure 3.6 – Home Influence, Fall to Spring ............................................................. 82
Figure 3.7 – Classroom Influence, Fall to Spring ..................................................... 86
CHAPTER 1
LEADERSHIP CONTEXT, SUPPORTING LITERATURE AND CHALLENGE
OF LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

Introduction

Fullan (2014) asserts that leadership in a traditional, hierarchal organization may be ineffective in influencing the behavior of individuals and he points out that principals may enhance their effectiveness by leading “the school’s teachers in a process of learning to improve their teaching, while learning alongside them about what works and what doesn’t” (p. 55). This action research project is unique in time and place. Results of the latest report cards for Midwestern American High School (MAHS) shows a school in transition and academic crisis, and I, the researcher, am new to the role of assistant principal in the school and in the state. Fullan’s words could not be more fitting in this situation. I needed to work alongside teachers to find what works with regard to instruction, but I also needed to be an agent of positive change in a culture that is in transition. The main focus of the research action will be creating a community of practice to increase teachers’ senses of self and collective efficacy. Preliminary academic and evaluation data collected by MAHS administration indicate the need for improvement in these specific areas.

In Chapter 1, I provide a detailed description of MAHS; state, district and building initiatives on literacy; and the current practices with regard to instructional practices and participation in the current model of professional learning communities (PLCs). Then, I describe the function of the current PLCs within the bounds of
professionalism and professional learning expectations. Finally, I identify the challenge of research in practice, define my role as school administrator and participant in the action research context and describe my expectations for research participants.

In Chapter 2, I detail the plan for implementing a community of practice (CoP) to increase teacher efficacy, in particular, building capacity staff members regardless of content area. I describe the changing face of the state assessments and the need for research in this area subsequent to implementation of the new requirements. I outline the research plan, the roles of those involved in the research during the “bounded period” (August 2017 through May 2018) and pose the guiding questions for the study. Additionally, I discuss methods for implementing the CoP, the monitoring process and the process for collecting and analyzing data through the research process.

In Chapter 3, I analyze the data collected from survey instruments, reflective tools, meeting notes and my journal. This analysis allowed me to not only ascertain the successfulness of the intervention, but also allowed me to identify specific personnel and institutional issues that contributed to the outcomes.

**Context of the Study**

Midwestern American High School (MAHS) is located in a high-poverty area of the Midwestern region of the United States of America. The latest school report card shows that MAHS is characterized as a persistently low-achieving school. MAHS was recently given scores of F in achievement and progress, a grade of D in students preparedness for success and a grade of C in number of students graduating based size of the student body. The lowest overall student academic achievement scores are in state assessments in Biology and Physical Science. Data from these assessments and ACT
assessments show students struggle with basic literacy concepts, such as inferences. The absence of these skills is duplicated in science content and is further complicated when students are asked to make basic inferences about scientific outcomes and concepts when faced with the task of doing so by examining one or more data tables. These data suggest there is a need for cross-curricular application of literacy skills, but perhaps more importantly, speaks to the need for building teacher efficacy.

**Purpose of Action Research Project**

Students at MAHS will need to accumulate a minimum number of points on the state assessments to fulfill the assessment requirement for graduation. The performance scale on these tests range from 0 to 5, with 5 being the highest possible score. A score of 3 is considered proficient. Students will need to score proficient on at least four of the seven sections of the assessment and no lower than basic (2) on the other three sections to meet the minimum score required for graduation. The greatest barrier to student success has been their inability to decode the questions on these assessments and formulate answers appropriate to the task. This is attributed to diminished literacy skills across all content areas. Furthermore, one third of the one hundred six staff members at MAHS are new to the building for the 2016 school year. Additionally, 25% of the teachers at MAHS are new to the profession of teaching (i.e. they are in their first year of teaching). These staff members have no experience with the current demographic of the high school and are not yet familiar with the district initiative, expectations for success, or the various requirements for graduation from MAHS. In order to give students the greatest possible chance at successfully navigating the curriculum, teachers must be acclimated quickly to
the environment and become an effective part of a community of practice to increase instructional efficacy.

**Review of Supporting Literature on Communities of Practice**

Since the early 1980’s the rise of a global economy fueled a national debate about the nation’s ability to compete internationally and launched an examination of the condition of public schooling that was unprecedented in scope, intensity and duration. For more than three decades (1983-2015) heightened concern for improving student academic achievement was not only the catalyst for the creation of a wide array of public education policy initiatives at the national, state and local levels, but also launched research initiatives focused on understanding how to improve student academic achievement (Björk, Kowalski & Young, 2005). According to Björk and colleagues (2005), scholars not only affirmed the scope and magnitude of issues facing the nation, educators and students but also identified a wide array of elements that may contribute to student success in high schools. The work of Hallinger and Heck (1996), Leithwood and Mascall (2008) and Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Mascall and Gordon (2010) examined the relationship between principals’ leadership behavior and student learning. The principal’s leadership behavior in this case is his ability to create a climate of relational trust that fosters a sense of collegiality and professionalism that will allow for the free exchange of ideas and professional practices, resulting in professional learning and growth.

A review of the literature suggests teacher efficacy is key in contributing to the success of a school. For example, Bridgeland, Dilulio, Streeter, and Mason (2008) note that 85% of parents of students in low-performing schools think the school (i.e. the
teaching staff) is doing a poor job of educating their students. They also note that 43% of parents with struggling students say they are satisfied with the school as a whole. These percentages suggest that perceptions of the community are based on the success of the school, (i.e. the success of the students), which is influenced by the efficacy of teachers. Scholars such as Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007), Marzano (2003), Sanders and Horn (1998) and Wong (2001) have noted that teacher efficacy is the driving force behind student achievement. Tchannen-Moran, Woolfolk and Hoy (1998) advanced the notion of teacher efficacy by reviewing and building upon the work started by the 1976 RAND studies on teacher efficacy as well as the early work of Guskey (1981). These scholars studied teachers’ perceptions on their control of student achievement as well as their responsibility for student achievement. Importantly, they note the distinct different between self-efficacy and self-worth. Self-efficacy is concerned with the performance of a particular task and the individual; the ability to perform that task effectively. It is for this reason support for teachers in performance of academic duties becomes critical. Although they advance the notion that the influence of teachers is directly related to student achievement, scholars posit that school principals play an important role in creating and sustaining the circumstances in which learning and teaching may thrive (Leithwood et al., 2010). They and other scholars affirmed the importance of teacher efficacy and support of leadership in improving student achievement in reading; particularly those schools characterized as persistently low achieving. A study conducted in 2008 by The Institute of Educational Science (Herman, Dawson, Green, Maynard, Redding & Darwin, 2008) suggests that changes in leadership behavior including building a committed staff by focusing on instruction may contribute to turning these
schools around. The department of education for MAHS notes the new report card system coupled with changing requirements for high school graduation with result in data that shows a “system in transition.” For some schools, that transition will be managed seamlessly. In schools classified as inner-city, with higher poverty rates, waning graduation rates and high teacher turnover, the transition will need to be lead expertly with teacher needs in mind. The first step in easing the transition is understanding the stages of group formation (Table 1.1) to create a cohesive team.

Table 1.1 – Stages of Group Formation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stages</th>
<th>Group Structure</th>
<th>Task Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The pattern of interpersonal relationships; the way members act and relate to one another.</td>
<td>The content of interaction as related to the task at hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forming:</td>
<td>Testing and dependence</td>
<td>Orientation to the task</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>orientation,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>testing,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>dependence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Storming:</td>
<td>Intragroup conflict</td>
<td>Emotional response to task demands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>resistance to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>group influence</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and task</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>requirements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norming:</td>
<td>In-group feeling and cohesiveness develop; new standards evolve and new roles are adopted</td>
<td>Open exchange of relevant interpretations; intimate, personal opinions are expressed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>openness to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>other group</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>members</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performing:</td>
<td>Roles become flexible and functional; structural issues have been resolved; structure can support task performance</td>
<td>Interpersonal structure becomes the tool of task activities; group energy is channeled into the task; solutions can emerge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>constructive</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>action</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note:* Based on Tuckman’s (1965) stages of behavior in group formation

A principal’s direct impact on student achievement is minimal, at best. Leithwood and associates (2008) noted that an infinitesimal 5-7% of leaders impact student success directly. It is for that reason Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) state the most
effective manner by which a leader can improve student achievement is by understanding and developing people. Developing a sense of commitment to increasing efficacy in reading instruction begins in professional learning communities (PLCs). Research predating *A Nation at Risk* by Rogus and Martin (1979) alludes to the importance of teachers sharing ideas rather than teaching in a vacuum. Professional practices should be shared in a community of professional learners to enhance student achievement. Senge (2012) echoes this assertion. He notes the policies did not create the deficits within a school and making policies to attempt to fix the problem is not the solution. The assertion is that people working collaboratively will be the ultimate solution to the woes experienced by any educational institution. The focus of this study will focus mainly of two of Senge’s (2012) five disciplines for schools that learn: personal mastery and team learning. I used these two disciplines as the foundation of my work in supporting teachers as they increase their efficacy in the instruction.

Team learning is a system of practices put in place to get members in the practice of thinking and acting together (Senge, 2012). This practice does not assume that the participants of the team learning will be like-minded, but rather that they will share a common purpose. In the case of a secondary educational institution, this unity of purpose is student academic achievement. Teams need to have this unity of vision to ensure student success. To that end, they will need to be able to successfully navigate the phases of team formation as noted by Tuckman (1965). Table 1.1 shows the stages and behaviors at each level of group formation and orientation to task in training groups. Reeves (2006) offers discourse on what he calls the Leadership for Learning framework (Figure 1.1). He notes that one of the highest levels of the framework, Lucky, is a fleeting state because
student achievement is based on their own natural ability and not necessarily in the ability of a teacher to adapt to the changing state of affairs in an educational organization.

Further, students in the case of the Lucky teacher will be successful because students are already reading fluently. Lucky teachers cannot replicate their success in future classes with other groups of students, particularly those with lower reading abilities, because their success was highly contingent upon the competence of former groups of learners. The lowest level of his framework is referred to as the Losing. These teachers are characterized as lacking the requisite reflective practices in determining performance antecedents and adapting to address these issues. Teachers in this quadrant are those who keep attempting the same tasks with students repeatedly without understanding antecedents to performance, the barriers to student success, or variant instructional strategies available.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Achievement of Results</th>
<th>Lucky</th>
<th>Leading</th>
<th>Losing</th>
<th>Learning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• High results without full understanding of antecedents</td>
<td>• High results with full understanding of antecedents</td>
<td>• Low results, low understanding of antecedents</td>
<td>• Low results with a full understanding of antecedents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Unlikely to be able to replicate success</td>
<td>• Likely to be able to replicate success</td>
<td>• Only replication likely is of failure</td>
<td>• Likely to be able to replicate success</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Antecedents to Excellence*

*Figure 1.1 – Based on Reeves (2006) Leadership for Learning (p.6)*

When teachers understand the antecedents for students’ academic struggles and recognize the need for adjustments in instructional practice is when professional learning
is taking place. Reeves’s (2006) framework shows the relationship between those who are able to make a connection between these factors and successful professional growth. He posits the notion that leadership in this framework is the ability to move away from blaming the victim (i.e. the students) and identifying and recognizing antecedents as well as taking appropriate action to change instruction to match the needs of the students and eliminate barriers in the interest of students success. In keeping with that philosophy, scholars such as Hallinger and Heck (1996), Leithwood and Mascall (2008) and Leithwood, Louis, Wahlstrom, Anderson, Mascall, & Gordon (2010) examined the relationship between principals’ leadership behavior and student learning. They found the influence was indirect. It is for this reason a leader must examine data regarding student academic performance and teacher instructional behaviors and act appropriately to make a positive impact the only way they can; that is, by increasing teacher efficacy in instruction. Scholars such as Aaronson, Barrow, and Sander (2007), Marzano (2003), Sanders and Horn (1998) and Wong (2001) have noted that teacher efficacy is the driving force behind student achievement. According to Leithwood and Louis (2012), leadership and leadership practices are second only to direct instruction in the classroom. Therefore, the impact of leadership must be on the teacher and that teacher’s instructional practices. The most effective way leaders can increase teacher efficacy, according to Protheroe (2008) is to provide for student achievement by offering professional development opportunities and the means by which professional learning can occur.

In keeping with the philosophy of leading professional change through profession development, Guskey (2000, 2002) provides five critical levels of evaluating the effectiveness of professional development: participants’ reactions, participants’ learning,
organization support/change, participants’ use of knowledge and student outcomes. The monitoring piece is the lynch pin of the development activity. As with Reeves (2002, 2004) Loser level, what goes unmonitored, will go unchanged and no progress will be made in increasing teacher efficacy or student success. Teachers stuck in this level will likely need assistance in recognizing futility of practices through data review and constructive feedback on instructional practices coupled with professional development relevant to their needs.

Boudett, City and Murnane (2005) note to improve teacher efficacy, a leader’s behaviors will have to conform to three broad categories: prepare, inquire, act. The preparation phase is one in which the leader creates collaborative teams with an eye for the tribulations and eventual success that come with forming a new team (Tuckman 1965). The groups best suited to this task are what Browne-Ferrigno and Maughan (2015) refer to as a closed cohort. This model affords members the opportunity to adapt to the cohort and gain a feeling of comfort and belonging so they can become fully engaged in the unified mission of the group. The inquiry piece comes with working in unison to examine student achievement data and examining instruction as suggested by Reeves (2006). However, Marzano, Waters and McNulty (2005) insist that this kind of change is known as a first-order change. This type of change is cultural and does not require new learning. This change is climate-focused – if learning change must happen, climate change must come first. Once the need for cultural stability is satisfied, a leader can then move on to second-order change; new learning and increasing skills.

The action component, according to Guskey (2000, 2002), involves developing a plan with participants’ learning needs in mind, supporting them in that learning,
monitoring the employment of new learning and evaluating the effectiveness of the activity by re-examining student data after the bounded period of the work to be done. For example, the action in this study was providing content literacy strategies, classroom management techniques and engagement strategies that will enable teachers to make learning more accessible to students. This task is best completed in a collaborative, team environment to ensure data is not only shared, but also understood by all and appropriate action plans are created with unity of vision. It is for this reason evaluation of the process of implementation of the intervention was crucial. Oakley and associates (2006) note the importance of evaluating each component of a process to fully understand the outcomes of the action. The evaluation of the intervention will be necessary to weigh the validity of the steps to determine adjustments that will need to be made during the course of the action. In order to determine the effectiveness of the action as it is implemented, the use of focus groups will be critical. Focus groups of between 5 to 10 participants can provide critical information or insight that would not be accessible due to the limited interaction of with all participants by the researcher (Krueger and Casey, 2009; Morgan, 1997). These groups can provide valuable qualitative data about the feelings and perceptions of a larger group. In this case, the focus group will aid in gauging the successful implementation of the CoP process.

**Shift from Professional Learning Communities to Communities of Practice**

The current state of collaboration at MAHS is based on compulsory attendance in meetings loosely based on the professional learning community (PLC) framework. These teams were installed as a means by which teachers are to gather, discuss data and share best practices for increasing student achievement based on that data. Teachers will meet
as subgroups within their content areas. For example, English I teachers will meet with other English I teachers, Biology teachers will meet only with those who also teach Biology, and so forth. The teachers’ union mandates these meetings are to be teacher led, held at teacher discretion; all decisions regarding the agenda and focus of these meetings are completely independent of administrative initiatives. Although, teachers meet as they are required to by policy and school mandate, the meetings have become fragmented. Senge (2012) and Fullan and Germain (2006) insist that teachers function as teams to move towards organizational learning. It is for this reason it has become necessary to move to communities of practice (CoP). All of the previously mentioned literature shows the formation of teams, sharing of professional learning and follow through with data analysis are all crucial aspects of increasing teacher efficacy. However, moving from PLCs to CoPs is, in essence, the most important first step in increasing teacher efficacy. Membership is a key factor (i.e. creating and maintaining volunteerism), but leadership is more critical. Leithwood and Jantzi (2006) note that leadership enacted to transform (i.e. transformational leadership) must focus on the motivation of the group. While literature on transformational leadership in education is sparse, it has been noted that all transformational leadership has an emphasis on the emotions of subordinates as well as the values of the team as a whole (Yuki, 1999). Therefore, it was necessary to maintain focus on teachers’ sense of their own efficacy and the sense of collective efficacy of the community as a whole. Dufour and Eaker (1998) and Hirsh and Hord’s (2008) discussions of PLCs indicate that they are both organized and purposeful, and membership is mandated. Consequently, the researcher recognizes the need for a philosophical shift to CoPs (Table 1.2).
As Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) note, CoPs are not only groups of individuals who share passion for a given topic or, in this case, content, but also share a
common set of concerns and problems and use their passionate devotion to engage in problem solving to alleviate the issues from which the concerns stem. A fundamental shift to shared leadership and group learning of innovative techniques was instilled in teachers in order for them to become members of a CoP, increase personal and shared efficacy and, consequently, increase student achievement. It is also be critical for members of leadership teams to be more heavily involved in the collaborative work of CoPs. In theory, sustained successful work of these teams may be able to reach beyond content areas and extend beyond building walls and spreading district wide if faculty members buy in to the practice.

**Summary**

The current need of the population of Midwestern American High School, the change in graduation requirements, the high turnover of faculty members and district initiatives make it necessary for teachers to form and function as part of effective communities of practice in the interest of student success. The questions guiding this study are: *Was the implementation of the intervention successful? Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action? Did the teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action.* The next chapter will provide a detailed description of the research context as well as the proposed action and methodologies for the action and data analysis.
CHAPTER 2

STUDY CONTEXT AND RESEARCH DESIGN

Context of the Study

In this chapter, I provided an in-depth description of the context of the study, the study period and the research action. Also included is the description of the data collection methodologies and instruments used to collect the data. Finally, I provided a detailed timetable for the study period including data collection for each phase of the study.

Midwestern America High School (MAHS), enrollment 1461, is located in the Midwestern region of the United States of America and is the only high school in the district. Two other alternative education facilities in the district, one that provides an alternative pathway to graduation and one career/technical facility, with a combined enrollment of approximately 300 students are also a part of MAHS. The student population of MAHS is diverse with over 37% of the population is classified as being minority status. Further, 100% of the population is economically disadvantaged and all qualify for the Free/Reduced Price Lunch Program.

MAHS is a low-achieving high school. In years past, the region’s schools successes or needs were measured by sharing data in the form of adequate yearly progress numbers and percentages of highly qualified teachers as calculated by teachers’ certifications and service in their areas of expertise. A September 2016 press release provided by the regional department of education explains a new model by which public schools in will be assigned letter grades scoring various performance indicators. The Superintendent of Public Instruction commented on the changing face of the region’s
expectations for students starting in 2015-2016 saying the report cards would measure schools and their success by scoring them in six categories by assigning specific categories a standard letter grade (A-F).

The achievement component of the report card has two parts. 75% of the score comes from the Performance Index, or student achievement on state assessments. The higher the student’s scores on the scale (accelerated, advance, proficient, basic, limited) the higher number of points the school receives for each (from 5 – 1). A total of 25% of the score comes from Indicators Met; how many students scored at least proficient on state assessments. A proficient score means students have met the basic expectations for knowledge to be gained in high school. There are a series of 31 state tests that can provide these indicators, plus an indicator for gifted and talented, for a total of 32 possible indicators. MAHS has a performance index of 48.5% and met 14.3% of the possible indicators, scoring an F in achievement.

The progress component measures progress for all students (55% of the score), gifted students (15% of the score), students with disabilities (15% of the score) and students whose academic performance is among the lowest 20% in the state (15% of the score). Letter grades are given for each of these subcategories and then an overall grade is given for the progress category based on the grades given to the subgroups. While all students do not learn at the same rate, or at the same level, all students should make progress in their learning. This growth is measured based on performance on previous assessments as compared to performance on assessments in subsequent years in math, science, reading, social studies and state assessments. MAHS scored a grade of F in all four subcategories as well as an overall rating of F.
In the release of their 2016 platform report, the regional school board association reported they support legislation that makes assessments, “effective and meaningful, [measuring student performance]…[employing] multiple and varied measures of knowledge, skill and abilities.” Beginning with the graduating class of 2018, those new assessments will be the measure of achievement and progress used to assess schools in the region. The state assessment as it currently is, will no longer be the measure. After completion of all required coursework (i.e. four English, four mathematics, three science, three social studies, three electives, one health/physical education), state assessments will be used to measure achievement and progress in the four core content areas of mathematics, science, social studies and English. Students will also have the option to earn an industry certification and in a technical school setting and pass the career assessment offered by the ACT company (WorkKeys), or earn remediation-free scores on the ACT or SAT college entrance assessments in English Language Arts (ACT 22 – if entering high school after July 2014; SAT: Writing > 430, Reading > 450) and Math (ACT 22; SAT > 520).

**Graduation Requirements**

Currently, students preparing for graduation from MAHS must complete all required coursework as mandated by state statute (Figure 2.1). Presently, those requirements include achieving a letter grade D or better in the four units of English (English I, II, III and IV), four units of mathematics, one unit of health and physical education, three units of social studies, three units of science, five units of electives (e.g.

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1 Students entering high school prior to July 2014 will need only score an 18 on the English portion of the ACT assessment.
One of the mathematics credits must be Algebra II. It is worth noting that, although the state requires Algebra II as a course, the required assessments for math are Algebra I and Geometry, not Algebra II. Therefore, there could be a possible revision in state assessment requirements in mathematics. Social studies credits must include 0.5 units of American government and 0.5 units of American history. Further, all students must receive instruction in financial literacy and economics while in high school. All students must also be instructed in two semesters of fine arts education between Grade 7 and Grade 12.²

Figure 2.1 – Curriculum Requirements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Course</th>
<th>Specifically Required</th>
<th>Number of Credits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Math</td>
<td>Algebra I</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>Physical Science, Biology</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies</td>
<td>American Government (.5), American History (.5)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Education</td>
<td>.5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fine Arts</td>
<td>(Unless enrolled in technical school)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technology</td>
<td>(May be earn in technical school)</td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics or Career Search</td>
<td></td>
<td>.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>21</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the standard coursework required, students are also subject to a standardized state assessment. There are multiple sections of the assessment and students are judged on their knowledge in the four core content areas of mathematics, science, 

² Students pursuing a pathway in career and technical education are not held to this requirement.
social studies and English. Students must score *Proficient* on a five-level scale. The lowest level is (1) *Limited* followed in ascending order by (2) *Basic*, (3) *Proficient*, (4) *Accelerated* and (5) *Advanced*. This assessment has been under revision, as have the requirements for graduation, over the past half decade.

**Revised and Altered State Assessments**

The most recent state assessment is must be taken by all students in the region to successfully fulfill the requirements for high-school graduation. This assessment will no longer be the measure of student achievement or a requirement for graduation beginning with the graduating class of 2018. Implementation of a new set of assessments began during the 2014 school year. By the end of the 2017 school year, new assessments were put in place, as well as alternative assessment routes. These alternate routes will allow students to choose how they demonstrate acquisition and retention of high-school curriculum. They must choose at least one option depending on the pathway they have chosen to complete their coursework.

The vast majority of students will complete the required coursework and take the standard state assessment. Each section of the assessment carries with it a total of five possible points that can be earned. Therefore, the most successful students would be able to earn a total of 35 points if they attain a perfect score on all sections. Should a student choose the state assessment route, the student will need to accumulate a minimum passing score of 18 points. For example, a student could earn 2 points on each of the two English assessments, 4 points on the two mathematics assessment, and 3 points each for
one science and two social studies portions.\(^3\) This will give the student enough assessment points to graduate, should that student successfully complete all coursework, as well. Students will be allowed to take each of these assessments as many times as needed to achieve the necessary point totals required for graduation. Students will only need to repeat sections of the assessment they do not accumulate the minimum number of necessary points to accrue the needed 18 points to meet the requirement. They need not take all seven sections again if they performed adequately on those sections (i.e. earned the required proficiency level and subscale scores).

In the spring of 2017, all juniors at MAHS will be given the American College Testing (ACT) assessment free of charge. Each student at MAHS will not only be offered this opportunity, but are also given two waivers to take either assessment again should they choose to do so.\(^4\) Students who perform well on the ACT are allowed to use these scores as their assessment score for graduation. In addition to completing all of the course requirements for graduation, students will be able to take the ACT or SAT and use what have been termed “remediation free scores” on those assessments (Table 2.1)\(^5\).

Table 2.1 – Remediation-free score benchmarks for ACT and SAT assessments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SAT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English ≥18</td>
<td>Writing ≥ 430</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading ≥ 21</td>
<td>Reading ≥ 450</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if entering high school prior to July 2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading ≥ 22</td>
<td>Math ≥ 520</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(if entering high school after July 2014)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) Students must also earn subscale scores in each content area: at least 4 point across English sections; 4 points across mathematics sections; 6 points across science and social studied sections.

\(^4\) Waivers are offered due to the high-poverty population.

\(^5\) At the time this dissertation was written, these scores were subject to change pending the release of the new 2016 SAT Assessment.
Finally, students will be offered a third option for fulfilling the assessment requirement for graduation. Currently, this option will apply to approximately 300 students at MAHS. This pathway is for students who are pursuing industry certification in a trade or vocational school. Students in this pathway will be given 12 points towards the necessary 18 points needed for graduation for earning an industry certification in Agriculture, Business, Human Services, Health, or 8 other career fields. Students at MAHS are afforded the opportunity to do just this through programs at a regional technical school. Students are allowed to apply at the end of their sophomore year at MAHS. Pending the completion of a vocational aptitude test and successfully passing the screening process (i.e. examination of school records to confirm satisfactory behavior, attendance and credits earned), students will attend the vocational school and attempt to earn one of these certifications. Successfully earning a certification is one piece of the graduation puzzle. Students must also achieve a Workforce Readiness Score on the WorkKeys Assessment. Students are assessed in reading, information location and mathematical application. Through 2019, students must score at least a 13; all subsequent graduating classes will have to earn a score of 14 or higher. Additionally, where students could score the minimum on state assessments as long as their total is 18, students taking the WorkKeys Assessment must score at least a 3 on each test to earn the required points. All pathway requirements are outlined in Table 2.2 (p. 22).

Regardless of the assessment pathway chosen by a student, if he or she is receiving special education services and has a current Individualized Education Plan (IEP), he or she can be excused from the consequences of not passing any of these assessments. Typically, students who do not pass any of these assessments must take
them repeatedly until they successfully earn the appropriate number of points or meet the minimum cut scores.

Table 2.2 – Assessment Pathways

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>End-of-Course Assessments</th>
<th>ACT</th>
<th>SAT</th>
<th>Industry Certification</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English (at least 4 points)</td>
<td>English ≥18</td>
<td>Writing ≥ 430</td>
<td>Students will receive 12 points for earning a state-approved, industry-recognized certification. Student must also earn a 13 or higher on the WorkKeys Assessment for a total of at least 25 points.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics (at least 4 points)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Studies/Science (at least 6 points)</td>
<td>Reading ≥ 22</td>
<td>Reading ≥ 450</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can earn a maximum of 5 points per assessment. Students must earn a minimum of 18 points total.</td>
<td>Math ≥ 22</td>
<td>Math ≥ 520</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If a student has an IEP, after that student has taken each required assessment at least once, the IEP team will convene a meeting during the student’s senior year to determine whether or not the student put forth the effort necessary for success on the examination(s) and if the student’s disability precludes the possibility of success on these assessments. Should the IEP team determine the student would not be capable of passing the assessments due to the student’s disability, that student can be excused from the requirements of all graduation assessments. The team can also decide to have the student retake any assessment, or portion of an assessment, if they believe the student is able to successfully earn the required points or cut scores.

Challenge of Leadership Practice

Since the release of Education Excellence Commission report, *A Nation at Risk* (1983), federal and state policy makers have heightened scrutiny of the nation’s schools, called from increased accountability and higher levels of academic performance for all
students. The Commission’s watershed report launched a reform movement that has been unprecedented in terms of its duration, intensity and scope (Bjork, 1995; Bjork, Kowalski & Young, 2005). According to Bjork, Kowalski and Young (2005), education reform in American came in three waves. The first two waves (1983-2003) focused on accountability, increased student learning and strengthening curriculum and instruction. The third wave of educational reports (1989-2003) criticized educational reform that focused on institutional structure and professional development and proposed familial supports and a focus on students’ capacity to learn. The availability and value of professional development opportunities continue to be a concern as many institutions are attempting to offer embedded professional development opportunities to staff members. These expectations, coupled with ever-changing state and national accountability measures, have labeled an increasing percentage of public schools as being persistently low-achieving schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When students were asked</th>
<th>Percent responded &quot;Always or Sometimes&quot;</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot of single-syllable words.</td>
<td>98.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot of multi-syllable words.</td>
<td>98.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I know a lot of sight words.</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use context clues to help with word recognition or word meaning.</td>
<td>97.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can use word parts to help with word recognition or meaning.</td>
<td>96.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although accountability remained a prominent dimension throughout the era of educational reform, measures continue to shift and vary from state to state based on
specific legislation. Professional development needs, by proxy, seem to be in a constant state of flux depending upon the needs set forth by state assessments. The fundamental needs for success on these assessments remains the same regardless of the content: literacy competency. Students must be able to read well and comprehend the passages given on the assessment and the questions posed about those passages and possess the requisite skills to respond accurately to those questions.

In an effort to gain insight into specific areas of need with regard to literacy instruction, the administrative team and teacher leaders of Midwestern American High School (MAHS) conducted a student literacy survey in August of 2017 (Appendix B) that asked students questions about their perceptions of their own competency at each of the five levels of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary, comprehension and fluency). As part of my administrative responsibilities, I developed this survey (Appendix B) based on skills Beers (2003) says struggling readers may be lacking. Preliminary data is shown in Table 2.3 (p. 23).

These data indicate how students feel about their own abilities in the most fundamental areas of literacy, phonemic awareness, phonics and vocabulary. Without these most basic skills, readers have a substantially decreased change of comprehending more challenging texts or being able to read them with any degree of fluency. These numbers show students at MAHS have a positive view of their skills overall. However, when given the statement, *These tasks are harder for me when I am reading a science text*, 77% of MAHS students said that it is sometimes or always more difficult.

Similar questions about mathematics and social studies content show 76% say they struggle more in mathematics and 72% struggle more in social studies. Recent state
assessment scores for MAHS (2015-2016) show the lowest success rate is on the science portion of that assessment. Further, the incoming accountability measures for the new science assessments, which are being given as a graduation requirement beginning with the class of 2018, yield the lowest number of students rating proficient or higher (66%) in all content areas.

Data collected from standardized state assessments, coupled with data collected from students own perceptions of their reading abilities, shows the need for a focus on supporting teacher efficacy in employing literacy strategies to increase student achievement. With this data in mind, and in keeping with the MAHS vision of increased literacy competency for students, I conducted action research at MAHS with a focus on literacy strategies, classroom management techniques, engagement strategies, etc. to increase teacher efficacy in instruction by creating sustainable CoPs focused on this goal.

**Leadership Roles and Responsibilities**

There are a number of participants who were invited to be members of the community who have wide-ranging experience levels and academic backgrounds. The researcher as well as teacher leaders assumed larger roles in the beginning as well as roles of observers throughout. Leadership on the team was shared and distributed throughout the process. Below are the roles of participants in this study.

**Roles of the researcher as participant.** I began my career as a middle school English Language Arts (ELA) teacher in a suburban school in the Midwest; however, I did not take the traditional path to teaching certification. When I was offered my first position, I was working towards a master’s degree in teaching and was nearing completion of a master’s degree in English. While many teachers’ degrees have a focus
on a content area with a certification for teaching that content, my bachelor’s degree is in English. I have been able to take my knowledge of English curriculum (i.e. informational reading, research, writing, literature) and apply effective teaching strategies to accessing these skills.

I have had the opportunity to work at all levels of education during in my career. I taught middle school ELA then moved to the high school in the same district as a teacher of English, Honors English, Advanced Placement (AP) English, Creative Writing and Dual Enrollment courses (e.g. Literary Criticism). I also had the opportunity to be an adjunct professor of English while still teaching high school. When I entered the world of administration, my first role was as the principal of an elementary school. I then became and assistant principal of a high school, followed by a brief return to the middle school-world as an assistant principal. I have since returned to the high school setting as an assistant principal. My ultimate career goal, as the aspiration is appropriate to this study, is to obtain a position at the district level as a director of curriculum, or superintendent.

I have been able to observe instruction at all levels of education, participate in professional development, create professional learning opportunities in instructional practices at all levels of education, employ those strategies in my own instruction, model those strategies for staff members and evaluate the efficacy of those strategies and the delivery of the content using that strategies at all levels of education. I have seen and experienced scaffolded instruction; therefore, I am able to assist in determining deficits in secondary education and identify which content areas are of immediate need. The vast
majority of students at MAHS have a 6th-grade reading level (more than 84%). It is for these reasons I have chosen to work to create a CoP that will function as a unit to increase the abilities and confidence of teachers to use engaging strategies to deliver content to struggling and resistant learners. Hallinger and Murphy (1985), Murphy (1988), Duke (1982) and other researchers at the epicenter of the instructional effectiveness movement of the 1980s insisted that school effectiveness is multifaceted and principals must be able to promote a positive school climate that is conducive to learning and student success and develop missions and visions for schools. The tacit assumption is the principal assumes these responsibilities. However, an instructional leader has to be able to implement, evaluate and manage instructional programs as well as support those who are responsible for utilizing strategies proposed by those programs. I will not only be the assistant principal for this study, but also the instructional leader.

The administrative team of MAHS is comprised of one lead principal, three assistant principals and an administrative dean. The lead principal acts as public liaison, primary building leader and lead evaluator, among other responsibilities assigned by the superintendent. The roles of the assistant principals vary based on the needs of the school. One assistant principal is charged with the task of schedule and administering assessments while another has the responsibility of leading an alternative, off-site facility for at-risk learners. My role as an assistant principal is similar to theirs because I am responsible for completing staff evaluations, maintaining and monitoring student discipline and a litany of other administrative duties. My specific administrative duties

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6 This information was provided in an annual report by the principal to the Board of Education.
include supervising student special services and providing staff support in execution of the district-wide literacy initiative.

It is the latter, providing staff support for literacy and pedagogical approaches, that was the focus of this research study. I am responsible for creating opportunities for staff members to develop instructional practices within their specific content areas and apply those to increase their instructional capacities and, as a result, positively impact student achievement. In this capacity, I share literacy strategies with the entire staff via a weekly email. I share these engagement strategies for reading as well as methods for what Casteel (1988, 1989) refers to as *chunking* texts. This is the process in which reading materials are broken into more manageable pieces before being given to students for instructional purposes to make them more accessible. Even a task such as this, which is seemingly simple requires precision to avoid making the chunks so small that the natural rhythmic movements of the eyes are disrupted while reading (Keenan, 1984). I have the responsibility of providing staff-wide professional development in these literacy strategies that are non-content-specific, making them universally applicable.

Approximately 25% of teachers at MAHS have been teaching for fewer than three years. Approximately 33% of the staff members are new to MAHS even if they are not new to the profession. This is significant because many programs have been attempted over the years and have met with little success due to teacher turnover. My goal is not to offer strategies that require collaborative classroom efforts or knowledge of a particular philosophy for teaching and learning (c.f. Marzano, 2009, 2013, 2014, 2017; Kagan, 2009), rather I focus on providing strategies on how to make content accessible to students. This will require me to build instructional efficacy in teaching staff by
providing opportunities to engage with one another in professional learning by forming functioning and sustainable CoPs.

**Role of teacher leaders as participants.** The five teacher leaders are only assigned to teacher classes 50% of the day so they are able to visit classrooms and work with their colleagues on instructional strategies, collect data and prepare for administrative meetings in which they present all data, instructional needs and any departmental concerns. I attended the monthly teacher-leader meeting to plan for new teacher meetings and prepare teacher leaders for their roles in each of those meetings. The teachers and teacher leaders were allowed to forego one PLC meeting in exchange for participation in this CoP to adhere to meeting guidelines set forth by the teachers’ union.

Teacher leaders were asked to provide walkthrough data and anecdotal information with regard to instructional practices shared in new teacher meetings in leadership focus groups. This data was used to illustrate whether or not the practices shared by leadership members are being utilized in classroom instruction. The focus groups are discussed at length in the section on data analysis.

**Roles of new teachers as participants.** All teachers at MAHS are required to meet at least two hours per month in professional learning communities (PLCs). Each content area has a PLC (i.e., English, mathematics, social studies, science). Art, foreign languages and music teachers form one single PLC when they meet to share data, but meet according to specialty in at least one of their two monthly meetings. Aside from these meetings, I invited all new teachers to meet with me and veteran teachers at least once per month as part of a CoP. This was a meeting in addition to the two PLCs they
must attend. In these meetings, teachers review their data from previous state assessments with mentors and administrators, plan common assessments with them and share research-based instructional strategies to assist in delivery of content. The teachers were expected to employ strategies shared in these meetings. I visited classrooms routinely from August 2017 through May 2018 to monitor delivery of the strategies, assist with implementation and monitor progress.

Teachers were asked to complete Goddard and Hoy’s (2003) Collective Efficacy Scale survey and Woolfolk and Hoy’s (1990) Self-Efficacy Scale Survey at the beginning of the bounded period and again at the end of the bounded period. They were also asked to complete reflection sheets at the closing of each meeting to show what they learned in the meetings and what they feel their needs were for subsequent meetings.

**Action Research Plan**

This action research plan was designed to study what effects the proper implementation of CoPs would have, if any, on the collective and self-efficacy of teachers in Midwestern American High School (MAHS). The current vehicle for data analysis and collaboration at MAHS are PLCs. These meetings are teacher-led and, by contract, are not to be facilitated by the administration. There are also new teacher meetings that happen once per month. The structure of those meetings and what constitutes the *new* status of a teacher is currently not operationally defined within the school.

**Research Action**

A new teacher cohort was created and met once per month using one of the bimonthly PLC meetings as an attendance measure. These meetings acted as a vehicle for
building efficacy in teachers in literacy instruction, classroom management and general pedagogical style. PLC structure was refined so they reflected a community of practice (CoP). According to the CoP model by Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002), this means forming a group of people who share a common passion (i.e. education/instruction) and building volunteer participation through shared leadership and unity of vision and mission. In order for this transition to occur, I facilitated meetings and provided resources based in multiple content-area strategies and focus on the common core standards for instruction. The CoP provided opportunities for new teachers to work directly with building administrators, teacher leaders and peers to increase efficacy in instruction and teaching practices. I reviewed survey data, reflection sheets and made observations during meetings and throughout the bounded period to ascertain any positive change in teachers’ feelings of collective and self-efficacy.

**Early Planning**

When I prepared the research plan, I approached the lead principal with relevant data regarding literacy strategies being used in classrooms, literacy needs of the student population, instructional needs of the staff, a statement of need as it pertains to students’ educational wellbeing and teacher growth and a proposal for carrying out the study (Appendix F). The principal agreed with the proposed study (i.e. instituting a Community of Practice to accentuate TBTs and new teacher meetings). She was intrigued at the prospect of increasing student achievement by increasing teacher efficacy.

I planned ten meeting dates during the bounded period (August 2017 through May 2018). Each meeting focused on studying classroom data (e.g. common assessments, tests, quizzes) and identifying areas of need in instructional practices and behavior.
management. The study was based on the Wenger, McDermott and Snyder’s (2002) framework for building a CoP that is comprised of five stages: (a) potential, (b) coalescing, (c) maturing, (d) stewardship and (e) transformation (Table 2.4). The first stage (potential) is when there are a group of people who meet loosely based on similar backgrounds and interests, but are not yet a community. The second stage is the coalescing stage where members begin to form bonds of trust and lasting relationships. The third stage, maturing, is when the community clarifies their focus and creates a learning agenda to focus on closing gaps in knowledge to support completion of their unified task. The stewardship stage (fourth stage) is identified by sustained momentum of the community, development of new leadership and the recruitment on new members. The final stage, transformation, is marked by the death of the community. This does not mean the community disbands, rather the successful attainment of the original goal has been realized and the purpose of the community must shift for the good of the organization. The potential for CoP formation already existed at MAHS; needs to work collaboratively abounded. The second and third stages (coalescing and maturing), or forming and building a sustainable CoP, was the focus of this intervention.

The Coalescing stage was crucial, as members needed to come together and form community bonds based on shared vision and unity of purpose. Maturity was the ultimate goal of the bounded period as it was to be the time for members to grow into a community, bypass the storming phase and become a true CoP. The fourth and fifth phases (stewardship and transformation) would not have been evident until after the bounded period when the CoP identifies and addresses new problems and the protocols and practices they leave in place as a result of their work. The target for implementing the
CoP was to build capacity in MAHS teachers to successfully assist students in accessing content through the use of research-based strategies and practices. It is important to note that this was an organic process and the needs of the CoP members dictated the direction of the meetings. Many new teachers often have issues managing a classroom. The focus of this study was to enhance teacher efficacy to improve professional practices and student academic achievement, so it was important to assist teachers in all aspects of teaching to support their instructional endeavors. Classroom management became a topic of discussion frequently in these meetings. These topics were addressed in part by offering strategies for creating engaging instruction that were efforts to combat some of those issues as they arose.

Table 2.4 – 5 stages of creating a CoP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Potential</td>
<td>Creating formalized structure, clarifying intent of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalescing</td>
<td>Building relationships/trust, building awareness of common needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maturing</td>
<td>Clarifying focus, move toward stewardship, identifying learning gaps, planning agenda to address needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stewardship</td>
<td>Sustaining momentum, recruiting new members, developing new leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transformation</td>
<td>Becoming no longer necessary, requiring a shift in focus and purpose</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from the Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) CoP model

The CoP model of Wenger and associates (2002) suggests structure and methodologies for preparing a community for their work. These models suggest building a community that has aliveness, or the ability to create and sustain energy to achieve mutually agreed upon goals. One important way to ensure drive, teacher commitment and momentum is to create process targets that address specific changes teachers would like.
to see in their instructional methodologies and teaching skills. According to Sagor’s (2011) first stage of action research, in order to clarify the vision for the action, it is prudent to create focus targets for the study. These targets can include foci such as leading more engaging classroom discussions, providing more detailed and timely feedback to students, or providing more detailed explanations for dense topics and content.

The key process target for this study was enhancing teachers’ abilities and confidence in teaching content-specific material and classroom management techniques that ensure student access and success. For example, science and mathematics contents are rife with Latinates, polysyllabic jargon and content-specific processes. Social studies content, especially world studies, may include words outside of the English language that are even more inaccessible to students. PLCs currently in place have potential to do the work of learning, but it is the fractured nature of the groups makes it difficult to build and sustain the necessary energy for successful focus on common goals and growth as a team. It is for these reasons the coalescing and maturing stages are the focus of this study. Veteran teachers were asked to meet as a team and bring the most recent, relevant texts they utilize in delivering instruction and share these in CoP to evaluate the rigor and accessibility of these texts and work to apply approaches that will help teachers increase instructional and personal efficacy.

Prior to the first meeting, I asked the teachers to complete two surveys. The first, Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (1990) Self-Efficacy Survey (Appendix D), was used to ascertain a teacher’s individual beliefs concerning his or her own teaching competency. This survey was the subject of three different studies to determine the
reliability of the scale. The first two studies conducted using this tool surveyed 224 and 217 participants respectively. The first study contained 52 items and the second instrument had 32 items. It was determined the instrument could be further reduced while maintaining focus on the three key factors: effective instructional strategies, effective classroom management and effective student engagement. The final instrument was developed in both short and long forms: the long form contains 22 items while the short form contains 10. The construct validity was determined by comparing the instrument to extant instruments used to measure teacher efficacy (cf. Kerlinger 1986; Hoy and Woolfolk 1993; Gibson and Dembo 1984; RAND Items). For this study, the long form was utilized.

The second tool I used was Goddard and colleagues’ (2000) *Collective Efficacy Survey* (Appendix C). Teachers’ perceptions of their own efficacy is a crucial measure in this study. Determining collective efficacy was necessary in determining teachers’ perceptions about the effectiveness of the staff as a whole; a team of which they were members. The items on this Likert-scale survey were created based on modifications of the Gibson and Dembo (1984) teacher efficacy scale. These modifications were then reviewed by a panel of experts and researchers in the field of teacher efficacy. The survey was then piloted by selecting a sample 46 teachers in 46 different schools to complete the survey. The results allowed the creators to determine the 21 questions offered a valid and reliable measure of collective efficacy. I analyzed the survey data and share those with the results with the new teachers attending the meeting.

In this first meeting, I worked with new teachers to develop norms for meetings to ensure the meetings stay focused on data analysis and literacy strategies. It was crucial
for me to act as part of the team during this phase in order to identify and effectively
manage the phenomenon Reeves (2006) refers to as storming. I attempted to focus the
CoP on the goal of increasing student achievement; thereby, minimizing or eliminating
distractions from our mission. The goal was to have this vision set and the target shared
with the team by the end of the first meeting. I allowed time for new teachers and
mentors to reflect after each meeting and consider their needs for future meeting dates.

A CoP relies heavily on positive relationships in the coalescing stage, which is
also characterized by beginning with high energy followed by quickly dwindling interest.
I worked diligently to build relationships quickly and sustain them throughout the study.
By building positive connections and modeling passionate interest in the focus of the
community, I was able to support teachers in their endeavors to grow as educators. I
worked to serve as a positive model in the CoP, as well as the researcher.

As the facilitator and coordinator of the community, it was incumbent upon me to
act as a model by remaining passionate about the mission, articulating stages of the
model and expected outcomes and maintaining commitment to the goals of the
community. I acted as a knowledgeable resource for members, so they feel supported in
their endeavors. As identified by the CoP framework, my primary functions was to
facilitate engagement by connecting community members and promoting the
development of their knowledge base by providing relevant, research-based professional
development opportunities and sharing best practices. Moreover, I was responsible for
monitoring and providing for the overall health of the community by meeting with each
member individually as needed to provide feedback, hear concerns and provide continual
individual support.
Prior to the start of the 2017-2018 academic year, new teachers received a letter informing them that they will be expected to attend new teacher meetings. Teacher leaders of MAHS received a letter on letterhead asking for their participation in this study. The letters were sent in early August 2017 to account for any change in personnel that occurred over the summer. As the year began and upon accepting the lettered request for participation, teachers were given the two surveys previously mentioned. The survey data was conducted and calculated in September. In the first meeting, new teachers had the opportunity to discuss strategies they have learned or used in student teaching that they are particularly comfortable with and/or excited about. They were allowed to discuss any trepidation they may feel about entering the profession. I wrote notes in my journal detailing responses of each participant as well as recorded them for reference.

It is worth noting that while new teachers had to meet together as part of their internship, teacher leader and mentor membership in the CoP was not mandatory. All individuals wishing to participate in CoP meetings were invited to do so by the principal on opening day and those invitations were reiterated by an administrative assistant monthly in advance of each meeting. While all teachers must participate in TBT meetings contractually, there was nothing binding them to participate in this CoP. For this reason, it was vital for me, as an instructional leader, to begin the work of building relationships with staff members to ensure future participation in the bounded period.

**Phase I - Coalescing Stage: Creating Vision/Maintaining Energy**

The CoP, while in its infancy, needed leadership at its core to develop beyond the potential stage. Wenger and associates (2002) assert the coalescing stage (stage 2) is fragile because members’ energy levels begin to wane for a variety of reasons. For some
it will be a lack of instant gratification. For others, obligations from outside the community will begin to demand their attention. Sustaining energy was crucial in maintaining momentum of the CoP. A critical piece to keeping the energy was modeling passion for the target and sharing relevant learning to support the community’s vision.

The CoP was scheduled to meet for the first time in the first week of August prior to the first day of school. In this first meeting, I planned to share data with the group about the most recent data from our state tests and review the data as a team, performing a needs assessment. I worked collaboratively to generate a list of norms in collaboration with the community by which the community operated. I provided members with research that stated the overarching message that was the driving force of our work: highly effective teachers can help students grow.

The shared leadership of the community was the first building block to the relational foundation of the group. We worked in a unified fashion to design and adhere to the norms we created as a community and worked toward our target in an environment based on relational trust and professionalism, dedicated to improving personal and professional practice in the interest of student achievement. We used this time to generate ideas for strategies and resources to be utilized in building best practices for instruction. I listened to and record what teachers’ concerns and needs, as well as provided advice for gathering and utilizing available resources. I acted as a resource myself as I helped collect and share strategies on existing texts used in instruction, modifying them using research-based strategies for use in classes and managing the learning environment. Acting as a participant of the community, rather than a leader of it, I was able to work
toward forming collegial bonds to build trust, participation, cohesion and sustainable energy.

I maintained records of each meeting, documenting topics of discussion, requests for materials and resources, complaints, issues, etc. I also kept an attendance record of teachers who participated in the community and submitted the proper documentation for professional development credit and mandatory PLC participation credit.

**Phase II - Coalescing Stage: Community Meetings/Relationship Building**

Each meeting began with the agenda and norms being read. The agenda always included a Plus/Delta Reflection Form. Teachers were expected to have implemented strategies discussed in CoP meetings. They were then asked to reflect on the following:

- What was helpful (in what way)?
- What was not helpful (explain)?
- How do you plan to implement what was learned/shared?
- What topics need further exploration in future meetings?

The time for debriefing and sharing was limited based on time, as these meetings were only contractually allowed to last an hour after school. Teachers were allowed to stay longer if they wanted to. Each agenda and the minutes of meetings were saved, reviewed and analyzed as a measure of group health.

The focus of these meetings was not only sharing of best practices, but also building and maintaining collegial relationships. As a comfort measure, I provided refreshments for each meeting to create a more relaxed and socially inviting atmosphere. Each member was encouraged to share successes as well as challenges of practice. These challenges have a tendency to be delivered with a defeatist tone, but I used these
challenges as opportunities to explore a change in practice by opening it to the group for
discussion. We moved passed the challenges after addressing them and focused on
celebrations. The celebrations were to be the highlight of each meeting. Teachers were
encouraged to share data that punctuated student successes as well as showcase strategies
they have found and implemented themselves. This focus on the positive was a necessary
dose of positive energy to sustain momentum of the community and its mission.

While the professionals in the room had knowledge of their particular content
areas, there were opportunities for me to retain the services of other professionals in the
field to build efficacy in new teachers’ and mentors’ abilities to deliver instruction. I
maintained a record of attendance for teachers who are present at the meeting or who go
to the event on a professional development day. I attended external events as a CoP
member and shared reflective time with the community after these opportunities. I
attempted to engage in reflective discussions on the meetings and discuss the merits and
practical applications from information offered in these meetings. There was an official
record of attendance and content for each of these events that was maintained with my
research journals for reference.

**Phase III - Maturing Stage**

If energy and focus is maintained throughout the teambuilding process,
membership should remain static; however, the possibility existed that members would
drop out of the community. Teachers were contractually bound to participate in PLCs,
but were not obligated to go beyond by working to build efficacy in professional
practices in meetings occurring outside the school day. The goal was to achieve small
victories with student success quickly to garner support for the initiative and buy in to the
strategies. It was also vital that I monitor the community to ensure they maintain the initial vision. The CoP in transition to maturity required focus, attention and sustained energy. Staying aligned to initial focus of the community was crucial in increasing teacher efficacy. By the first meeting of the January session, members of the group were be responsible for identifying and providing literacy strategies for their content to their peers as well as discussing possibilities for differentiating instruction of that material. As predicted, many incidents of classroom management and student behavioral interventions arose that required some of the community’s attention.

The framework for CoPs by Wenger and associates (2002) shows that the maturing stage is where the community reaches its adolescence. In this stage, the group has an identity and is functioning as a unit. Members in this phase take steps to identify gaps in process and practices and work together to address those issues without leadership; the function of organizational leadership at this stage was that of resource acquisition. With the collegial relationships formed, teachers should have felt free to ask for resources with confidence, as they have been working all year to identify gaps in instruction as a group and have now grown confident in their abilities to not only identify challenges, but to devise solutions to those issues.

**Participants**

This study was an effort to build teachers’ sense of self-efficacy as well as their senses of collective efficacy. To successfully provide appropriate resources for this study, multiple participants were invited to meetings to offer support and expertise. Those invitations were sent out via a third party to minimize the notion that I was requesting participation as a building leader.
MHS Administration Leadership

The administrative team of MHS is comprised of one lead principal, three assistant principals and one administrative team. The team works as a collaborative unit to support teaching and learning. During the bounded period (August 2017 – May 2018), the input of the administrative team was sought as general pedagogical experts, not content experts. They were asked to invited to join CoP meetings, which was a normal component of their leadership responsibilities; however, they were often called away due to other duties as issues arose as their leadership roles often dictate. Their attendance at these meetings was noted, but not recorded as fluctuations in CoP membership.

Teachers

On one afternoon per month throughout the 2017-2018 school year, new teachers were asked to participate in New-Teacher Meetings (CoP). The number of new teachers fluctuated as the year began due to last minute hiring. As previously mentioned, 33% of the faculty members of Midwestern American High School (MAHS) were new to the district, building, or profession. For the purposes of this study, New Teachers refers to any teacher who is new to the profession of teaching. There were distinctions drawn between teacher statuses for data collection purposes. All teachers not new to the profession or the district were invited to attend and share in the CoP as they are willing and able.

Teacher Leaders

The five teacher leaders (English, mathematics, science, social studies, electives) were asked to be points of contact for new teachers and liaisons to administration when my other duties pulled me from academic support. Further, they were asked to perform
walkthrough observations of their peers in their respective departments. Their schedules afforded them three free periods each day to perform that very function. As these activities were part of their assigned responsibilities, they were not asked to do anything extra in that regard. They have heretofore not be asked to act as an instructional model to staff members, but that became an expectation of all participants. If the teacher leader, one of the administrative team or I saw exceptional instruction using a specific learning strategies, that teacher was asked to allow other community members the opportunity to visit his classroom and observe delivery of that lesson.

Finally, the five teacher leaders were debriefed quarterly in focus group meetings. These meetings allowed the teacher leaders to offer insight into what they saw in classroom visits and offer qualitative input on perceptions of teachers’ sense of efficacy through examination of practices and delivery of instruction. These meetings were an invaluable part of gathering qualitative data from peer observers to evaluate the process and make any necessary adjustments to the intervention.

**CoP External Membership**

A CoP does encourage external membership in support of completing tasks that aide in attainment of the group’s vision. Due to the nature of the CoP’s mission external agencies and personnel were invited to offer input and attend meetings. Such agencies and individuals include, but are not limited to: directors of curriculum and instruction, directors and coordinators of student services, educators from surrounding cooperative entities, professors from local and regional universities. Invitations were extended to all of these entities to attend all CoP meetings at the beginning of the bounded period. Their attendance (e.g. frequency, contributions, acceptance into the group) was recorded in my
research journal. Any materials distributed to CoP members or presentations given by external members were collected, catalogued and reflected upon in my research journal. Records indicate there was little to no participation by external partners in these meetings due to time and location, as well as other obligations that prevented attendance.

**Role of Researcher as CoP Coordinator**

Wenger, McDermott and Snyder (2002) assert a community of practice coordinator needs to be able to identify issues in their specific domains, link community members and other teams and organizations, aid in building practices and assesses the overall health of the CoP. I acted in this capacity throughout the bounded period. The research conducted by the administrative team of MAHS uncovered an underlying issue of practice; therefore, it was my function to form and act as a member of a community of practice. I worked to connect our members with internal and external partners and organizations that were able to provide resources and support while community members pursued their common goals. I functioned as a team member with expertise in literacy strategies, reading instruction and general pedagogical skill to provide information on research-based techniques and best practices. Finally, I acted as a collaborative partner to assess the needs of the community and aid to establish and sustain an energetic and cooperative environment.

As participant-leader, I maintained accurate logs of meetings and assessment data. I addressed members’ concerns quickly and with fidelity. My core responsibility was to focus on the stability of the CoP and infuse that team with the resources and structure vital to success in their work. Further, I assured administration that all work being done in the community was done in the best interest of teacher efficacy and with teacher
growth in mind. Any practice to the contrary was not implemented or tolerated by any member of the community.

Additionally, I was responsible for the accurate collection of any and all quantitative and qualitative data throughout the course of the bounded period. I gathered all documentation necessary for reporting in this study. Finally, in keeping with the mandates of the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Institutional Review Board (IRB), I safeguarded all information obtained and data analyzed in relation to this study.

**Research Plan**

The sequence of action research is divided into four stages: clarifying vision; articulating theories; implementing action and collecting data; reflecting and planning informed action (Sagor, 2011, p. 97). The first stage requires setting targets and determining assessment criteria/methodologies. The second stage, articulating theories, involves developing a theory of action. The previous pages are the result of the first two stages of this process. Upon analyzing the needs of teachers at MAHS and reviewing district initiatives and goals, I developed a plan to build teachers’ efficacy by creating a CoP and providing research-based literacy strategies to support instructional practices. The resultant condition in building teacher efficacy in delivery of content through research-based strategies will be more confident teachers and students who will be better able to think critically and comprehend and apply concepts across the curriculum. The third stage as suggested by Sagor (2011) is implementing action and collecting data.

The proposed study spanned the 2017-2018 school year (August 2017 – May 2018). Throughout the course of the year, I collected and analyzed data based on the
research questions and used that data to determine the successes of the implemented action, the limitations of the action and the areas of growth and need that arise from the action (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2 Theory of Action

I analyzed data from each meeting to evaluate the process of implementation of the intervention and make adjustments to the process should such action prove necessary. After reflecting on the action through the preponderance of the evidence gathered during the bounded period, I proposed new or continued action to support continued collaboration and collegial support in teacher growth and development.

Utilizing the CoP framework developed by Wenger and associates (2002), I studied the interactions of a PLC-turned-CoP as teachers came together to develop tools and practices and a realization that they are bound by common values and goals. This
realization was based in the fundamental belief that knowledge is not a static concept and only together can we improve personally and professionally in the interest of student success.

**Research Questions**

This mixed-methods study utilized both quantitative and qualitative measures to track the study and reflect on the impact of the action. The research design was quasi-experimental in nature and answered several broad research questions concerning whether or not sharing best practices in reading instruction will increase teacher efficacy, perceptions of efficacy and, by proxy, student achievement. The bounded period of the action research study is from August 2017 through mid-May 2018 (i.e. 2017-2018 school year). The questions that guided this action research study appear below:

1. Was the implementation of the intervention successful?
2. Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action?
3. Did teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action?

I engaged in the selected interventions described below and collected data to ascertain the degree to which they were accomplished. I provided school-level leadership designed to engage teachers and administrative team members to increase teacher efficacy in the area of reading instruction, text decoding across content areas, classroom management and general pedagogy. By engaging teachers in the process of changing instructional practices through the sharing of best practices and providing embedded professional development in CoP meetings, a sense of ownership may be developed and the move towards the creation of a true CoP was put into action. Teachers participated in a wide array of
meaningful activities (Rost, 1991) including identifying needs with instructional practices, using research-based methodologies for instituting instruction and creating tools for engaging student in instruction. I also ensured there was proper funding for activities, seminars and tools necessary to increase efficacy in instruction was available to all teachers. Extant research-based literature suggests that these and other activities may contribute to increased teacher efficacy.

To monitor teachers’ perceptions of self-efficacy, I used a survey instrument created by Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (1990). I administered this survey (Appendix D) at the beginning of the and again at the end of the bounded period. The scoring guide for the questions was downloaded from the same site (Ohio State University) where the survey was obtained. The scoring and reviewing of this data allowed me to draw conclusions about the action and environment in which the intervention was carried out.

I addressed the first question posed, *Was the implementation of the action successful?* by collecting pertinent data including minutes of the CoP meetings, focus group notes and routine monitoring of meeting reflection data (i.e. Plus/Delta sheet). I used these data sources to provide general informative feedback to participants, plan future agendas, develop relevant discussion items and ascertain next steps and follow-up procedures. In addition, these data sources enabled me to craft a descriptive narrative of events associated with the effects of the intervention on teacher efficacy.

I investigated the second question, *Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action?* by analyzing data I collected after each meeting as well as by reflecting on my research journal. Further, data I collected in the form of CoP meeting
agendas and minutes has allowed me to discern whether or not discussion focused on challenges of practice and procedures with regard to the action. Finally, I recorded focus group discussions and reviewed them in their entirety so that I was able to reflect on the broader scope of the process. This information was used as a quarterly measure of effectiveness of the action to gauge teachers’ senses of self-efficacy as observed by teacher leaders. Likewise, the third question posed, *Did teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action?* was discernable through my analysis of CoP meeting agendas and observation notes of the meetings, as well as reflective data provided by teachers after each meeting. Both the second and third questions had quantitative measures to support conclusions in the form of teacher responses to the self and collective efficacy surveys, respectively. Teachers were asked to complete those instruments prior to and following the implementation of the action.

The final data source was my own research notes/journal I used to make note of obvious changes in instructional practices throughout the course of the year, changes in membership to the CoP, deviations from sharing of professional practices and anecdotal information collected through informal, individual conversations with teachers throughout the course of the school year. All data was collected and evaluated for reporting at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

**Research Methodologies**

This mixed-methods study relied on analysis of multiple data sources to ascertain successful implementation of the action. There were a minimum of four sources of quantitative data (see Table 2.8) as well as four sources of qualitative data (see Table 2.9). A tentative timeline for collecting data can be found beginning on page 55.
Research Question 1 was examined through study of teachers’ reflections from meetings, meeting observations performed by researcher and recorded in research journal and focus group discussions with teacher leaders. I anticipated at least twenty study participants, which would have made valid use of the survey instruments I chose. After beginning the study and collecting the first round of data from the surveys, it became apparent rather quickly that I would need to rely heavily on anecdotal data from my journal and qualitative data in the form of teacher reflections to explore the impact of the intervention. I followed the procedures for implementation and data collection with fidelity, but I was concerned about the small sample size. Therefore, I spoke with the University of Kentucky statistics lab for advice in using the data collected. I discovered there would be no statistically significant results from the surveys, so I had to restructure the instruments and organize the data in a way that would lend insight into the successes and challenges of the implementation of the intervention.

There was qualitative data collected from my researcher journal as well as analysis of meeting agendas and minutes to further explain data collected via survey instruments. I used this data to help provide insight into survey instrument results and explain challenges that occurred during the course of the study, as well as illuminate needs for alterations to the intervention and opportunities for further study.

I attempted to answer the second and third research questions utilizing those same measures with the addition of the results of the Teacher Efficacy Surveys used for question 2 and the results of the Collective Efficacy Surveys used for question 3. I created a schedule to administer the surveys in August 2017 prior to beginning the study and again before the end of the study in May 2018. After the study period ended and I
analyzed the results of the survey instruments, I determined the sample size was not the only barrier to collecting usable data that could be scored as the instruments originally intended. The frequency with which the surveys were administered was problematic. In order to successfully track the implementation of the intervention and provide alterations to the intervention during the course of the action, it was necessary to administer the surveys with greater frequency. The questions on the Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey were designed to be measured in two subsets (Table 2.5), but the statistical data yielded by the low number of participants. I required a deeper division of questions and analysis based on individual items, rather than the items being loaded on each factor as suggested by the creators.

**Quantitative Data Measures**

Table 2.5 – Long form questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long Form Group</th>
<th>Item Numbers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Personal Efficacy</td>
<td>2,3,4,9,10,13,15,17,20,21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teaching Efficacy</td>
<td>1,5,6,7,8,11,12,14,16,18,19,22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* General question groupings as defined by Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy (1990)

**Surveys.** Teacher Efficacy Surveys were given at the beginning of the bounded period and again at the end. Those surveys were Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk’s (2000) Collective Efficacy Survey (Appendix C) and Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (1990) Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey (Appendix D). Those results, when compared, showed what impact the action had on teacher perception of personal/professional efficacy and confidence in instructional practices. These surveys served primarily as evidence for Research Questions 2 and 3. The Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey had teachers score their aptitude in a variety of classroom-related matters on a Likert scale ranging
from 1 (Nothing) to 6 (A Great Deal). The questions posed focused on a teacher’s ability to control his classroom and/or respond to difficult behaviors, confidence in instructional practices and perception of abilities to engage students in learning (Table 2.6). The data were analyzed by using the unweighted means of the individual items that load together into each factor as suggested by the subscale scoring and factor analysis provided by Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy’s (1990) (Appendix E).

While the data collected from these surveys ultimately offered insight into Research Questions 2 and 3, the data was useful in analyzing the first question, as well. The data showed whether or not the implementation was successful at the end of the bounded period; unfortunately, as with any summative assessment, this data did not afford me the opportunity to make changes to the action during implementation. For that reason, the quantitative data gathered from the Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections was used for that purpose. I was able to tabulate the number of teacher reflections noting agenda items that “were not helpful” (i.e. Δ) on any particular meeting date and use that data to provide interventions to the action. Any interventions were noted in the researcher’s journal and utilized as a qualitative data source.

Table 2.6 – Quantitative Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Quantitative Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Was the implementation of the intervention successful? | Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey
|                                                                          | Collective Efficacy Survey                |
| 2. Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action? | Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey              |
| 3. Did teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action? | Collective Efficacy Survey |
Qualitative Data Measures

Meeting observations. Merriam (2002) suggests that observations offer researchers a first-hand account of the action and are more valuable than a secondhand interpretation that is offered through an interview. I acted as participant observer in CoP meetings. These observations were recorded in my research journal and focused on teachers’ general feelings about delivery of content, efficacy, student engagement, and so on. These observations were a measure of teacher increases or decreases in feelings of efficacy.

Interviews/Reflections. Creswell (2003) notes that interviews can be an invaluable part of data gathering. Respondents can be given pieces of qualitative data gathered and asked a series of open-ended questions to rate satisfaction of a certain aspect of a program. In the case of this study, I had informal discussions with individual teachers intermittently based on observations of discussions in CoP meetings. These check-in-style discussions focused on confidence in instruction, or lack thereof, and allowed me to work with individual teachers on interventions. These interviews offered extended meaning to qualitative data as well as prescribe possible future action depending upon the respondents’ answers to the questions.

Plus/Delta Reflection Forms. As suggested by Merriam (2002), I created a loosely structured protocol for teacher meeting reflections (Appendix G). I provided these to teachers after each meeting and asked that they provide information about what they found useful, what they found of no use instructionally, how they would use information shared in the classroom and suggestions for the content of the next meeting. They were also encouraged to use this document to ask questions they may have regarding a
particular topic or area of concern. These forms were coded in the same fashion as the survey data to preserve anonymity and allow for honest reflective practice (p. 58). The commentary provided by teachers on these forms provided valuable data to ascertain general dispositions and gauge the climate, or well being, of the community during the intervention period.

Table 2.7 – Qualitative Measures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Qualitative Data Source</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Was the implementation of the intervention successful?</td>
<td>Research Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Teacher Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action?</td>
<td>Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Teacher Discussions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Did teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action?</td>
<td>Collective Efficacy Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Research Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Informal Teacher Discussions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CoP meeting agendas/minutes.** These documents were reviewed to ensure the practices related to the action were discussed and time in CoP meetings in effectively used. These documents were reviewed to determine whether or not the agenda for the team was adhered to with fidelity as well as to account for any digressions from that agenda.

**Focus group meeting agendas/minutes.** The focus group comprised of me and the five teacher leaders met quarterly (see Tables 2.6 & 2.7). These quarterly meetings served as qualitative data about the increase or decrease in teachers’ senses of self-efficacy. Additionally, this focus group acted as a process check. In the first three of the
four focus group meetings, the group discussed the successes and needs of the community. These checkpoints were recorded in my research journal and utilized to provide interventions to the action as the year progresses.

**Researcher’s journal.** I maintained a digital journal throughout the course of the study period. Deviations from the action can amount to failed implementation, shifts in focus, or any other number of anomalies that go unaddressed during the course of a study (Sagor 2011). My research journal served as a tool for tracking the implementation of the action in order to preserve fidelity of execution. In the interest of improvement of teacher efficacy, the only deviations allowed were those in which strategies that have been found ineffective. In those cases, differentiated strategies will replace ineffective ones. Anything unexpected (e.g. change in membership, shift in teachers in positions, etc.) were noted in this journal as well. Quantitative researchers often overlook the importance of observation in action research, largely because it is difficult to observe large groups (Silverman, 2006). The observations of this small group was crucial to note if and when deviations occur and to use the quantitative data comparatively to ascertain the impact these deviations have on instructional effectiveness.

**Data collection.** Data collection occurred throughout the course of the 2017-2018 school year and followed a pattern of collection laid out by the three phases listed above (i.e. Phase I, Phase II, Phase III). The first phase of the process required meeting with new teachers and veteran teachers and creating a shared vision of instructional excellence. It is within this first phase that leadership at the core of the CoP was crucial. Establishing shared leadership in support of the common vision was the driving force of Phase I. This phase took place during the first two meetings of the school year (August
Phase I was as follows (Table 2.9):

Table 2.8 - Data Collection - Coalescing: Phase I

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Type/Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>September 2017</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Phase II focused on the sustaining energy and momentum of the community and continually building relational trust through shared leadership and unity of vision. During these next six meetings (October 2017 – March 2018) I had the opportunity to record growth and/or needs of the community (Table 2.9) and provide supports for to address the needs of the members. There was a mid-year meeting before the winter break with members to discuss progress to this point and ascertain needs upon returning from the break.

Table 2.9 - Data Collection – Coalescing: Phase II

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Type/Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>October 2017</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries, Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 2017</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 2017</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries, Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 2018</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 2018</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries, Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Maturing (Phase III) is characterized by unity of purpose, sustained energy, relational trust and sustained membership. The data for this final phase (Table 2.10) was collected during the last two meetings (April 2018, May 2018). Team members completed the surveys on the day of the last of the meeting. There was an end-of-the-year debrief, including the sharing of victories and future planning. Individual meetings took place between me and members of the CoP as they saw fit (i.e. when they felt they needed extra support), or as the need arose (i.e. there was extra intervention that was needed as determined by observations).

Table 2.10 - Data Collection – Maturing: Phase III

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Data Type/Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April 2018</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes, Walkthrough Results, Journal Entries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 2018</td>
<td>Self-Efficacy Survey (2), Collective-Efficacy Survey (2), Meeting Minutes, Plus/Delta Meeting Reflection, Journal Entries, Focus Group Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Data coding.** The data was coded for confidentiality and organizational purposes. Teachers were assigned alphanumeric identifiers that were used throughout the course of the action. The first two characters of the code were letters denoting teachers’ status as a teacher. For example, a first-year teacher had the letters NT beginning his or her identifier, while a teacher leader was assigned an identifier beginning with the letters TL. The status codes are listed in Table 2.11 (p.58). Additionally, teachers were given a sequential numerical component that was added to their status codes. For example, if a teacher new to the profession, his unique code for data collection in the CoP was NT001. Similarly, a teacher who had been working in the district for eight years who is not a
teacher leader and is the third teacher of this background who wished to join the CoP was
given an identifier for data collection of VT003.

Table 2.11 – Teacher Status Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status/Code</th>
<th>Status Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT = New Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher new to the profession and the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TT = Transfer Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher new to the district, but not the profession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RT = Returning Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher with fewer than three years of experience in the profession or the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VT = Veteran Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher with more than three years of teaching experience in the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL = Teacher Leader</td>
<td>Teacher with supervisory/extra duties; focus group member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I collected and maintained all data in order to maintain confidentiality. All
information was organized and compiled for dissemination by me and me alone and used
to determine any deviations from the prescribed action as well as propose future action
that may have arisen through the study.

Data Analysis

Action research data sources included survey results, both Likert-scale scores and
anecdotal records, observations of professional learning in department meetings and
observations of implementation of strategies.

Data was organized into the three phases outlined above (i.e. Coalescing I,
Coalescing II, Maturing). Each phase was analyzed separately to determine whether or
not the goals of each phase are reached. In Coalescing: Phase I focused primarily on
establishing a vision and mission and developing shared leadership. Coalescing: Phase II
used data to determine if relational trust was built and maintained throughout and if
energy was sustained through the year. The focus of Maturing: Phase III was to
determine increases in teacher self-efficacy and analysis of group membership to determine continuous participation. Finally, this phase was utilized to collect data for future planning and recommendations for next steps.

Analysis of *Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey* (TES) (Tschaenn-Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, 1990) in Phase I was done utilizing the scoring model provided by the instrument’s creators and then modified to yield results that could be utilized for the purposes of this study (a full explanation of that structure will be revealed in Chapter 3). The results of the *Collective-Efficacy Scale* (CES) (Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk, 2003) were scored using the guide provided, as well. Both scoring rubrics were located on the website for Ohio State University, but were removed after the study began; therefore, I contacted the designers of both instruments to obtain scoring protocols and permission to continue using these instruments. Permission was obtained from both entities to use the instrument as well as the scoring guides.

As previously mentioned, each of the items on the TES long form are loaded into two categories, or factors (Table 2.5, p. 51): Teaching Efficacy (TE) and Personal Efficacy (PE). I calculated the unweighted means of those surveys taken in August 2017 and compared those to the results of the same survey when taken in May 2018. I compared the results for each factor to determine growth in each. I not only did this for the CoP as an entity, but also calculated the results for individual teachers. In order to maintain teacher anonymity, each teacher was given a code number when completing the first survey and asked to use that same number to answer selections on the follow-up survey and reflection pages. Those numbers were distributed randomly and the
participants were informed that I would not have access to identity of the owner of that number through the study period.

The results of the CES were used to gauge perceptions of the community’s climate at the beginning of the study period (August 2017) to the end of the period (May 2018). The results of this survey are calculated using the scoring guide provided by the instrument’s creator. The items were calculated using a Likert-scale measure ranging from 1-6. Each answer were given the number scored by the teacher (i.e. if a teacher marked 5, the value for that answer is 5). Ten of the twenty one items were reversed scored to ensure reliability. For example, one these items, if a teacher marked 6 – strongly agree as her answer, she was actually given 1 point for that answer instead of 6 points. The reverse-scored questions are: 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20. Much as with the first survey, teacher response forms were coded with the number they were assigned in August to track group progress and individual growth. A score of 126 is the high possible total for the CES.

Anecdotal records (i.e. research journal and meetings minutes) were collected and dated accordingly. They were categorized first by date collected and placed into three broad categories: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III. These categories were aligned to the phases of implementation of the CoP (see Table 2.12). They were analyzed and pieces of evidence will be placed into a chart determining if goals of each phase were met. The data collected via Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections allowed for corrections to the action to be made in throughout the bounded period should such adjustments prove necessary based on feedback contained in those reflections. These documents were also valuable in ascertaining the “health” of the community throughout the study period.
Table 2.12 – Categories for Qualitative Data (Meeting Minutes and Research Journal)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phase I</th>
<th>Phase II</th>
<th>Phase III</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
<td><strong>Goals</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Vision</td>
<td>Build and sustain</td>
<td>Sustained Energy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create Mission</td>
<td>relational trust</td>
<td>Sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establish Shared Leadership</td>
<td></td>
<td>Membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
<td><strong>Evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
<td>Meeting Minutes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms created</td>
<td>Continued focus</td>
<td>Topic focus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norms adhered to</td>
<td>focus</td>
<td>Participant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who speaks/how</td>
<td>Participant</td>
<td>attendance/co</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>often/content of</td>
<td>attendance</td>
<td>ntribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presentation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research Journal</td>
<td>Lapses in focus</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Off-topic discussions</td>
<td>New and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>Sustained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>participants</td>
<td>membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Concerns</td>
<td>Research Journal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>causing</td>
<td>Climate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>directional shift</td>
<td>Researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>gradual pull</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Collegiality</td>
<td>out</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Quality Assurances**

Throughout the course of this study, I worked closely and communicate frequently with my dissertation chairperson and share my research journal with him via email, Google Doc or other delivery method we agree upon. Frequent checks were made by dissertation committee members to ensure ethical practices are adhered to. I reviewed and reflected upon my journal weekly, minimally. The dissertation committee was used in the data review and analysis process to ensure correct usage of measures and collected data. I shared results of the data with faculty and staff members after the research is
reviewed by the dissertation committee, but I will keep all data in secured files on a private flash drive. The only people who had access to the data other than the me will be the principal of the high school, the participants and the dissertation committee. Finally, I sought the ongoing guidance of my immediate supervisor through the bounded period. Her 25 years of experience in education, English background and relationships with staff members proved to be invaluable assets.

**Limitations of the Study**

First, teacher leaders are accustomed to making collegial visits to classrooms of their co-workers and reporting anomalies they notice in instructional practice and deviations or violations of school or district policies. They are not evaluators, per se, but their input is crucial as evaluating personnel are not able to be in classrooms as often as teacher leaders. The focus group meetings they participated in were closely monitored so they focus strictly on their impression of efficacy of the teachers they observe to ensure they did not stray into topics of how things should be run, or discussion of teachers’ personalities. They have not been trained as evaluators and often brought their own biases and judgments into the observations data they collected.

Next, the teachers’ union has created a teacher contract that puts strict limitations on when administrators can offer professional development and when teacher time is allowed to be infringed upon outside the school day. The plan was to allow teachers to miss one TBT meeting per month to participate in the new teacher meetings. At times of the year when there is data to review (October, December, March), it was difficult to determine which meeting, if any, the teachers would be able to miss to attend the CoP. Additionally, these limitations dictate meetings cannot contain professional development
offerings. For this reason, it was crucial to develop shared leadership and have teacher input in creating the direction of the meetings. If they used data to realize there were specific needs and request training for those needs, I could then provide it at their request. If the first phase is not successful in instilling these needs in teachers through sharing survey results and building relational trust, I would need to investigate moving the meetings to district-scheduled professional development days.

**Summary**

With this study, I hoped to build the efficacy of new teachers and willing veterans by working as a functioning CoP in pursuit of a common vision. By helping transform the current state of PLCs into functioning and growing CoPs, I hoped to increase teachers’ competence, confidence and abilities in delivery of content specific instruction to students; thereby, increasing team functionality and teachers’ sense of self-efficacy. The next chapter reports and discusses data collected as well as makes recommendations for future actions based on outcomes.
CHAPTER 3
RESULTS, RECOMMENDATIONS, & REFLECTION

Introduction

Midwestern American High School (MAHS) is an urban high school in the Midwestern Region of United States and is situated between two major metropolises. MAHS is located in a high-poverty area and has consistently been reported by the state to be a persistently low achieving school. In an effort to close achievement gaps for students and offer supports for incoming teachers, I proposed a study in which I would attempt those actions by implementing a community of practice (CoP) as it has been recommended by the work of Wenger, Snyder & McDermott (2002).

I created a new teacher cohort and met with them once per month using one of the bimonthly professional learning community (PLC) meetings as an attendance measure. These meetings acted as a vehicle for building efficacy in teachers by providing a place and dedicated time for them to meet with veteran teachers in the building and share best practices to increase student engagement and achievement. In accordance with the CoP model (Wenger, McDermott & Snyder, 2002), I brought together a group of newly hired teachers who share a common interest in improving their efficacy in instruction and classroom management to work with school administrators and veteran teachers to that end. Convening this group offered an opportunity to gain voluntary participants to implement the CoP model focused on developing a shared sense of leadership as well as unity of vision and mission. I facilitated meetings and provided materials and resources to the group based on their perceptions of their respective needs in classroom management, instruction, engagement and general pedagogy. They offered insight into these needs.
through discussion in group meetings and feedback given on reflection forms after each scheduled meeting. I designed the CoP to provide opportunities for new teachers to work directly with building administrators, teacher leaders and peers to increase efficacy in instruction.

The specific research questions addressed in this study are as follows:

1. Was the implementation of the intervention successful?
2. Did teachers’ sense of self-efficacy increase as a result of the action?
3. Did teachers’ sense of collective efficacy change as a result of the action?

Throughout the course of the action, I worked as participant observer, providing insight, feedback and resources to this group of teachers as their needs were articulated. To answer the questions of whether or not the implementation of the intervention was successful, I analyzed my research journal, which contained observations from CoP meetings and focus-group meetings, reflection forms from teachers and two surveys given two times each, once before the intervention and once after.

This mixed-methods study relied on analysis of multiple data sources to ascertain successful implementation of the action. The examination of this data showed whether or not the action produced the desired effect (i.e., increase in teachers’ senses of self efficacy). Four sources of quantitative data (see Table 2.6) as well as four sources of qualitative data (see Table 2.7) were collected and analyzed for this study. Research Question 1 was examined through study of teachers’ reflections from meetings, meeting observations performed by researcher and recorded in research journal and focus-group discussions with teacher leaders. I collected qualitative data in my researcher’s journal.
and included analysis of meeting agendas and minutes. The second and third research questions utilized those same measures with the addition of the results of the *Teacher Efficacy Surveys* used for Question 2 and the results of the *Collective Efficacy Surveys* used for Question 3. These surveys were administered twice through the bounded period: once in fall and again in the spring.

I intended to analyze the *Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey* (Tschaenn-Moran & Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001) utilizing the model provided by the instrument’s creators. However, after collecting the data and performing the analysis based on the scoring criteria, the sample size was so small that there appeared to be no statistically significant data to determine the answer to Question 2 by performing a factor analysis. As a result, I completed a comparative analysis of the data based on grouping of items into subcategories (Table 3.1). I analyzed the items relating to personal efficacy after separating them into two subcategories relating to teachers’ beliefs about influences of students’ home lives and their beliefs about classroom and instructional influences on student performance and behavior. Each subcategory score were averaged and weighed against a highest possible score of 6.

Table 3.1 Subcategories for *Teacher Efficacy Survey*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subcategory</th>
<th>Item number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adaptability (TE)</td>
<td>6,7,11,14,18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effort (TE)</td>
<td>1,8,19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Management (TE)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation (TE)</td>
<td>5,12,22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home Influence (PE)</td>
<td>3,4,9,13,20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Influence (PE)</td>
<td>2,10,15,17,18,21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7 Item 15 is the only reverse-scored item that relates to teaching efficacy as opposed to personal efficacy.
I scored the *Collective-Efficacy Scale* (Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk, 2003) using the guide provided by the instrument’s creators with their permission and guidance. The scoring rubric is located on the website for Ohio State University. The results of the CES were used to gauge perceptions of the community’s climate at the beginning of the study period to the end. The items are calculated using a Likert-scale measure ranging from 1-6. Each answer was given the number scored by the teacher (i.e., if a teacher marks 5, the value for that answer is 5). Ten of the 21 items are reversed scored to ensure reliability. For example, one these items, if a teacher marks 6 – *strongly agree* as her answer, she would actually be given 1 point for that answer instead of 6 points, making a score of 126 the highest possible. The reverse-scored questions are: 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 16, 18, 19, 20.

I collected and recorded all necessary anecdotal records (i.e. research journal and meetings minutes) and categorized and reviewed them, first by date collected and placed the commentary into three broad categories: Phase I, Phase II, Phase III. These categories are aligned to the phases of implementation of the CoP (see Table 2.14). They were analyzed to determine if goals of each phase were met. The data collected via Plus/Delta Meeting Reflections (Appendix F) allowed for corrections to the action to be made throughout the bounded period. Teacher interviews were conducted on an as-needed basis contingent upon commentary from meeting reflections.

**Results**

All teachers involved in the community were given the *Collective-Efficacy Scale* (CES) twice, once in the fall and again in the spring. Likewise, all participants were given the *Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey* (TES) at the same times the CES was administered. In order to organize the data according to teacher status (i.e., number of years in the
profession and/or building), they were assigned a code to put atop each survey instrument. As mentioned in Chapter 2 (Table 2.11 p. 57), those codes are as follows:

Table 2.11 – Teacher Status Codes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Status/Code</th>
<th>Status Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NT = New Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher new to the profession and the district</td>
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<tr>
<td>TT = Transfer Teacher</td>
<td>Teacher new to the district, but not the profession</td>
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<td>RT = Returning Teacher</td>
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<td>VT = Veteran Teacher</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>TL = Teacher Leader</td>
<td>Teacher with supervisory/extra duties; focus group member</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After assigning status codes to all members of the community, both those who joined at the first meeting and those who joined after, I noted there were no returning teachers, veteran teachers or teacher leaders who chose to become part of the community. Therefore, the data is organized into four separate tables. Figure 3.1 (p.69) illustrates Collective Efficacy Rating (CE Rating) for each teacher from fall to spring. Table 3.3 (p. 70) outlines the results and shows positive or negative growth in teachers’ feelings of collective efficacy through the course of the study period.

Since there were so few teachers who were in attendance through the entire study period, I organized the participants into a table and provided pseudonyms I created for them. I had originally planned for a study sample of no fewer than 20 people. When it came time to conduct the surveys, there were significantly fewer teachers that that involved. As the study progressed, the membership changed due to individuals opting out of meetings, individuals being terminated or resigning, or individuals participating in other professional/personal events. The following is a list of designations includes each
participant who remained a member of the community through the entire bounded period (Table 3.2). I reported the data collected during the study and then used the data from the surveys and the qualitative information from the reflections and my journal notes to construct a narrative to explain the outcomes.

Table 3.2 – Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Code</th>
<th>NT001</th>
<th>NT002</th>
<th>NT003</th>
<th>NT004</th>
<th>NT005</th>
<th>TT003</th>
<th>TT004</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Designation</td>
<td>James</td>
<td>Liz</td>
<td>Dawn</td>
<td>Marcus</td>
<td>Jason</td>
<td>Janet</td>
<td>Carl</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Collective Efficacy

According to Goddard, Hoy and Woolfolk (2003), the higher the sum of all 21 items on the CES, the higher the teacher’s sense of collective efficacy. The highest scale score achievable is 126. In order to ascertain the CES for the group, one only need find the mean score of all participants.

![Figure 3.1 - Teachers’ Collective Efficacy Rating (CE Rating), Fall-Spring Comparison](image)

For the fall survey, the individual scores are: James (NT) = 100, Liz (NT) = 95, Dawn (NT) = 81, Marcus (NT) = 87, Jason (NT) = 107, Janet (TT) = 80, Carl (TT) = 90. The mean score for new teachers is 94 with a range of 81 to 107. The mean score for transfer teachers is 85.25 with a range of 80 to 90. When scores for both groups are
averaged together, the score for the transfer teachers causes the sense of collective 
efficacy for the group to drop to 89.625.

The individual spring scores for teachers’ sense of collective efficacy (Figure 3.3) 
are: James = 95, Liz = 91, Dawn = 90, Marcus = 84, Jason = 95, Janet = 66, Carl = 73. 
The mean score for new teachers is 91.2 with a range of 84 to 95 and the transfer teacher 
individual scores mean score for TT is 49.5. When scores for both groups are averaged 
together, the score for the transfer teacher numbers causes the sense of collective efficacy 
for the group to drop sharply to 70.35.

Table 3.3 – Collective Efficacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Collective Efficacy</th>
<th>James (NT)</th>
<th>Liz (NT)</th>
<th>Dawn (NT)</th>
<th>Marcus (NT)</th>
<th>Jason (NT)</th>
<th>Janet (TT)</th>
<th>Carl (TT)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fall</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>107</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>84</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Change</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>+9</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-12</td>
<td>-14</td>
<td>-17</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to Goddard, Hoy & Woolfolk (2003), the higher the sum of all 21 
items on the CES, the higher the teacher’s sense of collective efficacy. In order to 
ascertain the CES for the group, I found the mean score of all participants. Table 3.3 
shows 86% of teachers participating in the study showed negative growth in their senses 
of collective efficacy during the bounded period. When scores are averaged together to 
ascertain the collective efficacy for the group, the collective efficacy for the fall was 
89.625 followed by a collective efficacy score of 70.35; a drop of 19.275 points overall.

**Self-Efficacy**

To analyze the effect of the action on the teachers’ senses of self-efficacy, I 
collected data in the form of surveys from the *Teacher Self-Efficacy Survey* (Tschaenn-
Moran and Woolfolk-Hoy, 2001). The traditional statistical scoring for this instrument
would not yield any statistically significant results due to the small sample size.

Therefore, it became necessary to subcategorize the items within the two factors traditionally found within this instrument. The two factors are Personal Efficacy (PE) and Teaching Efficacy (TE). Those factors have been subcategorized (see Table 3.1, p.66) for analysis of teachers’ feelings of efficacy in their efficacy as teachers (Adaptability, Effort, Management, Preparation) and their personal impact on students as individuals (Home Influence and Classroom Influence). I organized the data based on individual responses to surveys items and placed them into charts based on questions subcategories and those two separate factors.

**Adaptability.** This subcategory of questions (6,7,11,14,18) is designed to discern a teacher’s ability to adapt instruction based on the needs of students in the class, observation of student success through performance and data analysis and ability to differentiate instruction based on student needs.

![Figure 3.2 – Adaptability, Fall to Spring](image)

According to the responses given on the instruments to measure teachers’ senses of self-efficacy in the fall and spring (Figure 3.2), Carl and Dawn, both first-year English
teachers, showed no change in sense of efficacy in their abilities to modify instruction based on student needs. Janet, a special education teacher in her first teaching assignment, remained nearly unchanged, except for more confidence that when grades increased, that showed more confidence in that teacher’s ability to adapt instruction. James reported increased confidence in being able to assist students in remembering information better the second time it is delivered. Jason, a first-year math teacher, showed an increase in 3 of 5 areas. Overall, new teachers showed a minimal increase in their abilities to adapt their instructions to support students in learning.

Transfer teacher data is limited to two teachers, as the rest either opted to no longer attend meetings, take surveys, or were not employed with the school through the course of the entire school year. Liz showed an increase in sense of efficacy in 2 of 5 areas, while remaining static in one. However, Liz did not have confidence in her ability to adapt instruction to the proper level for that student (item 6), or that a student’s grade improvement is a result of effective adaptation of instruction (item 11), even though she has taught social studies content in another school for two years before coming to MAHS. Marcus, an English and drama teacher returning to the classroom after a 14-year absence, remained static on items 11 and 18, but showed an overall decline in sense of self-efficacy in the ability to adapt instructional practices based on student needs and assessment data.

**Effort.** This subcategory of items (1,8,19) shows whether or not teachers believe that increases in students’ success is related directly to the efforts they put forth into attempting to reach students. Based on its use in this context, effort is not limited to
academic or personal efforts. The tacit assumption is the efforts made by the teacher are any means used to engage the student in education.

![Figure 3.3 – Effort, Fall to Spring](image)

Analysis of Figure 3.3 after the actions reveals Dawn and Janet showed no increase or decrease in their senses of belief that any effort impact student achievement. James is a special education teacher new to the profession and only showed and increase in the belief that his students’ achievement increases because of his efforts in delivering instruction (item 1). Observation data shows he frequently collaborated with peers and engaged students and parents in creating learning opportunities for his students. Carl showed a decrease in the belief that his efforts in his English classes would impact a student’s achievement after failed attempts to collaborate with special needs teachers in his collaborative classes. Jason displayed a decrease through the course of the action in the belief that he can get through to difficult students. Observation data shows that Jason had multiple discipline infractions that went unresolved and unaddressed in his classes (e.g. students talking over him while he taught, students on phones and disengaged,
student throwing condoms at one another and laughing loudly about it). This observation data was used to have multiple coaching sessions with Jason on managing his environment. The lessons, according to subsequent observations, went unheeded by Jason and negative behavior continued in his class.

Transfer teachers’ data show a similar pattern. Again, there were only two transfer teachers to track through the course of the action, as the others either opted to stop attending meetings, or are no longer employed by the district. Liz’s results were inconsistent, in that her responses indicate an increase in the belief that students do better when she exerts extra effort (item 1), her confidence concerning her belief that when she really tries, she is able to get through to most difficult students (item 8) decreased. Marcus’s responses mirror this sentiment. He believes that his efforts aid students’ increased performance (item 1), but has a decreased belief that his efforts allow him to reach difficult learners. Both transfer teachers show self-confidence, but lack of certainty in student ability to perform well. In conversations with both teachers, they referred to certain students as “bad kids” and others as “good kids.” I was able to ascertain that they both believe their efforts are most effective when helping “good kids” learn material, while they both intimated to me that “bad kids” were unreachable, no matter the effort exerted by the teacher.

**Management.** Item 16 on the TES instrument is the only item which assesses the teachers’ beliefs about their abilities to manage a classroom environment and address behaviors. The question asks if teachers know techniques to address student behaviors and redirect that particular student to task quickly and effectively. Those results are illustrated in Figure 3.4 (p.75).
While Dawn and Jason remained steady in their confidence to redirect students to task in their classrooms, James and Janet’s confidence increased in this area. Carl was the only new teacher who experienced a slight decline in his beliefs in his ability to address unwanted behaviors and manage student behaviors. During the course of CoP meetings, this area was a specific topic of discussion among members in nearly every meeting. Behaviors seemed to remain a concern throughout the year and, therefore, became a constant check-in topic for each meeting. As I worked with teachers individually and assigned teacher leaders as mentors, I focused heavily on management techniques and instructional practices that would enable teachers to control student behaviors more effectively.

![Figure 3.4 – Management, Fall to Spring](image)

Liz and Marcus’s confidence levels in their abilities to control the classroom environment were relatively high in the beginning and either remained so, or increased slightly through the course of the year. Some of the discussion in CoP meetings surrounding this topic were led by these transfer teachers and they offered insight into
how they have handled situations in the past at other schools. Marcus noted that he had issues in a different setting and explained to the group that his tactics, while effective in one setting, were not necessarily transferrable to clientele in this context. He stated, rather perfunctorily, that relationships were the keys to success, yet there was very little evidence in walkthroughs and observations that students had formed any type of bond or relationship with him; at the end of class, students left immediately, many teachers had notes or trinkets that were given to them by students and Marcus had none displayed and so on.

Discussion emerged about the most effective means to translate those actions from previous settings be translated to actionable steps in the current setting. Liz’s contributions to these discussions were limited to instructional practices. One of her discussions centered around the purchase of a canned curriculum she bought with her own money that was “fun and engaging.” She touted this type of gamesmanship in the classroom as the best way to engage students in learning and manage the room. While there is some truth to this adage, discipline data shows Liz had a comparatively higher rate of writing office referrals for discipline incidents than others in the CoP. If the methods Liz used in class were effective, this should not have been the case.

**Preparation.** Items 5, 12 and 22 focus on teachers’ beliefs in their preparation for the field by their respective college programs. Given the nature of these items and the preparedness of the teachers, pre-service, the assumption is that there should be change in the responses for new teachers, since teachers had yet to complete practical, full-time experience as an educator (Figure 3.5).
New teachers maintain their belief in their abilities to deal with most learning problems (item 5), but transfer teachers’ confidence in this area decreased dramatically as the study period continued. Only James demonstrated increased belief in his abilities to handle learning difficulties by the end of the bounded period. James’s position in the organization was changed mid-action. He was moved from working with students with emotional disabilities to working with moderately disabled students in a school-to-work program. He was placed in this position and given the opportunity to work and interact collaboratively with students, families and community members. This move seems to have allowed James to access his talents and thrive as a first year teacher.

New teachers maintained their belief that students were able to learn concepts quickly because they, as teachers, were trained well enough to deliver the content. Carl struggled as the year drew, ostensibly due to a conflict with a collaborative teacher in his classroom he deemed ineffective. I listened to his concerns and intervened to coach him in collaborative teaching methodologies and ways to open up dialogue with hi
collaborative teacher (e.g. engage her in the planning process, ask for assistance with specific content/students in certain classes, and so on). I assured him that the relationships in a collaborative setting between adults took time to build, just as they did with students. I continued to work with him, as well as the collaborative teacher for the remainder of the year.

The only new teacher who showed an increase in his belief that her knowledge helped students master concepts quickly (item 12) was Jason. Classroom performance data for students showed this belief was unrealistic, as only 32% of his students were passing his class at any given point during the school year. This was due in large part to the fact that he never graded assignments and did not keep up with his grade book after putting in only two to three grades at the beginning of each quarter. He was assigned a mentor immediately due to struggles with assigning and grading materials, but it became apparent that he lacked some pedagogical skills and content knowledge. He was resistant to assistance, although he was made aware of his struggles. At the end of the study period, he reported feeling confident in his ability to help students master concepts despite being placed on an action plan for improvement by his supervisor. Jason did not appear to believe he was struggling as a teacher, even after being shown all the data.

All new teachers stated confidently, by scoring a 5 or 6 on the Likert scale, that they were well prepared with the necessary skills to be an effective teacher. While most either maintained, or elevated in this belief, Carl fell by two score levels to a 4 from the highest level of 6. A discussion with him revealed that he was confident in his abilities at the beginning of the year based on his training, but he was not as confident at the end of the year after struggling to teach concepts to struggling learners and failing to form
collegial bonds with his collaborative teacher. Carl based his successes on the successes of his students on standardized and summative assessments. He reported that their failure to reach proficiency was his failure as well; hence, the decrease in his belief in his training.

Transfer teachers showed a diminished belief that their pre-service training prepared them to be able to handle most learning problems that arose in their classrooms. Liz dropped from a moderately high confidence level to a moderately low level during the study period (item 5). This item, however, defines the amount of training, not the quality of training necessary for success. Marcus only displayed slight confidence in the ability to address any learning needing of students in the classroom and showed a decrease to a slight disbelief in that ability based on training he received in the post-secondary setting. Perhaps this is due to the fact that Marcus was a teacher of English over who returned to the classroom after a 14-year hiatus. However, Liz and Marcus maintained or grew in the belief that they possessed the required content knowledge to assist students in mastering concepts (i.e. Liz remained steady; Marcus increased by 2 points). Observation data shows that both transfer teachers appeared to possess the knowledge of content necessary to deliver basic instruction, but the instruction delivered was low-level (i.e. recall). There was very little practical application or real-world appeal to the instruction in these classes.

After experiencing the context and situating the experience within the context of other educational facilities, transfer teachers are better able to determine if they were prepared to handle to specific clientele of this school as opposed to other schools where
they have taught. The overall belief of the transfer teachers is that their training provided them with skills sufficient to help students achieve success in their classrooms (item 22).

**Home Influence.** The TES contains items that measure a teacher’s sense of efficacy and what influences a student’s home life has on that ability (items 3, 4, 9, 13 and 20). The answers to these questions illuminate teacher’s beliefs about the amount a student can learned based on external factors.

![Figure 3.6 – Home Influence (TE), Fall to Spring](image)

When the first survey was given, Figure 3.6 shows 3 out of 5 new teachers strongly disagreed that the amount a student can learn is related in any way to their family background, while one only moderately disagreed with the statement. Only James disagreed slightly more than agreed. The second time the teachers took the survey, only James increased to *moderately disagree* with that statement while all other new teachers’ responses decreased by at least one level. This is perhaps due to James’s shift in purpose within the organization. The new position he was assigned midyear afforded him greater opportunities to seek meaningful educational experiences for his students, inside and
outside the organization, and collaborate with the community partners for the betterment of his students.

Carl’s response dropped from strongly disagreeing with the statement to agree more than disagree. He had experienced some struggles with parental engagement through the school year. His parent contact information shows that he tried frequently to make contact with parents and was often met with disconnected phones, voicemail boxes that were not set up and unreturned messages. Upon discussing this issue in meetings, it was quickly discovered this was a frustration shared by all teachers in CoP.

Further, all new teachers moderately disagreed with the idea that a teacher is limited by what he or she can do in the classroom because of the influences of the home (item 9). Analysis of the second survey shows that all new teachers maintained their belief in the notion that the home influence did not impinge on a teacher’s abilities to deliver instruction in the classroom. While the survey data insists this is the feeling, observation data from CoP meetings shows frequent discussions centered around the frustration of students sleeping in class because no one makes them go to bed at home, students not focused on content because their parent said math was useless and other similar commentary.

All new teachers disagreed slightly more than they agreed (at minimum) with the idea that students would not be receiving of discipline at school if they were not disciplined at home. By the time the second survey was taken, only Carl’s response changed to moderately agreeing with that statement. Similarly, teachers clung to the idea that, no matter what parents did or did not do for their students at home, the impact on what the teacher could do was minimal (item 13). Finally, all new teachers moderately or
strongly disagreed that a student’s motivation was tied to his or her home life (item 20). This remained true through the bounded period as evidenced by the second round data, which shows an increase in the strength of the disagreement by new teachers.

Transfer teachers responses to items regarding their personal efficacy and abilities to reach students in the classroom regardless of home influences varied slightly from the new teachers’ responses. From the beginning, neither transfer teacher believed factors in the home impacted the amount a student can learn. Marcus never waivered in the idea that a teacher is limited in what he or she can achieve based on the influences of the home. Liz only slightly disagreed with that statement at first, but then subscribed to the notion that home factors limited her abilities in the classroom. Liz taught a required social studies course and had many difficulties engaging students. She often noted that students were not engaged because of influences outside the classroom and that she could never reach parents to ask for assistance in engaging students. Marcus taught honors English students and theater classes. He noted that those students in honors courses were successful because those parents “cared about their kids’ education,” while the general track students in theater classes were just regular kids and he had the same issues reaching parents. This tended to be a popular theme in discussions during CoP meetings – honors students had parents who cared, everyone else did not.

With regard to discipline, by the end of the year the transfer teachers both at least disagreed that students who were not disciplined at home would resist discipline at school. This is after Liz strongly agreed this was the case. Further, Liz strongly agreed with the notion that she could do more for her students if parents would do more for their children at home and never waivered in this belief, while Marcus moderately disagreed at
first and only slightly agreed at the end of the bounded period. Marcus consistently disagreed moderately that, ultimately, teachers cannot do much for students because the home environment is too great an influence (item 20). Again, Marcus often made grand statements about his ability to form relationships with students and, thus, engage them in learning. All observation evidence shows there was little evidence of positive relationships between Marcus and his students, or Marcus and his colleagues, for that matter. In fact, he often left CoP meetings early, if he attended at all. Liz was consistent in the response to this item, also; however, she agreed that this is the case and teachers can only be as successful in reaching students as the student’s home life will allow.

As the meetings progressed, suggestions were made by community members to focus on particular student behaviors in classes as well as external factors and carry-in behaviors. Much of the discussion was how to understand the home and the school as separate entities and how best to proceed with instruction to get the highest possible amount of engagement from students as possible, given home circumstances. Liz was always extremely vocal in these discussions and would frequently attempt to turn the conversation to the negative, by mentioning what specific students were doing in her class and what she suspected the causes for these behaviors might have been. Marcus, when in attendance, would often add to the attempts to accentuate the negative.

I referred everyone back to the norms and expectations of the group when these individual discussions began to crop up. The English teacher leader noted that the new teachers in the English department ignored the discussions leading to these negative comments by this transfer teacher. She reported that the new teachers attributed it to the
Marcus and another transfer teacher (one who was eventually terminated midyear) having been out of the classroom for so long and not being able to acclimate to the environment.

**Classroom Influence.** Items 2,10,15,17 and 21 are questions that also ask teachers to offer their opinions on the effects of students’ home lives, but the questions are designed to determine whether or not teachers believe the classroom influences is enough to engage students in academics and overcome the external factors of home life.

![Figure 3.7 – Classroom Influence (TE), Fall to Spring](image)

When asked if the hours in their classes have little impact on students compared to their home lives (item 2), all 5 new teachers moderately disagreed with the statement. By the second round of data collection, 3 of those 5 had dropped to merely disagreement with the statement, while Carl agreed that the time in his class had less of an impact than a student's home life. Item 10 stated that teachers are not a powerful impact in students’ lives. Three of five new teachers strongly disagreed with that statement in the beginning and the other two moderately disagreed. Figure 3.7 illustrates that this remained unchanged throughout the bounded period. Item 15 is the only item addressing personal
efficacy that is reverse scored. The results were scored for statistical analysis. Since the statistics do not yield and statistically significant results, the charted answers might be misleading. In the case of this item, the higher the score, the more a teacher agrees with the statement. Therefore, when asked if they believed the influences of the home can be overcome by a teacher (item 15), all five new teachers moderately to strongly agreed with this notion on the first round of data collection. In the second round, two of five teachers still agreed with the idea, but not strongly, or even moderately. Contradictorily, three of five new teachers conceded to the notion that teachers with excellent teaching abilities may not be able to reach all students (item 17). Janet and Jason both maintained their moderate agreement that a good teacher can reach students throughout the study period, although both continued to struggle with the notion. Janet continued to show productive struggle in her classroom (both self-contained and collaborative) by addressing students’ behaviors. Jason, however, continued say a good teacher could reach students, but could not and would not match the belief with deeds that would show results in that area.

Meeting notes reveal discussions in CoP meetings sometimes led to discussions of community perceptions of the school, changes in community population and community values, etc. New teachers and transfer teachers alike expressed concern about carry-in behaviors exhibited by their students. As a group, we worked to generate ideas on how to combat external factors impacting student engagement in the classroom. The main idea discussed among the group members was that of relational bonds formed between teachers and students. Teachers talked about students wanting to have a teacher in their lives who could be a trustworthy and stable influence in a community in transition. Carl and Dawn proposed a new class that would allow them to tap into the students’ social
circle and teach them how to navigate the treacherous world of social media, while combatting issues surrounding the medium. Their class was approved for the following school year. They hope to form relationships with students and help them navigate the electronic world around them safely by tapping in to their own youthful knowledge base. Marcus proposed a club for lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender students (LGBT Club) to create a safe place and sense of belonging for some who may feel outcast. The club was approved and meets bimonthly.

In these ways, the CoP worked as a team to identify ways teachers could impact students positively and make the school a safe environment for them to escape the source of some of their external influences that disrupt their learning, but the methods will only be as effective as those engaged in execution. Unfortunately, the class Carl and Dawn proposed was removed from the master schedule at the last minute because the outgoing interim curriculum director (who was released for being ineffective) did not release the course description in enough time to be placed in the course catalog for the upcoming year and it was never offered. The club started by Marcus was also a relative non-starter. He would have the group meet in his room and then leave whenever he had graduate classes or events he needed to attend for his own children. The students were often left alone without leadership, guidance, or supervision. I informed Marcus they would no longer be allowed to meet until he was able to devote the time required to such an endeavor. He disbanded the group and told them the administration said they could not have an LGBTQ club.

Finally, Carl and Dawn are the only new teachers who showed a shift in their ideas about ability grouping students (item 21). While James, Janet and Jason maintained
agreement that students should be grouped according to ability to engage students “at their level,” Carl moderately disagreed with this notion at first, before agreeing with the idea in spring. Dawn’s disagreement for ability grouping only grew stronger as the year continued; possibly due to the fact that her instructional practice was designed to reach as many students on as many levels as possible. Observation data showed Dawn’s classes were characterized by utilization of collaborative teachers and resources effectively to engage all students in learning. There were three special education teachers in the meetings, as well as the supervisor of student services (i.e. me). This was a missed opportunity to share best practices and build teachers’ confidence in their abilities to reach all students.

Just as the new teachers had, transfer teachers agreed that their classroom environment was not enough to combat external factors impacting student behaviors and engagement. Additionally, Marcus and Liz believed teachers can have a powerful impact on students in the classroom regardless of outside influences of the home and adhered to that belief through the bounded period. Transfer teachers’ perceptions of their abilities to reach students changed for the worse over time. They insisted at first that the experiences of students outside the classroom can be overcome by good teaching (item 15) and disagreed that a good teacher may not be able to reach all students (item 17). This showed a hopeful and positive attitude towards their abilities on the first round of surveys. The second round of surveys showed a steadfast belief that good teaching can overcome external factors, but they both strongly agreed, in the end, that a good teacher may not, in fact, be able to reach all students. Meeting notes reveal a drastic change after the midyear break when one of the transfer teachers (whose results are not included here)
was released due to professional negligence and violations of ethical codes. The perception of the transfer teachers, as noted by their teacher leaders, is that the students reported their teacher and the teacher was punished for student violations. Marcus became fast friends with an ineffective teacher who was fired midyear and two veteran teachers who made a daily habit of publicly insulting their younger peers in front of their classes. Liz had had multiple confrontations with students that nearly escalated to violent, physical altercations. She even got on a bus to threaten retaliation against any student who tried to destroy her personal property, following a verbal altercation and a student threat to flatten her tires. Incidents such as these most assuredly account for the change in transfer teacher ideas about their impact as teachers.

Finally, transfer teachers held true to their strong belief that students need to be placed with slower learning groups to meet academic expectations. Their experiences in other institutions have guided their discussions in meetings when they talked to special education teachers about why they do not pull students from the regular classroom setting more often. The only discussion surrounding differentiated instructional practices was how many students were due specifically designed instruction (SDI) according to their individualized education plans (IEP) and why other students without IEPs could not be pulled from the classroom setting with those who did, so others could learn.

**Review of Results**

This research study was designed to implement and monitor a community of practice (Wenger, McDermott and Snyder, 2002). The model for a community of practice (CoP) is based on the notions of volunteer participation, shared leadership (both formal and informal from internal and external organizations) and sharing knowledge and
innovation both within the community and outside its boundaries. The research questions for the study and all of the data collected suggest revisiting and revising the original questions that guided this study. The premise of the intervention was putting in place a community of practice that would replace PLC structures and create a vehicle by which professional learning could grow among teachers within a sustainable framework. The implementations was done with fidelity and according to the framework created by Wenger and associates (2002). The unfortunate challenges arose as a result of a toxic work climate that encapsulated multiple aspects of the organization, from central office on down.

The first two steps of implementing a CoP are to design the community for evolution and open a dialogue between internal and external perspectives (Wenger and associates, 2002). I gathered together new teachers and transfer teachers and had others invited to the community. As Wenger and colleagues (2002) note, CoPs are not only groups of individuals who share passion for a given topic or, in this case, content, but also share a common set of concerns and problems and their passionate devotion to engage in problem solving to alleviate the issues from which the concerns stem. Our group met and created a common vision: coming together to share best practices to increase personal and professional efficacy. With that vision in mind, we developed our group norms. These norms were to maintain and safe and supportive environment for sharing professional practices, and having rich and valuable discussions that remained focused on a given topic without extending to involve individual student issues. Research predating A Nation at Risk by Rogus and Martin (1979) and Senge (2012) alludes to the importance of teachers sharing ideas rather than teaching in a vacuum. It is that
philosophy that drove the creation of this CoP. With the dialogue opened and the mission, vision and norms created and agreed upon, the first two steps of implementation were successfully completed.

The third step of implementation of a CoP is inviting differing levels of participation (Wenger, Snyder and McDermott, 2002). The goal was to have community members take on leadership roles. This is where veteran teachers and teacher leaders were to be of value. However, there was no participation by those groups. One teacher leader showed up to one meeting and it was to do an observation for a college class she was taking. I had my administrative assistant send out reminders and invitations to meetings, advertise dates and times for meetings and add those items to the newsletter she created and sent to the staff each week. None of these efforts resulted in increased membership or attendance.

Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008) noted that a mere 5-7% of leaders impact student success directly and it is for this reason the most effective manner by which a leader can improve student achievement is by understanding and developing people. Wenger, Snyder and McDermott (2002) state, as part of this third step of implementation, that every community needs to have a coordinator – one who organizes events and obtains materials for the community. I, as participant researcher, offered insight to the group when I was asked for assistance, obtained resources and answered questions when needed. In order to foster a sense of shared leadership, I used the reflection sheets filled out by teachers after meetings to organize the next meeting and suggest ideas to members for leadership opportunities within the group. Wenger, Snyder and McDermott (2002) state that, as the community matures, there is a core group of members (15-20%) who
take on leadership roles and drive the community. In this instance, membership never
grew beyond transfer teachers and new teachers. The number of new teachers only
remained steady at five. There were 12, but 7 of them never attended meetings. Of those,
two were terminated before midyear. There were, at one time, six transfer teachers. One
was terminated in December, one ceased attending meetings after the first meeting, one
joined in second semester and never took the survey, while another only attended one
meeting. No teacher leaders attended meetings or offered contributions to meeting
agendas or community needs. Membership in the community never reached stasis, never
grew in number and none of the new teachers ever took a leadership role, even when
asked to do so. Many of the new teachers intimated to me that they felt like they did not
know enough about the profession to contribute to the community. That sentiment, in
itself, constitutes a failure of implementation.

**Barriers to Success**

**Phase I.** This first of many barriers to success occurred in the summer of 2017,
before the beginning of the bounded period. The sitting superintendent was embroiled in
negative relations with some of the board members that led to his opting for retirement.
When the announcement was made, the sitting principal of the high school was, in many
people’s minds, the ideal choice for the next superintendent. She was knowledgeable,
well liked and more than capable. She was approached by board members and asked to
apply. After weighing her options and agonizing with the decision, she applied. She was
contacted by the very same board members who pursued her the next day and told they
would not be interviewing her.
While not many in the district knew this initially, there were outgoing members of the principal’s administrative team (those who were retiring) who voiced their discontentment with this decision. The man they hired instead had little experience in leadership and was very young. The unspoken belief in the district is that he was a diversity hire. This was the first incident that caused a decline in morale, especially at MAHS.

When he came to the district, he had many ideas on what constitutes innovations, best practices and organizational structure. All of those things ran counter to what was currently in place. He added programs, created pathways, issued mandates and eliminated positions, all within his first four months in office. This type of immediate restructuring caused some panic and confusion among new teachers and veterans. Most were concerned about holding on to their positions for the remainder of the year, not just the following year. It was this type of event I was not prepared to address. No matter how much I tried to reassure the group, it seemed as though they were getting the news of another colleague being terminated weekly. This bred fear and confusion among staff members and they were cautious in all they did for the entire year. I consider myself a big-picture thinker, someone who was prepared for any eventuality. I was not prepared for this and it became a bigger issue as the bounded period drew on to a close.

The first meeting was delayed by one month and I was not able to meet with the new teachers until September. They had already been in the building, experiencing their teacher teams and students before there was time to prepare. Many of the teachers came into the first meeting in September with what can only be described as trepidation. The first matter brought up for discussion was student behavior and classroom management.
Even after developing the norms, teachers still wanted to discuss individual student behaviors that were of concern.

One transfer teacher noted on her first reflection form that “taking a survey was not helpful” and never returned to CoP meetings. She did, however, become a teacher who was always in the office, writing referrals for students and demanding they be punished for any and every behavior. We discussed in CoP what behaviors constituted writing referrals for students and how to combat certain behaviors in subsequent meetings, but she was not in attendance at those sessions.

**Phase II.** The attempt to reach coalescence was failing as we entered the second phase. The membership of the CoP had waned and only nine teachers were coming with any consistency. Then an issue arose with one of the transfer teachers. For this reflection, her name is Carrie. In the weeks leading up to the November and December meetings, I had to put Carrie on a corrective action plan. She was assigning students multiple packets of work that was mostly vocabulary, out of context. I had spoken to her on multiple occasions about actually interacting with students, talking to them, leading discussions and teaching them. This conversation and action plan came about not only from my own observations, but also from reports of similar findings from the English teacher leader and another assistant principal.

Carrie blatantly and flatly refused to interact with students. I found that this was her first foray back into the classroom after being out for nearly a decade to raise her children. This was one of the many factors that contributed to a close relationship between her and Marcus – they were both returning to the classroom after lengthy absences from the profession. I put Carrie on a professional action plan and coached her
with strategies for student engagement and attempted to be a collaborative partner in her development of lessons and activities. Carrie continued to sit behind her desk and refused to use any of the strategies, consistently assigning vocabulary worksheets to her classes.

Carrie completely disengaged from any work in CoP and was often sardonic in her reflective commentary on the forms at the end of meetings and verbally combative with me every time I spoke with her. She then skipped the CoP for November. When we tested students for state testing in December, she sat behind her desk and graded papers and left writing and reading annotation posters up in her room along with instructions for reading the state assessment successfully up on her board. All of these were violations of testing protocols. All of these behaviors were committed after being heavily trained on state testing expectations, protocols and consequences for violating these rules. Due to her unwillingness to follow suggestions of peers, instructions of supervisors and mandates of the state, she was terminated before the December CoP. Events such as this one deepened a sense of trepidation in the community and forced membership to drop, rather than increase. Teachers did not know of Carrie’s violations and contrary behaviors and I could not share those with them, so they assumed they could also be let go at any time.

By this phase, many of the new teachers had already had confrontations with others in their department. Two new English teachers, Carl and Dawn, along with another new English teacher (who did not attend CoP meetings) were all confronted by veteran teachers in the English department. The veteran teachers walked into new teachers’ rooms and berated them openly in front of students for a multitude of reasons, claiming the new teachers cannot control their students and should not let their kids be out of
control in common areas. The non-attendee was reduced to tears in one of the recent confrontations. Participant Janet was a special education teacher who was assigned to work collaboratively with both veteran teachers who confronted the new teachers in the English department. Observational data shows that she began withdraw from collaborative efforts in classes with veteran teachers and continued to be silent and reserved during CoP meetings, so as to not be caught in the middle of the situation.

None of the English teachers discussed these issues in open meeting, to their credit, but the incidents seem to have made them unwilling to share their practices in the room with peers. As I mentioned, Janet withdrew, as well. The incidents, though addressed by leadership, seem to have forced the new teachers into silence. As a result, there was a growing rift in the English department that was compounded by the resentment of the veteran teachers for being disciplined for their actions. Observations showed a growing sense of unease among new teachers in that department and a continuing sense of inadequacy felt by them. The next compounding factor, at least for four of the new teachers, was the removal of the English teacher leader as a buffer.

The use of focus groups of approximately 5 to 10 participants can provide critical information or insight that would not be accessible due to the limited interaction of with all participants by the researcher and provide valuable qualitative data about the feelings and perceptions of a larger group (Casey, 2009; Morgan 1997). The focus group in this study became unreliable as a source of information. It was difficult to get the teacher leaders to focus on the needs of the teachers at hand after the first focus group meeting because they were all concerned with their standing as teacher leaders. They were all called to a meeting at central office by the superintendent in the middle of the fall
semester and told they will no longer be teacher leaders next year. All teacher leadership positions are being eliminated to create 12.5 new teacher positions based in central office starting in the 2018-2019 school year. As a result, teacher leader input waned as the study period continued. There were three teacher leaders who continued to contribute minimally to focus group sessions. One was hired to a new position for the following school year and stopped attending teacher leader meetings; the math teacher leader had to pick up extra classes because one of her teachers was committed to a mental health facility; another teacher leader stopped attending altogether, since his position was eliminated. The information gleaned from these meetings was helpful in the beginning and became less insightful and frequent due to external factors beyond my control.

**Phase III.** Jason, a first-year math teacher, attended CoP regularly and was initially having issues with management and leading his classes. In CoP, he and the group have discussed what behaviors need to be turned in to the office and how to handle others that are outside the norm. In April, he was evaluated by his supervisor (not me) and was released for not performing his duties and ineffective teaching practices (e.g. classroom management, grading policies, instruction, etc.). He had not graded any assignments, or put them in the grade book since September, even after CoP had discussed strategies for managing the workload and staying abreast of grading. He struggled to maintain control of his students even after discussing practices in meetings and working with his teacher leader to grow in these areas. His supervisor put him on an action plan for these behaviors. To his credit, he continued to attend CoP meetings. Unfortunately, he did not seem to heed any advice shared through discussions in these meetings. He consistently
failed to grade any work given to students, or put any of the grades in the grade book. He was terminated in April and will not return for the following school year.

Perhaps the biggest barrier Jason encountered was his association outside CoP with another first-year math teacher who refused to attend – I will refer to him as “Hans.” Hans quickly became a friend of Jason’s. They spent time together both in and out of school. Hans did not attend a single meeting and began having psychotic episodes with increasing frequency. His students reported that he said strange things in class such (e.g. he was on the lookout for cartel members in his room, one student was a drug mule for Columbians, his mom was looking for him in the hall, and such). Hans’s colleagues reported that he turned his desk into a fort and he hid behind it, peering out at students while avoiding any type of teaching. He then began to revert mentally to a younger age and talk like a child, asking for his mom. By March, he decided to take medical leave for the remainder of the year and his spouse had him committed to an institution for psychological evaluation.

Hans also did very little instruction, rarely graded papers and assigned lots of assignments, expecting students to be able to do them without guidance. These practices are professionally self-destructive, but this type of collegial relationship is caustic. I discuss these types of relationships later in *The Gathering Storm*. Jason’s surveys at the end of the year showed slight increases in his sense of self-efficacy, possibly because he thought showing he had positive growth may save his position in the school. Comments on his post-session feedback forms show that he believed he needed no extra assistance and he felt confident in his abilities to use information and strategies shared in CoP, although observation data directly contradicted these statements.
Declining Sense of Efficacy

Often times, leaders will posit the notion that there is no excuse for waning performance or feelings of being devalued. I agree there are not excuses, but there are reasons for such struggles. Students at MAHS come into the school at least two grade levels below the norm in reading, writing and mathematics. Another portion of the population comes in three grade levels below. This academic piece alone makes instructional practices a challenge at MAHS, but there are more factors at play in an urban setting.

Table 3.4 – Discipline Data, MAHS, August 2017 – May 2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infraction</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number of Infractions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Disruption/Disrespect</td>
<td>A student fails to comply with request of a staff member; yelling out; rude interactions</td>
<td>809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abusive Communication</td>
<td>Swearing; cursing; calling names at another</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting</td>
<td>Two or more students engaged in physical attack</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Aggression; Intimidation; Harassment</td>
<td>Student intimidating another by threat of physical violence</td>
<td>117</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gang Activity</td>
<td>Carrying out gang activity and wearing gang colors on school property</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inducing Panic</td>
<td>Threatening school violence in writing or verbally</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assault</td>
<td>One-sided physical attack on another</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs</td>
<td>Dealing, possession or using of illegal substances</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weapons</td>
<td>Possession or use of guns, knives or other dangerous instrument on school grounds</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The environment of MAHS is not only toxic with regard to some of the cultural interactions among new and veteran teachers, but student behaviors are often factors in teachers feeling ineffective, or even frightened. Violent and illegal behaviors abound at MAHS. The numbers of unwanted and criminal behaviors in Table 3.11 are staggering and, to the casual observer, are cause for alarm.

The administrative team worked diligently and collaboratively with the school resource officer and local law enforcement to combat these behaviors, but the school environment is a microcosmic representation of the community it serves. There are multiple instances of assault, drug use and dealing, gang activity and illegal conveyance of weapons. When looking at the total number of assault cases for the 2017-2018 school year, it is important to note that two of those assaults were on teachers and committed by students.

It is important to note these numbers are incidents that have been reported by teachers. There are those who make it a practice to address as many as they can on their own before contacting administration for intervention. Additionally, these numbers do not include minor infractions, such as truancy, tardy, lying, forgery or destruction of property.

**Implementation and Recommendations**

**Protected Time**

MAHS teachers’ time is protected by the mandates of a teachers’ union. These unions are a vital entity in educational institutions, as they are needed to protect the rights and interests of the teachers. Master agreements most often mandate that teachers will be paid for any extra duty outside the school day and, should those teachers not be
compensated for their efforts, they are not required to participate. Many of the new teachers in this study opted not to participate because, even though they are encouraged to do so to form collegial bonds, learn the school environment and grow professionally, they are not bound by contract to do so (i.e. there is no consequence for not attending). If these meetings are to be of value and if a leader truly desires the input and expertise of the members, protected time must be given to the meetings. They must be allowed to take place during the course of the school day and coverage given to participants so they can feel free to participate meaningful and contribute to the professional growth and pool of best practices for themselves and their colleagues.

The Gathering Storm

The stages of group formation are a good tool to have when planning the formation of a community for any specific purpose. Tuckman’s (1965) stages of group formation are a good base of knowledge to have when beginning the process; however, I believe there is a middle stage that a leader must address. The first stage is forming, in which teachers are gathered together for a specific task. The next stage is storming; the resistance to task performance and the influence of the group. There is a stage in between these two leaders need to be aware of – The Gathering Storm.

The gathering storm is what I call the stage after the group is formed, before the group is aware of the expectations or membership. It is this in between where leaders, especially those in an educational organization, must prepare to address situations that may impact the group effectiveness before the group ever meets. Factors to look for in this stage are location of members in the building and their relative location to non-members who may have acerbic influence. For example, if three new teachers are
selected to be part of a group and their classrooms are located in close proximity to said acerbic personality, it would be best to move the physical location of the unwanted influence so that person is not able to easily influence others.

Further, leaders sometimes select people who are quite vocal, if not focused in what they are vocal about to be on committees. This is a wonderful practice is a leader is attempting to engage a person who is on the precipice of being one of the aforementioned acerbic personalities. The most effective way to address this phenomenon is to meet with this person before the first community meeting, after they have been selected and assure them they have been selected for their insight, expertise and ability to be a positive voice for change. While this may seem to be the undeserved bolstering of an ego, it often time provides the praise, confidence and motivation needed to bring that person back from the edge of becoming a cancerous voice in the organizations.

Finally, leaders may want to consider a pre-conference to be held with members who are new to the organization and, in the interest of transparency and preparedness, give them insight into the organizational climate. This meeting can serve as an introduction to the community and better prepare new members for behaviors they may witness and encounter throughout the developmental stages of the formation of the group.

**Teacher Anxiety**

Left to their own devices, teacher in this context chose to not attend any outside function or meeting unless there is the promise of compensation, either in the form of monetary benefits or compensatory time off. New teachers, while far more likely to attend because they are new to the profession and want to be perceived as hardworking, are less likely to share in leadership, as they feel they have not yet earned it, or have not
gained enough experience in the field to add to the collective knowledge base of the group. Observations show this remains true even when they receive positive feedback from colleagues who have visited their rooms. Dawn used innovative technological strategies to foster engagement in her students and refused to share the practice in an open forum, even after being praised by peers, students and leaders for her efforts.

Additionally, new teachers, either new to the profession or to the district, are not often willing to take leadership roles, or any risk where they may make an error in front of their supervisor, immediate or otherwise. Even though I informed the community on multiple occasions that they were not being evaluated during our meetings, the vast majority of teachers in the room (all but two) were evaluated by me during the course of the year. I explained to the teachers engaged in the intervention that this phenomenon was not by design. The observation and evaluation schedule was created by the building principal and was in no way meant to place teachers in a position to be evaluated on participation in these meetings. The message that this was a non-evaluative process was further complicated when the teachers were told they could be evaluated by their supervisors from the time they entered the building to the time they left for the day. Although I tried to resolve this notion with them and clear up any mixed messages, they were still cautious in meetings and reluctant to share and lead.

**Lessons Learned**

Although the implementation of the intervention was done with fidelity and in keeping with the framework or Wenger, Snyder & McDermott (2002), The desired outcome was not achieved. In this context and for this purpose, the community of practice model was not practical for many reasons. First, the implementation of the
model, regardless of how it followed the protocol for creating and maintaining a community of practice, could not work because of the designated meeting time. In order to garner interest and foster leadership from veteran teachers within the building, the meetings must occur within the boundaries of the school day. Teachers, especially those working in a highly volatile, urban setting are not willing to stay and put in extra time at the end of the day if it is not mandated that they do so.

Furthermore, new teachers are often reluctant to take on leadership roles, especially in any situation in which they may not be the most experienced person in the room. In these instances, they often require guidance from professionals who have been in the field longer than they have. It is for this reason the PLC model might be more appropriate when holding new teacher institutes. Regardless of how many times I encouraged teachers to bring information to meetings and share, they intimated to me that they needed modeling and guidance for how to engage students in learning, manage a classroom, navigate the numerous responsibilities that come with teaching, etc.

Finally, the method by which I was to measure the successful implementation was flawed. The tools are valid and valuable for larger groups, if given at more frequent intervals. The sample size was so small that there were no statistically valid data and I was forced to repurpose the results to fit my needs and extract some meaning. Additionally, I should have administered the surveys with more frequency so I could track the health and wellbeing of the community and provide appropriate interventions.

**Reflection**

Attempting to create a community of practice in the context was a calculated risk. I was aware of a multitude of obstacles, but nonetheless I chose the action. If the
community would have been sustainable, the new teachers from this year would have become community members next year and the community would have continued to grow and change as necessary. The shifts in curriculum and technology could have been address collegially without need of administrative intervention. A sustained community of practice could have changed instructional practices, building-wide, for the better.

**Contrasting Communities of Practice**

The key takeaway from this action research experience is that the results did not have to be positive. Contrarily, it is perhaps better the action proved negative.

Communities of practice are valuable when used in the correct context. For example, during the 2017-2018 school year (the same time as the research study period), a member of the central office team explained that the new superintendent wanted to build a transitions program that would help members of our student body with special needs transition to life after school (i.e. work force and independent living skills). He asked me to lead a committee of people from both inside and outside the district to create a transition program for our students with special needs. This project was handed over to me with only 24-hours notice that I would be “leading” the committee. I talked with him about creating this as a community of practice, rather than making it a mandated process led by administration.

If I had been looking for a research project that would show the successful implementation of a CoP, this would have been it. I asked the central office coordinator to schedule the meetings and reach out to high school and middle school administrators and teachers, district parent representative and various community partners and entities. He did so, and we had our first meeting in September. It was a brainstorming session and
three individuals suggested what our next steps should be and volunteered to collect information to present. Thirteen members were in attendance and included an administrator from the middle school and the high school, as well as one district coordinator. There were three high school teachers, two middle school teachers, a district occupational therapist, one parent liaison, two representatives from other districts and a coordinator from a local education cooperative. The time for the teachers was protected (i.e. we met during the school day and gave substitutes to those in attendance to cover classes).

At the end of the meeting, I reiterated what the team had discussed and what the members offering to bring resources had committed to do (i.e. invite new members from a local agency, perform separate school visits, bring organizational tools from other districts that have worked). What is important to note is the people tasked with being leaders in the district were not leading discussion in the meeting, or mandating activities for others to do. Potential was realized in the first meeting and coalescing began with the exchange of ideas and contact information. A few of the members remained behind and continued discussions on the topic and shared what resources they planned to bring for the next meeting. They were excited at the prospect of being involved in creating a program for high-needs students and it showed in their action and discussions.

At the next meeting in November, those people presented their findings in spectacular fashion (prepared PPTs, handouts and copies of materials collected from various sites). The membership grew by two people (one physical therapist and one coordinator from a technical school). The team was impressed with what the individuals found on their search for materials and resources to grow our program. The observers and
presenters suggested mirroring some of the tactics of other programs using resources brought in by community leaders. The team decided to put some of the actions into practice in the best interests of the students. After the meeting, people met in smaller groups to congratulate one another and praise each other for outcomes and initiative. I was among those expressing praise for jobs well-done, although I had personally done nothing but facilitate. The community members stayed and chatted as long as they were able and began to share personal contact information so they could speak with one another outside of the regularly scheduled meeting times.

The January meeting was a follow up in which we discussed the outcomes to this point and how the program was gaining traction. The leaders of the program in the school reported successes to the committee and accepted input from partners who helped install the program. They discussed next steps for the program and expressed excitement at the prospect of the program continuing to grow in support of the students. The collegial atmosphere of these meetings was denoted by supportive feedback, words of praise, the free exchange of ideas and so forth. The team began scheduling more frequent meetings to take place outside of the scheduled work day and at locations that would allow for greater social interactions, such as local eateries. Their good works continues to be demonstrated through growth of the program and the forming of strong collegial bonds based on a shared mission and vision.

There was one more meeting in May that went much like the January meeting, except the community agreed to meet again in the following school year to check in and share not only what has been happening with the program in this district, but how the programs in other districts were continuing to expand and grow. This CoP had become a
mini-cooperative, of sorts. This is the final, transformational phase of CoP formation. The community will change focus to a support cooperative instead of a creative initiative, since the program reached a successful end.

The team will meet twice next year to check in and make modifications. This is the textbook CoP and, in truth, had I known I was going to be selected for it, I may have proposed using these meetings for my study. Personally and professionally, I feel putting this framework to the test in a context where it could succeed under the right conditions, with or without challenges, was a better use of my time and action. Although a study of this community was not part of my research study, it is worth noting that the only teacher who showed positive growth in sense of collective efficacy in my research study, James, was a part of this transition team as well.

Much of the current research in this field is heroic in nature, in that it illuminates successful implementation of interventions and expands the knowledgebase of the field positively. This heroic literature is vital to expanding studies in the field of education and helping future researchers and leaders improve the state of the profession. My research, while not yielding successful results for the community members, will act as a map by which future researchers can navigate the minefield of intervention implementation and achieve success by not duplicating similar strategies in similar contexts. This journey has not changed the fact that the community of practice framework is effective in certain instances for specific goals. The results have merely shown that more careful attention must be given to the overall organizational climate is necessary in attempting to employ this type of intervention.
Appendix A
IRB Approval Letter

TO: J Lail, Executive Doctor of Educational Leadership
    PI email: lail_j@yahoo.com

FROM: Chairperson/Vice Chairperson
      Non Medical Institutional Review Board (IRB)

SUBJECT: Approval of Protocol
DATE: 8/3/2017

On August 3, 2017 the Non Medical Institutional Review Board approved your protocol entitled:

BUILDING TEACHER EFFICACY: CREATING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE AMONG NEW TEACHERS AND VETERAN TEACHERS

Approval is effective from 8/3/17 until 8/2/18 and extends to any consent/assent form, cover letter, and/or phone script. If applicable, the IRB approved consent/assent document(s) to be used when enrolling subjects can be found in the "All Attachments" menu item of your E-IRB application. [Note, subjects can only be enrolled using consent/assent forms which have a valid "IRB Approval" stamp unless special waiver has been obtained from the IRB.] Prior to the end of this period, you will be sent a Continuation Review Report Form which must be completed and submitted to the Office of Research Integrity so that the protocol can be reviewed and approved for the next period.

In implementing the research activities, you are responsible for complying with IRB decisions, conditions and requirements. The research procedures should be implemented as approved in the IRB protocol. It is the principal investigator's responsibility to ensure any changes planned for the research are submitted for review and approval by the IRB prior to implementation. Protocol changes made without prior IRB approval to eliminate apparent hazards to the subject(s) should be reported in writing immediately to the IRB. Furthermore, discontinuing a study or completion of a study is considered a change in the protocol's status and therefore the IRB should be promptly notified in writing.

For information describing investigator responsibilities after obtaining IRB approval, download and read the document "PI Guidance to Responsibilities, Qualifications, Records and Documentation of Human Subjects Research" from the Office of Research Integrity's Guidance and Policy Documents web page. Additional information regarding IRB review, federal regulations, and institutional policies may be found through ORI's web site. If you have questions, need additional information, or would like a paper copy of the above mentioned document, contact the Office of Research Integrity at 859-257-9428.
Appendix B
(Literacy Survey)

Read each statement below carefully. Honestly respond to each statement by marking “A,” meaning “This statement is not about me,” “B,” meaning “This statement sometimes applies to me,” or “C,” meaning “This statement is always about me.”

Phonemic Awareness/Phonics/Vocabulary
1. I can easily and quickly recognize single-syllable words.
2. I can easily and quickly recognize multi-syllable words.
3. I know a lot of “sight words.”
4. I can use context clues to help with word recognition or word meaning.
5. I can use word parts to help with word recognition or meaning.
6. I can use text features to aid in comprehension (e.g. charts, graphs, bold or italicized words, subheadings, chapter titles, etc.)
7. These tasks are harder for me when I am reading a science text.
8. These tasks are harder for me when I am reading a math problem.
9. These tasks are harder for me when I am reading a history document.

Fluency
10. I sometimes stop reading as soon as the text gets too hard for me.
11. I keep reading on even when things don’t make any sense.
12. I expect that someone else will explain a text to me, so I don’t really need to work through it myself.
13. I am sometimes frustrated by reading a text.
14. I think reading for any reason is boring and dumb.
15. I avoid reading at all costs.
16. I usually ready very slowly and take it one word at a time.
17. I read aloud or “whisper-read” when I am supposed to read silently.
18. I don’t pay attention to punctuation when I read, whether it is reading silently or aloud.
19. I use expression when I read aloud (e.g. I get louder when I see an exclamation mark.).
20. When I read, I don’t see pictures in my head, I only hear my own voice.
21. I read everything at the same speed no matter the subject or topic.
22. I often reread for clarity.
23. I read just to get finished – it doesn’t really matter if I understand what I’m reading.

Comprehension
24. I sometimes remember the reading in the wrong order.
25. I can find correct “cause and effect” relationships.
26. I can compare and contrast events in a text.
27. I know what characterization is and can identify it.
28. I can form a valid argument for or against and author’s position.
29. I can predict what will happen next in a text.
30. I can answer text-dependent questions.
31. I can make inferences based on a text.
32. I can make generalizations from information offered in a text.
33. I know how point of view impacts a text.
34. I can find the main idea or author’s purpose of a piece.
35. I can write a brief summary of a text.
36. I can identify various literary elements in a text.
37. I can determine how literary elements influence a text.
38. I can determine which information is important in a math problem and use that information to solve the problem.
39. I can determine what portion of a science text is relevant to the task at hand.
40. I can recall basic information from any text easily.
41. I can apply information in a given text to my life and experience.
42. I can explain how one genre is different from another.
43. I can recognize when I am not comprehending a text and takes steps to make sure I do (e.g. read again, slow down, annotate, etc.)
44. I can create critical thinking questions about a text.
45. I can easily organize my thoughts about a text in writing.
46. I can share my thoughts and ideas about a text in group discussions (small or large group).
47. I am a good speller.
48. I can recognize the difference in reading for a purpose and reading for pleasure.
49. I have read at least one piece this summer for personal enjoyment (i.e. short story, novel, comic book, etc.).
50. Overall, I read better than people think I do.
Appendix C

(Collective Efficacy Survey)

**CE-Scale**  
Form L

**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Strongly Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Disagree</th>
<th>Somewhat Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Teachers in the school are able to get through to the most difficult students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If a child doesn’t want to learn teachers here give up.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Teachers here don’t have the skills needed to produce meaningful student learning.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. If a child doesn’t learn something the first time teachers will try another way.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Teachers in this school are skilled in various methods of teaching.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Teachers here are well-prepared to teach the subjects they are assigned to teach.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Teachers here fail to reach some students because of poor teaching methods.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Teachers in this school have what it takes to get the children to learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The lack of instructional materials and supplies makes teaching very difficult.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Teachers in this school do not have the skills to deal with student disciplinary problems.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Teachers in this school think there are some students that no one can reach.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. The quality of school facilities here really facilitates the teaching and learning process.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The students here come in with so many advantages they are bound to learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. These students come to school ready to learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Drugs and alcohol abuse in the community make learning difficult for students here.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The opportunities in this community help ensure that these students will learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Students here just aren’t motivated to learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Learning is more difficult at this school because students are worried about their safety.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Teachers here need more training to know how to deal with these students.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. Teachers in this school truly believe every child can learn.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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# Appendix D

(Self-Efficacy Survey)

Teacher Efficacy

A number of statements about organizations, people, and teaching are presented below. The purpose is to gather information regarding the actual attitudes of educators concerning these statements. There are no correct or incorrect answers. We are interested only in your frank opinions. Your responses will remain confidential.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Please indicate your personal opinion about each statement by circling the appropriate response at the right of each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>KEY</th>
<th>1=Strongly Agree</th>
<th>2=Moderately Agree</th>
<th>3=Agree slightly more than disagree</th>
<th>4=Disagree slightly more than agree</th>
<th>5=Moderately Disagree</th>
<th>6=Strongly Disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>When a student does better than usual, many times it is because I exert a little extra effort.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>The hours in my class have little influence on students compared to the influence of their home environment.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>The amount a student can learn is primarily related to family background.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>If students aren’t disciplined at home, they aren’t likely to accept any discipline.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>I have enough training to deal with almost any learning problem.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>When a student is having difficulty with an assignment, I am usually able to adjust it to his/her level.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>When a student gets a grade that he/she usually gets, it is usually because I found better ways of teaching that student.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>When I really try, I can get through to most difficult students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>A teacher is very limited in what he/she can achieve because a student’s home environment influences his/her achievement.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Teachers are not a very potential influence on student achievement when all factors are considered.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>When the grades of my students improve, it is usually because I found more effective approaches.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>If a student masters a new concept quickly, this might be because I know the necessary steps in teaching that concept.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>If parents would do more for their children, I could do more.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>If a student did not remember information I gave in a previous lesson, I would know how to increase his/her retention in the next lesson.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The influence of a student’s home experiences can be overcome by good teaching.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>If a student in my class becomes disruptive and noisy, I feel assured that I know some techniques to reduce his/her quickness.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Even a teacher with good teaching skills may not reach many students.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Appendix E

TES Scoring Guide

Directions for Scoring the Teacher Efficacy Scale: Long Form

1. Construct validity
For information the construct validity of the 22-item efficacy scale, see Woolfolk, A. E., & Hoy, W. K. (1990). Prospective teachers’ sense of efficacy and beliefs about control. Journal of Educational Psychology, 82, 81-91.

2. Factor Analysis
When using the 22-item of the Teacher Efficacy Scale, it is important to conduct a factor analysis to determine how your subjects respond to the questions. We have consistently found two independent factors: Teaching Efficacy (TE) and Personal Efficacy (PE), but at times the make up of the scales varies slightly. For example, we often find that items 15 and 21 of the 22-item version do not load on either factor and must be dropped.

3. Reverse scoring:
Given the 1=“strongly agree” to 6=“strongly disagree” format, if you want a high score on each scale to indicate strong sense of efficacy, then you must reverse the scoring for the Personal Efficacy items. Thus a “strongly agree” response to the statement, “When I try really, I can get through to most difficult students” must be reversed so that the respondent receives a score of 6 rather than 1.

The reverse scored items on the 22-item version

are: 1, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 15*, 16, 18, 19, 22

*Note that item 15 is the only reversed item that is from the Teaching Efficacy, not Personal Efficacy scale.

4. TE and PE Scores:
To determine the TE and PE scores, we compute unweighed means of the items that load .35 or higher on each respective factor. We do not recommend combining the TE and PE scores to compute a total score because the TE and PE scales represent independent factors.
### Appendix F

#### Meeting Reflection

**Member ID Code** ______________________________

**Meeting Date:** _______________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>+ (What was helpful/useful?)</th>
<th>Δ (Was anything not helpful?)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How will you attempt to use information shared?</th>
<th>Suggestions for next meeting:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


References


Objective:
To obtain an administrative position in a P-12 institution that will allow me to use my experience and knowledge to support 21st century learners as they become college and career ready.

Education:
Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 2009-2010
Master of Arts, Instructional Leadership
Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 2005-2007
Master of Arts, Teaching
Xavier University, Cincinnati, OH 2004-2006
Mast of Arts, English
Northern Kentucky University, Highland Heights, KY 2001-2004
Bachelor of Arts, English

Experience:
Medicine Lake School District #7, Superintendent 2018-present
Midwestern American High School, Assistant Principal 2016-2018
Newport Middle School, Assistant Principal 2015-2016
Grant County High School, Assistant Principal 2012-2015
John W. Miles Elementary School, Principal 2011-2012
Lloyd Memorial High School, English Teacher 2007-2011
Tichenor Middle School, English Language Arts Teacher 2005-2007

Certifications:
Montana Superintendent (Class 5)
Montana Principal (PK-12)
Ohio Principal Certification (PK-6, 4-9, 5-12)
Kentucky Instructional Leader – Superintendent (P-12)
Kentucky Administrator Certificate (Principal Level II, P-12)
Kentucky Teacher Certificate (English, 8-12)

Awards/Honors:
Wallace Charles Hill Graduate Scholarship (2015, 2016, UK)
Melnick Scholarship (NKU)
Graduated Cum Laude (NKU)
Student Research and Creativity Honoree (NKU)
Pinnacle Honor Society (NKU)
Dean’s List (NKU)
Honor’s List (NKU)
Scholar’s List (NKU)