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Collaborative Lesson Planning as a Form of Professional Development? A Study of Learning
Opportunities Presented Through Collaborative Planning

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Abstract

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Teacher collaboration is heralded as a practice that can improve teaching and learning in schools. Based on the presumption that working in a teacher community will increase teachers' abilities to meet the needs of their students, many schools are now organized to allow teachers to work in professional learning communities. In fact, teachers are encouraged, and sometimes required, to collaborate with their colleagues. However, little is known about how teacher collaboration leads to more effective teaching. This dissertation examines the relationship between teachers collaborating and the opportunities for teacher learning that arise through this work. More specifically, this study investigates teachers who participate in Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP), a phenomenon defined as teachers who teach the same grade level or content

area, planning together across curricular areas on a weekly basis, and implementing the collaboratively planned lessons in their own classrooms. Using a socio-cultural learning theory lens, this qualitative, comparative case study finds that teachers who engage in CLP have locally defined practices guiding their work. These practices include setting aside time for planning meetings outside of the normal school day, engaging in talk about the past as well as the future, and keeping students at the central focus of their work. As teachers engage in this work, cultural norms are established and a variety of outcomes are perceived. In addition, this study finds that the process of using and creating resources together enables opportunities to learn about students, content, and teaching. Findings suggest particular characteristics that contribute to on-going, long-term collaboration: 1) self-designed formalization, 2) joint positioning, 3) cultural and structural deprivatization, 4) utilization and creation of resources, and 5) attention to the instructional core. This dissertation illuminates how CLP, and collaboration more broadly, can serve as a form of professional development for teachers, informing both researchers and practitioners as they seek to support teacher learning through the act of collaboration.

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The idea for this dissertation grew out of an experience I had while teaching at Russell Byers Charter School in Philadelphia, PA. Sherri Bresette Ahlers and I had just spent the past year collaboratively planning and she turned to me and said, “This is the best professional development I ever had!” Those words stuck with me and several years later I found myself asking, “Why was that?” I thank Sherri not only for the countless hours we spent creating meaningful lessons together, but for inspiring me to study Collaborative Lesson Planning.

Countless people supported me in this journey and contributed to this dissertation in some way, but several deserve particular attention. First, I’d like to thank my study group members over the years—Carol Adams, Kate Brayko, Catherine Mutti-Driscoll, Cate Samuelson, and Kerry Soo Von Esch. Each of these women listened as I processed and offered advice on ideas, writing, and life in general. I left study groups sessions invigorated and inspired due to their brilliance and friendship. For this, I am forever grateful.

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As a young child, I knew I wanted to be a teacher and find a way to help improve the education children across the country receive. I hope that this dissertation serves as a tiny step toward fulfilling that life-long aspiration.

Chapter One: A Study of Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP)

We will fail...to improve schooling for children until we acknowledge the importance of schools not only as places for teachers to work but also as places for teachers to learn.

(Smylie, 1995, p. 92)

Improving schools involves improving the teaching that occurs within them. While many factors affect the quality of education children receive, teachers are one of the most critical factors (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012). One way to improve the quality of teaching in schools is to provide teachers opportunities to learn, typically called professional development. Professional development is currently receiving attention from researchers, policy makers, and practitioners (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Desimone, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; The Holmes Group, 1986; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997). Questions about how to provide teachers effective professional development that results in improved teaching practice and increased student outcomes are being explored by many individuals and organizations interested in improving schools.

This dissertation is a part of that discussion. I explore the relationship between a particular act of collaboration, Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP), and the opportunities for teacher learning that arise as teachers engage in that act. In doing so, I contribute nuance and new questions about the assumed relationship between teachers collaborating and teachers learning. In this chapter, I offer a brief overview of the study and its findings, and outline the subsequent chapters.

Overview of Study

This study draws on the professional development literature indicating effective professional development is ongoing, job-embedded, and gives teachers opportunities to talk (Garet, Porter, Desimone, & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). As a result of these findings, many in education call for the break-down of the egg-crate organization of schools and teaching (Lortie, 1975), to be replaced by teachers working together. This model of teachers working together is often called a teacher community or Professional Learning Community. A common feature among the variety of definitions of a teacher community is that teachers collaborate. However, little is known about what happens when teachers collaborate.¹ How does collaboration offer opportunities to learn? What kinds of opportunities arise? What enables learning opportunities to arise? These are just some of the underexplored questions this study begins to address.

Building from what is known about teacher collaboration, this study focuses on a particular act of collaboration, a construct I developed called Collaborative Lesson Planning, or CLP. I define CLP as teachers of the same grade level or content area who plan lessons together across curricular areas on an on-going (often weekly) basis, and then implement the lessons in their own classrooms. The term encompasses Little's (1990) conception of *joint work*, in which “teachers [decide] to pursue a single course of action in concert or alternatively, to decide on a set of basic priorities that in turn guide the independent choices of individual teachers” (p. 519). The teachers in this study prepared for the upcoming week through their CLP work. Since planning and preparing are activities in which (almost) all teachers engage as a normal part of

¹ See Chapter Two for a full review of the literature supporting this study.

their work, there is potential for CLP to influence the work of many teachers. For these reasons, I believe CLP is a case of teacher collaboration worth exploration.

In order to explore CLP and address gaps in the literature on teacher collaboration, I ask the following research questions:

- How do teachers engage in CLP and what opportunities for learning are presented when teachers do so?
 - What is the nature of the work of CLP?
 - What enables learning opportunities to arise when teachers engage in CLP?
 - What kinds of learning opportunities are afforded by engaging in CLP?

Through these questions, I am able to look at CLP, learning opportunities, and the relationship between the two in order to further understanding of how teachers may learn through the act of collaboration.

I ground this study in a socio-cultural learning theory lens and draw specifically on constructs from Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective, as well as constructs from Horn's (2005, 2007) research on teacher collaboration. In essence, my conceptual framework posits that teachers engaged in CLP can be conceptualized as a CoP that engages in the negotiation of meaning of lessons to be taught. In the process of doing so, teachers have opportunities to talk, allowing opportunities for learning to emerge through episodes of pedagogical reasoning (Horn, 2007) and renderings of classroom events (Horn, 2005).²

I conducted a qualitative, two-phase, multi-case case study. In Phase One, I observed and interviewed five teams of teachers engaged in CLP. Based on the data collected, I then chose

² See Chapter Three for a full explanation of the conceptual framework grounding this study.

two teams that exemplified the work of CLP for Phase Two. I then conducted further observations and interviews, and also collected relevant documents. All data was then transcribed and analyzed in systemic ways to allow me to make the claims that follow.³

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore and describe a particular act of collaboration and the opportunities to learn that are presented when teachers engage in such an act. By doing so, I further knowledge of how collaboration can serve as a form of professional development for teachers.

Key Findings

Through this study, I find that teachers who engage in CLP have particular practices that guide their work.⁴ Teachers set aside time for a CLP meeting, where they plan each subject they teach in common for the upcoming week. During these meetings, in addition to determining what they will teach when, teachers engage in talk about both the past and the future. There are norms, routines, and expectations around the work of CLP for teams that offer opportunities for teacher learning, although the specifics are different for each team.

As the teams engage in these practices for the purpose of planning upcoming lessons together, they participate in a process of using and creating resources. This study finds it is through the process of jointly using and creating resources that learning opportunities arise. Teachers use resources such as teachers' manuals, documents from their school district, and other published teacher materials throughout their meetings. They talk about these documents—what they mean, their evaluation of them, and how their students might respond to the material being suggested. They also create resources. The most prominent of which is their planbook.

³ See Chapter Four for a full explanation of the study design and methodology used in this study.

⁴ In most cases throughout this dissertation, I use the term “practices” to refer to the ways in which teachers collectively behave as they engage in collaboration. I use the term “practice” (singular) to refer to teaching strategies teachers use in their classrooms.

Every teacher brings a planbook to CLP meetings and fills out a planning grid with notes about what was discussed. In interviews, teachers repeatedly mentioned the importance of these books. The process of using and creating concrete objects, or resources, grounds teachers' conversations and allows learning opportunities to emerge.

This process provides teachers opportunities not only to talk, but to talk and learn specifically about each aspect of the instructional core (Elmore, 2004; Hawkins, 1974). The teachers in the study talk about students, content, and teaching—the “critical work of teaching and learning that goes on in classrooms” (Childress, Elmore, Grossman, & King, 2006). Teachers talk about what their students did and anticipate what their students might do, offering opportunities to learn about specific children as well as the kinds of things children at a particular grade level may do. They talk about what they need to teach, offering opportunities to deepen content knowledge. Finally, through CLP meetings, teachers talk about their teaching. They discuss what they did in their classrooms and anticipate what they will say during upcoming lessons. These discussions deprivatize practice, allowing teachers opportunities to learn from one another's practice. It has previously been assumed that teacher collaboration offers opportunities to talk, a key element of effective professional development. This study finds that not only do teachers engaged in CLP have opportunities to talk, but they have opportunities to talk and learn about each aspect of the instructional core.

Overall, this study finds that teachers who engage in CLP have particular practices and while engaging in those practices, teachers jointly use and create resources and talk about each aspect of the instructional core, which allows learning opportunities focused on students, content, and teaching to arise.

Outline of Dissertation

Subsequent chapters of this dissertation explain more fully what has been discussed in this introduction. Chapter Two presents a problem statement and literature review, identifying what is already known about teacher learning through collaboration and why a study of CLP contributes to the research literature. Chapter Three describes the theoretical and conceptual foundation of this study, while Chapter Four outlines the study design and methodology. The next two chapters, Chapter Five and Chapter Six, offer analysis of each of the focal teams and their particular practices. Chapter Seven looks across the two focal teams and discusses the learning opportunities afforded to these teams as they engage in CLP. Finally, Chapter Eight provides a synthesis of what this study suggests, as well as limitations and implications for continuing this work.

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a particular act of collaboration, CLP, as a professional development opportunity for teachers. In doing so, I investigate teams of teachers engaged in CLP to understand their work and the opportunities to learn that are presented through this work. This research can add to the growing knowledge of the relationship between teacher collaboration and opportunities to learn that can ultimately help improve teaching through professional development.

Chapter Two: Funneling Knowledge into Questions about CLP

Over the past twenty years, policy makers, politicians, and practitioners have turned their attention to issues of professional development and teacher learning as a mechanism for improving schools (Carnegie Forum on Education and the Economy, 1986; Desimone, 2009; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999; The Holmes Group, 1986; National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1997). As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) state, "There is widespread agreement now that of all of the factors inside the school that affect children's learning and achievement, the most important is the teacher... Teachers really matter" (p. xii). There is a generally accepted premise that if teachers matter, then improving the quality of teachers can improve the quality of schools (Darling-Hammond & Sykes, 1999). One way schools and school districts work to improve the quality of their teachers is to invest resources in professional development for teachers.

However, not much is known about the relationship between various activities schools and school districts require and/or encourage in the name of professional development and the changes that result from these activities. What happens during these various professional development activities? What kinds of learning opportunities are presented? What enables these opportunities to arise? And, ultimately, how do these opportunities translate into teacher learning, changes in teaching practice, and improved outcomes for students? These are all under-explored relationships between professional development and the improved student outcomes desired as a result of professional development.

In this chapter, I first review the research on professional development that resulted in a call for schools and teachers to function as communities. I then review the literature on teacher

communities that highlights a need to better understand the act of collaboration. Finally, I review what is known about the act of teacher collaboration and argue that investigating an activity such as Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) among elementary school teachers can add to our growing understanding of the relationship between teacher collaboration and opportunities for teacher learning. Increased knowledge of this relationship can support the never-ending quest for improving schools through improving the teaching that occurs within them.

Research on Professional Development

Professional development refers to “any activity that is intended partly or primarily to prepare paid staff members for improved performance in present or future roles in the school district” (Little, 1987, p. 491). In other words, professional development involves creating opportunities for teachers (or other staff members) that are intended to result in improved teaching. The theory of action (Argyris, 1993) underlying professional development is that teachers will be presented with opportunities to learn, and once presented with those opportunities, they will, in fact, learn and make changes in their practice that lead to improved student outcomes (See Figure 1). These logical connections undergird much of the research on professional development for teachers.

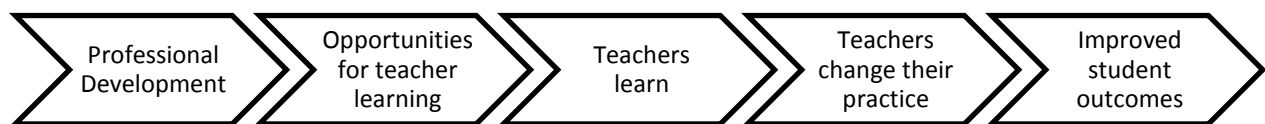


Figure 1. *Theory of Action underlying Professional Development*

Much of the previous research on professional development for teachers focused on the characteristics of effective professional development (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Combined, this research indicates that effective professional development is job-embedded, ongoing, and engages teachers in talk. Professional

development can be most effective when teachers talk with colleagues with whom they have opportunities to interact with frequently, such as those within the same school. The research literature also suggests professional development is most effective when it is aligned and combined with comprehensive reforms and policies across a school and/or district.

Finally, the literature highlights the importance of talk focused on subject matter content; although talk about students, including expectations as well as current performance, is also important.

Despite a general consensus that these characteristics are integral to providing effective professional development opportunities, there are limitations within this body of research. First, the research has relied primarily on self-reports of satisfaction, increased knowledge, and/or change. The validity and accuracy of self-reports must be subject to skepticism (Gil & Hoffman, 2009; Ho, O'Farrell, Hong, & You, 2006).

Secondly, this body of literature offers little explanation as to why exceptions to the general principles exist. In a review of the literature highlighting the need for more complex conceptualizations of teacher learning, Opfer and Pedder (2011) state:

We questioned why there are reports in this literature of teachers attending professional development with all the characteristics of effectiveness and yet learning or change does not occur. Conversely, we wondered, why are there reports that some teachers learn and change via activities that do not have the identified characteristics of effectiveness? (p. 377)

A list of characteristics of effective professional development does not provide a comprehensive or theoretical understanding of the relationship between an activity and the opportunities for teacher learning presented through that activity. In other words, while much of the professional

development literature offers insights into what effective professional development might entail, it does not help explain why, thus limiting our understanding.

A final limitation present within this literature relates to the mismatch between much of the literature and a growing body of research suggesting that learning is a situated activity (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Much of the research suggesting characteristics of effective professional development look at individual teachers and their learning rather than relationships between individuals, communities, and learning.

The findings of research on effective professional development, coupled with research highlighting learning as a situated activity suggests a focus on the development of teacher communities.

Research on Teacher Communities

Across the United States, this has been an emphasis on the break-down of the typical, isolated, egg-crate organization of schools and teaching (Lortie, 1975) to be replaced by teacher communities, often referred to as Professional Learning Communities, or PLCs.⁵

As teacher communities have arisen in schools, research on these communities has primarily focused on the implementation and creation of communities, factors that support and/or constrain communities, and the effects that communities have on teachers and students. This research has typically looked at schools or departments within schools and has been oriented around organizational theories and issues. Based on this overall research, there are indications that working as a community can support the improvement of teaching and learning

⁵ The term “PLC” is used by researchers and practitioners in a variety of ways. Therefore, I use the term “teacher community” to refer to this broad construct of teachers working together in a manner unlike Lortie’s (1975) egg-crate model.

within schools (Bryk, Camburn, & Louis, 1999; DuFour, 2004; Lee & Smith, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008).

This small but growing body of teacher community literature offers insights into connections between working as a community and the theory of action underlying professional development previously described. This literature also presents important cautions about the implementation of teacher communities.

Connections between Teacher Communities and Professional Development

Given the theory of action described above, research on teacher communities illuminates connections between working in a community and professional development that leads to improved student outcomes. This research indicates a relationship between working as a community and increased self-efficacy that may lead teachers to higher levels of motivation to learn (Johnson, 2003; Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997; Warren & Payne, 1997). Other research has found a relationship between working as a community and willingness to change teaching practice (Bryk et al., 1999; Louis, Marks, & Kruse, 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Vescio et al., 2008), as well as increased student outcomes when teachers work as a community (DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Lee & Smith, 1996; Vescio et al., 2008).

Teacher communities and motivation to learn. Research connects teacher communities and increased self-efficacy for teachers. A study conducted in Australia found “collaborative ways of working helped most teachers feel better about themselves and their work, and provided them with opportunities to learn from each other” (Johnson, 2003, p. 337). Similarly, while researching the implementation of cooperative learning in classrooms, Shachar and Shmuelevitz (1997) found that teachers who reported a higher level of collaboration with colleagues also reported higher levels of teacher efficacy. Finally, Warren and Payne (1997)

found that teachers in schools with common planning time “had significantly higher perceptions of personal teacher efficacy” (p. 301). In combination, these studies suggest a relationship between teachers interacting with one another and teachers feeling better about their abilities as teachers. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) suggests teachers with high levels of self-efficacy will feel motivated to continually improve their practice. Hence, the research on teacher communities suggests that teachers who work in a community will have higher levels of self-efficacy and may therefore be more motivated to learn.

These connections align with Rosenholtz’s (1989) quantitative study of teacher learning. Rosenholtz examined the social organization and workplace conditions of schools and their relationship to teachers’ opportunities to learn as well as their attitudes about learning. Results found that in schools where teachers collaborated with one another, the teachers also viewed learning as a lifelong pursuit. In addition, in these “learning-enriched schools,” teachers believed themselves to be strong teachers of academic subject matter and reported learning from other teachers. In essence, Rosenholtz found a connection between working in a teacher community and teachers’ desire to learn.

The relationship between professional development and teacher learning highlighted by this literature indicates that teachers who participate in a teacher community may be more motivated to learn. Although this does not offer information about what teachers are learning, it does suggest that working as a community may serve as a form of professional development for teachers.

Teacher communities and willingness to change teaching practice. There is some indication that working as a community leads teachers to be willing to change their practice. In a large mixed-methods study, McLaughlin and Talbert (2001) found that teachers who worked in

collaborative environments were willing to “move beyond or outside established frames for instruction to find or develop content and classroom strategies that will enable students to master core subject concepts” (p. 25). The researchers categorized this as *innovating to engage students*. Additionally, in a quantitative study, Bryk et al. (1999) found a positive correlation between communities where collaboration, reflective dialogue, and deprivatization of practice existed, with teachers reporting a strong orientation toward experimentation and innovation. Teachers who worked in these environments felt more encouraged and supported to try new teaching practice. In a literature review of additional research on teacher communities, Vescio et al. (2008) found 11 articles in support of the idea that working in a community can lead to changes in teaching practice. These studies suggest that in teacher communities, teachers are willing to change their teaching practice. Although this research does not confirm whether or not changes took place, willingness and interest in change can lead to actual change. Change in teaching practice is a key step in the relationship between professional development and improved student outcomes, and will likely only occur when teachers are willing to change their practice. This is another connection between working in a community and professional development that has the potential to lead to increase student outcomes.

Teacher collaboration and increased student outcomes. There are a few studies that suggest a relationship between teachers working in a community and improved student outcomes. For example, Lee and Smith (1996) found that in schools where teachers cooperate with one another, feel a sense of collective responsibility, and have control over classroom and school policies, students demonstrated higher and more equitable achievement gains.

Corroborating this, Vescio et al. (2008) boldly state:

The collective results of these studies [on teacher communities] offer an unequivocal answer to the question about whether the literature supports the assumption that student learning increases when teachers participate in a PLC. The answer is a resounding and encouraging yes. (p. 87)

Vescio et al. provide a potential explanation for this connection: “All six studies reporting student learning outcomes indicated that an intense focus on student learning and achievement was the aspect of learning communities that impacted student learning” (p. 88). Here they are suggesting that if teachers engage in communities that have a focus on student learning and achievement, student outcomes will increase.

Summary. Combined, this research suggests that working in a community can motivate teachers to learn, lead to a willingness to change teaching practice, and improve student outcomes. Teacher communities not only align with research on effective professional development by being job-embedded, ongoing, and providing teachers opportunities to talk with one another, but they also appear to relate to the assumed process of how professional development leads to improved student outcomes (See Figure 2). Based on this, one could tentatively conclude that working as a community can be considered a form of effective professional development.

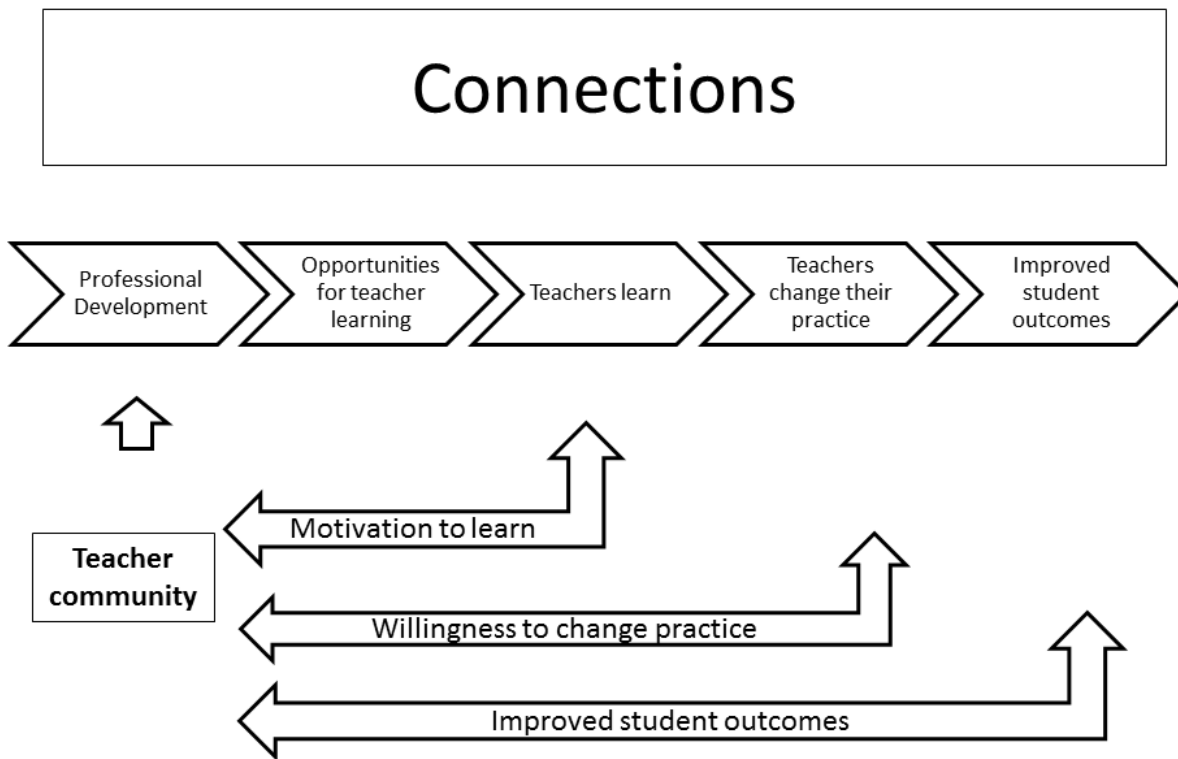


Figure 2. *Connections between Teacher Communities and Professional Development*

However, there are limitations to these research findings. First, similar to the broader trend in professional development literature, these studies rely heavily on self-reports by teachers, which may or may not be accurate reflections of motivation or actual changes in teaching. Second, these primarily quantitative studies do not offer insights into what teachers are learning, but merely indicate that teachers are likely to be more motivated to learn and report changing their practice. In addition, not much is known about the reported changes in teaching. For example, of the eleven studies reviewed by Vescio et al. (2008), fewer than half provide specific information about what changes in teaching practice took place.

Most glaringly, the research reviewed above has not explored the relationship between teacher communities and the opportunities to learn that are presented through working in a

community. What kinds of opportunities to learn do teachers have when working in a community? What about working in a community enables opportunities to learn? As the research on teacher communities broadens with respect to quantity as well as a variety of research methods, these questions can be explored in order to further verify and explain the findings thus far.

Cautions about Teacher Communities

Before exploring what is known about the relationship between teacher communities and opportunities for teacher learning, it is important to highlight the cautions that permeate the research on teacher communities. In order for teacher communities to serve as a form of effective professional development, the research highlights the need for school-wide structures and norms (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002) and teachers who are willing to engage in conflict with one another (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman, Wineburg, & Woolworth, 2001). These conditions have been found to be critical to the creation and maintenance of teacher communities.

Need for structures and norms. For teacher communities to serve as a form of professional development that leads to improved student outcomes, research indicates a need for structures, as well as cultural norms, within the school that promote working together. In an evaluation of a Cincinnati public schools reform initiative, Supovitz (2002) found that simply organizing elementary school teachers into teams and expecting teams to work together did not lead to meaningful discussions around curricular and instructional issues, nor did it lead to practice that was different from those in non-team-based schools. This study highlights the importance of structures and cultural norms that allow teachers to work as a community.

For teacher communities to lead to meaningful discussions around curricular and instructional issues, research demonstrates the importance of structures that provide schools with leadership, time, resources, and incentives to engage in instructional work (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). These structures may include scheduled planning time, ways for principals to demonstrate support of the community, additional professional development, and a staffing structure that allows multiple staff members to work in classrooms.

In addition, research finds a need for teachers to feel empowered (Hargreaves, 1994; Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). This empowerment can come in the form of influence over policies and decisions within the school, although some research suggests that teachers should have decision making power related to their participation within a community. Hargreaves' research found a difference in how teachers engage in collaborative activities based on whether they have chosen to do so, or whether they have been told to do so. Hargreaves makes a distinction between what he terms a *collaborative culture*, in which collaboration happens spontaneously, voluntarily, and not necessarily in distinct points in time and a *contrived culture*, in which collaboration is administratively regulated, compulsory, and focused on the implementation of collaboration. His study indicates that when teachers are told to collaborate with one another, this collaboration becomes merely a mandate to be gotten around or through, in contrast to when teachers choose to collaborate, they do so in a way that can lead to learning.

Beyond empowerment, there also appears to be a need for a culture that encourages teachers to identify, explore, and assess instructional strategies (Supovitz, 2002). In a study utilizing survey data to investigate organizational factors that facilitate the development of a teacher community, Louis et al. (1996) concluded, "Human and social resources are as critical to professional community as structural features" (p. 786). These resources included respect

toward one another, attitudes of openness toward educational innovation, as well as receiving and offering feedback among parents and colleagues.

In sum, the research on teacher communities cautions that structures and cultural norms promoting working together is a vital element of communities that lead to changes for teachers or teaching practice and therefore serve as a form of professional development.

Willingness to engage in conflict. Research also indicates that teacher communities are more likely to function as a form of professional development when teachers engage in conflict with one another--something that does not necessarily happen immediately when teachers begin working together. For example, in a seminal article on the development of teacher communities, Grossman et al. (2001) found that teachers pretended to agree with one another for several months before showing willingness to push back or question each other. The authors refer to this as a pseudocommunity and explain:

Individuals have a natural tendency to play community—to act as if they are already a community that shares values and common beliefs...Groups regulate face-to-face interactions with the tacit understanding that it is ‘against the rules’ to challenge others or press too hard for clarification. (p. 955)

Without a willingness to push back or question, it is unlikely that teachers will engage in the kinds of discussions that lead to changes in teaching practice or student outcomes.

Aligning with this finding, Achinstein (2002) conducted a case study of two schools, which both exhibited the characteristics of a teacher community. However, only the teachers in one school showed growth and change. The difference was in the way each community managed conflict—when teachers addressed conflict more changes were evident, compared to when teachers avoided conflict. Achinstein explains, “Conflict is not only central to community,

but how teachers manage conflicts, whether they suppress or embrace their differences, defines the community borders and ultimately the potential for organizational learning and change” (p. 421). Combined these studies suggest that only when teachers within a community are willing to engage in conflict can working within a community effectively serve as a form of professional development.

Summary

When looking within the body of literature on teacher communities to understand the relationship between teacher communities and professional development, one can see connections between working in a community, increased motivation to learn, willingness to change teaching practice, and improved student outcomes. However, current research indicates these connections will likely exist only when school-wide structures and norms are in place and teachers within the community are willing to engage in conflict.

However, this research does not present a comprehensive understanding of the relationships between teacher communities and professional development. In addition to the limitations of self-reported data, there is a lack of consistency regarding the definition of a teacher community. Louis and Kruse (1995) define teacher communities as schools with at least a minimal level of each the following elements: shared values, focus on student learning, collaboration, deprivatized practice, and reflective dialogue. Other researchers have included characteristics such as collective responsibility (Bryk et al., 1999), shared decision making (Copland & Knapp, 2006), and collective inquiry (DuFour & Eaker, 1998) in their definition of a teacher community, while leaving out some of Louis and Kruse’s elements. In fact, the only element common across all definitions of a teacher community is that within a teacher community, teachers collaborate.

Added to this lack of a common definition is a lack of explanatory power. The research illuminates what can happen when teachers work as a community and what conditions appear to be necessary, but offers few insights into why and how working in a community connects with teacher learning. Much of the research discussed thus far in this chapter looked at schools through an organizational lens and with quantitative methods, remaining at a 1,000 foot level, giving only a bird's eye view of teacher communities. These methodological approaches do not provide in-depth explanations of how or why teacher communities relate to professional development.

One way to build upon this research and address this gap is to focus on the relationship between the act of teacher collaboration (as the common element in the teacher community literature) and the opportunities for teacher learning that arise when teachers collaborate (as the piece of the theory of action underlying professional development not yet explored in this research).

Research on the Act of Collaboration

Luckily, there are a few researchers looking specifically at the act of collaboration, rather than focusing on school-wide collaborative efforts and communities (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Little, 2002, 2003; Levine & Marcus, 2010). These researchers are attempting to go “inside teacher communities” (Little, 2003) to explore the specifics of what happens when teachers collaborate. . These researchers focus on the relationship between teacher collaboration and opportunities for teacher learning. This research can help explain why and how teacher collaboration leads to teacher learning, willingness to change teaching practice, and improved student outcomes because it focuses on questions such as, “What kinds of learning opportunities arise when teachers collaborate?” and “What enables those opportunities to arise?” Using

qualitative case study methodology and a socio-cultural learning theory lens, these researchers have found that discourse matters (different groups talk differently), structure matters (whether or not there is a protocol or some other structure guiding the collaboration), and intended focus matters (why the teachers are collaborating).

Discourse Matters

Horn and Little published several papers looking at the work of four high school collaborative teams (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Little, 2002, 2003). They found teachers in these teams talked about their work with one another differently, and those differences resulted in unequal opportunities for teacher learning. For example, Horn (2005) used Wenger's (1998) framework for learning and described how there were three different types of talk that enabled teachers in this study to learn—the use of reform slogans; classification systems of students, subject, and teaching; and rendering of classroom events (which Horn calls rehearsals and replays). She compared two teacher communities and found differences among the talk within these categories. One team engaged in conversations that pushed and challenged each other's mathematical thinking and teaching to come to common understandings, while the other team was quick to allow individual interpretations. These conversations offered different opportunities to learn.

Similarly, Horn & Little's (2010) article looked at conversational routines among two groups and found that some routines offered more opportunities to learn than did others. The group that followed a pattern of normalizing, specifying, revising, and generalizing offered each other richer opportunities than the group that followed a walk-through routine. The authors discuss how these differing patterns “provided different resources for [the teachers] to access, conceptualize, and learn from problems of practice” (p. 181). In addition, while both groups

normalized problems presented by someone in the group, the authors described how during normalization, discussion either *turned toward* (discussing the problem further, creating opportunities for learning) or *turned away* (pointing toward the problem as normal, but not something the teacher has direct agency over addressing) from problems of practice (see also Little & Horn, 2007). Combined, this research indicates that how teachers talk with one another matters if one is interested in the ways in which collaboration provides opportunities for teacher learning. Different groups of teachers talk differently, offering varying opportunities to learn. It appears that rich opportunities to learn arise when teachers discuss problems of practice and work to come to common understandings.

Structure and Intended Focus Matters

Levine and Marcus (2010) conducted a multi-level case study focused on how different types of teacher collaboration offer different learning opportunities. They looked at a developing high school, where teachers agreed to engage in collaborative work as a condition of employment. The study sought to understand the kinds of teacher collaboration most likely to improve teaching and how different collaborative activities facilitate and constrain opportunities for teacher learning. Drawing on Horn's (2010) research, they defined learning as renderings of classroom events that deprivatized practice, or allowed teachers to "see" one another's practice through rich description of practice.

These researchers found that the structure of collaborative meetings (protocol-guided, strongly structured, or loosely structured) influenced the opportunities to learn that arose (Levine & Marcus, 2010). When meetings were guided by a protocol, teachers were more likely to deprivatize their practice. By deprivatizing practice, teachers offered one another opportunities

to learn. These findings suggest that structured collaboration may offer richer opportunities for teacher learning than less structured collaboration.

Levine and Marcus (2010) also found the intended focus of meetings influenced opportunities for teacher learning. They classified meetings as focused on classroom instruction, students, or school operations. When the intended focus of the meeting was classroom instruction, the quantity of discussion about classroom practice was significantly higher, as might be expected. In meetings with a primary purpose of addressing matters of instruction, including curriculum, teachers provided more renderings of classroom events. Therefore, the researchers conclude that collaboration with the intended focus of discussing instructional matters may lead to the greatest number of opportunities for teacher learning.

Summary

Taken together, this emerging body of research on the act of collaboration indicates that it is critical to go inside teacher communities to understand what happens when teachers collaborate, for not all acts of collaboration lead to the same opportunities to learn. Why teachers are collaborating and how they structure those collaborative meetings may influence the extent to which teachers talk about their practice and provide one another opportunities to learn.

However, these findings are based on only a small number of studies, each involving high school teachers. Based on these studies, it seems prudent to continue this line of research, with in-depth qualitative studies and a socio-cultural learning theory lens, in order to further our understanding of the relationship between teacher collaboration and opportunities for teacher learning. The research on the act of collaboration suggests that future research investigate the discourse, structure, and intended focus among a group of teachers engaged in collaboration.

Focus and Rationale for this Study

This dissertation is an example of that needed research. In this descriptive study, I investigate a particular act of collaboration with a specific intended focus. If intended focus influences learning opportunities, then it is worthwhile to investigate a specific intended focus to gain an in-depth understanding of the relationship between that intended focus and the learning opportunities that arise through such interactions. Findings from this research can then be used to inform future research on collaboration with other intended foci.

The intended focus chosen for this dissertation is CLP which involves teachers working together to plan upcoming lessons collaboratively. CLP is defined as teachers of the same grade level or content area planning future lessons together across curricular areas on a weekly basis, and then implementing the collaboratively planned lessons in their own classrooms. Teachers who do this work engage in CLP meetings, either during the school day or on their own time. CLP encompasses Little's (1990) conception of *joint work* in which "teachers [decide] to pursue a single course of action in concert or alternatively, to decide on a set of basic priorities that in turn guide the independent choices of individual teachers" (p. 519).

I chose CLP because lesson planning is not only a specific, instruction-focused activity, but is also something in which (almost) all teachers engage. This differs from much of the teacher community literature, which focuses on activities such as curriculum development, which teachers can opt to participate in or not. In most schools, for most teachers, lesson planning is not optional. Therefore, collaborating around planning lessons could have broad implications for practitioners. In other words, if collaborating around lesson planning offers rich opportunities for teacher learning, then there is potential for the vast majority of teachers to engage in such work.

In this study, I utilize research methods and theoretical perspectives used by others exploring the act of collaboration. In doing so, I go beyond the self-reporting and bird's eye view taken by much of the research on teacher communities. I focus on teams of teachers, rather than schools of teachers, but take into consideration the ways in which the teams of teachers experience their schools as communities. This research adds to our body of knowledge about collaboration, teacher communities, and professional development by exploring the relationship between a particular act of collaboration and the opportunities to learn presented as teachers engage in it.

I pose the following two-pronged overarching research question: How do teachers engage in CLP and what opportunities for learning are presented when teachers do so? I break this question into three sub-questions:

- What is the nature of the work of CLP?
- What enables learning opportunities to arise when teachers engage in CLP?
- What kinds of learning opportunities are afforded by engaging in CLP?

Through my examination of these questions, I consider CLP, learning opportunities, and the relationship between the two in order to understand how CLP, as an act of collaboration with a specific intended focus, serves as professional development for teachers.

This study builds on previous research regarding teacher collaboration, teacher communities, and professional development as it seeks to fill gaps in the understanding of how and why working as a community that collaborates relates to teacher learning, willingness to change teaching practice, and improved student outcomes.

Chapter Three: Conceptualizing CLP and Learning Opportunities

In order to explore Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) and the learning opportunities that arise when teachers engage in it, I must conceptualize both the work of CLP and opportunities for teacher learning. Because this dissertation is grounded in the belief that teacher collaboration likely leads to teacher learning, I adopt a learning theory lens. On a broad level, I take a socio-cultural learning theory approach to this study. More specifically, I draw on the work of Etienne Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective.⁶ CoP was originally developed as part of Lave and Wenger's (1991) theory of legitimate peripheral participation, but Wenger (1998) explored and articulated it further in his book entitled, *"Communities of Practice--Learning, Meaning, and Identity--Learning in doing: Social, cognitive, and computational perspectives."* My use of CoP and its constructs derive primarily from this book.

In this chapter, I first provide a rationale for this framing. I then explain the key premises of socio-cultural learning theory, which Wenger's (1998) work is grounded in. This is followed by a more specific discussion of the particular constructs from Wenger utilized in this study. I then discuss the additional constructs from the literature on teacher collaboration that help to conceptualize opportunities for teacher learning. Finally, I articulate how all of the pieces fit together to form the conceptual framework that guides this study.

⁶ I refer to CoP as a perspective, because it is not a theory in the traditional sense of the word where a theory explains why something works as it does, such as Newton's theory of gravity; but rather CoP is a theory in the more recent usage of theory as a way to think about a phenomenon. I utilize CoP as "a guide about what to pay attention to, what difficulties to expect, and how to approach problems" (Wenger, 1998, p. 9). Therefore, I refer to CoP as a perspective, rather than a theory.

Rationale

A socio-cultural learning theory lens is appropriate for this study of CLP and the opportunities for teacher learning that arise when teachers engage in it for several reasons. First, the origins of the call for teacher collaboration are based on research indicating that teachers learn through opportunities to talk. In other words, interactions among teachers can play an important role in teacher learning. This idea fits nicely with a theory that foregrounds interaction, such as socio-cultural learning theory.

Secondly, research on teacher communities indicates that learning through collaboration is a complex process, influenced by contextual factors such as school-wide structures and cultural norms, as well as the interactions between teachers within a collaborative team (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Little, 2002, 2003; Louis et al., 1996; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Supovitz, 2002). Socio-cultural learning theory approaches these complexities as integral to the learning process and provides constructs that support the investigation of context as well as the interactions.

Not surprisingly, the most recent research on the act of collaboration also adopts a socio-cultural learning theory lens (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2002, 2003; Little & Horn, 2007). I adopt a similar lens in order to build on this research, because it aids in the process of comparing and contrasting research findings in order to build a comprehensive understanding.

Socio-cultural learning theory offers a logical and solid foundation for this investigation. In order to conceptualize the particulars of the study, I turn to specific constructs grounded in this overarching theory. These constructs are part of Wenger's (1998) CoP perspective. In addition to being grounded in socio-cultural learning theory, Wenger's perspective is particularly

appropriate for this study for two reasons. First, as is discussed later in this chapter, Wenger's perspective focuses on how objects and ideas come to take on meaning for a CoP. Since lesson planning involves using objects such as teachers' manuals and other resources to create ideas for upcoming lessons, this perspective is particularly useful.

Secondly, CoP is a neutral term. It does not connote a "community" in which people care about and take care of one another. Wenger (1998) states, "Communities of practice are not intrinsically beneficial or harmful. They are not privileged in terms of positive or negative effects" (p. 85). This is relevant to this study due to the research indicating that simply engaging in collaboration may not result in a teacher "community" (Grossman et al., 2001). Hence, as Horn (2007) explains, using Wenger's neutral definition of community allows one to investigate a broader range of collaborating teachers, including the "rarefied places in which teachers collaborate productively toward a common goal" (p. 40). Under Wenger's conceptualization of a CoP, the extent to which teachers behave as if they agree versus actually agree are important descriptors but not defining factors.

For these reasons, I approach this study with a socio-cultural learning theory lens, drawing specifically on Wenger's (1998) CoP perspective to assist in the conceptualization of CLP and opportunities for teacher learning.

Key Premises of Socio-Cultural Learning Theory

Over the course of human history, people have conceptualized learning in many different ways. Behaviorists focus on human actions, or behaviors, and seek to understand how to train people to have appropriate responses to stimuli (Martin-Loomis, 2007). Cognitivists focus on how individuals' brains function and seek to understand how to best transmit information from one person to another (Sternberg & Mio, 2009). The cognitive perspective has traditionally

dominated how people view learning and education in the United States (Goldman & Greeno, 1998). Yet many believe neither of these broad perspectives accurately explains the complex phenomenon of learning. Recently, research suggesting that learning is a situated activity has led many theorists to focus on social interactions and the importance of contextual factors in learning (Lave & Wenger, 1991). These theorists believe one cannot understand learning solely through laboratory experiments or a particular individual's "hard-wiring," because there is a dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment that is integral to the learning process. These ideas are often placed under the umbrella term "socio-cultural learning theory."

This theory is rooted in the work of Lev Vygotsky. Vygotsky, who lived from 1896-1932, was a Jewish Russian theorist with training in law, psychology, philosophy, and literature. Vygotsky influenced many through his teachings and writing; yet, he did not synthesize his ideas before his early death. However, many scholars took up his work and continued to develop it under the umbrella of socio-cultural learning theory (VanOers, 2004; Wertsch, 1985). While there is no one unified, codified definition of socio-cultural learning theory, there are common premises, based on Vygotsky's work, that guide a variety of theorists: 1) learning as change in participation; 2) cultural mediation; 3) dynamic interplay between individuals and their environment; 4) context matters; and 5) history of individuals, places, and objects matter. These key premises undergird this study.

Learning as a Change in Participation

Those working within the field of socio-cultural learning theory look at learning as a change in participation. As Lave & Wenger (1991) state, "Learning is a process that takes place in a participation framework, not in an individual mind" (p. 15). This statement means that learning is not receiving some body of knowledge that now exists in one's mind, but rather is the

process of being able to participate alongside others. Similarly, Sfard (1998) describes two different ways of conceptualizing learning as the acquisition metaphor and the participation metaphor. According to the acquisition metaphor, learning is acquiring or receiving some commodity; whereas the participation metaphor describes learning as becoming a participant in some aspect of practice, discourse, or activity. Socio-cultural learning theory aligns with the participation metaphor. This view of learning focuses on how individuals participate and/or think about their participation, rather than wanting to discover what people know.

Guided by this idea, I seek to understand the learning opportunities afforded during the course of this study. I do not focus on the transfer (or acquisition) of information between teachers, but rather on how the teachers participate in meetings with one another and how they talk about their participation as teachers. Learning opportunities are therefore opportunities through which teachers can change the way they participate in the work of teaching.

Cultural Mediation

A second key premise of socio-cultural learning theory is the idea of cultural mediation. Cultural mediation is the notion that tools, such as speech and physical objects have meaning because humans interact with them to give them meaning (Vygotsky & Cole, 1978). Those meanings are passed from generation to generation, although meanings change slightly through every interaction. Socio-cultural learning theory posits that tools do not have meanings in-and-of-themselves, but have meanings because people attribute meanings to them through interactions. Understanding a phenomenon includes understanding the meanings that those who are engaged in the phenomenon give to various tools.

The concept of cultural mediation permeates all aspects of this study, from the design through the findings presented in this dissertation. Throughout the study, I attempt to uncover

the meanings teams of teachers give to both the objects they use (teachers' manuals, district mandates, etc.) as well as the words they speak, rather than presuming these objects and words mean the same to the team as they do to me. This is particularly important, as prior research on teacher collaboration found that tools such as reform slogans take on particular meanings in teacher communities, and those meanings either limit or encourage talk that offers opportunities for learning (Horn, 2005). By taking a stance that tools are culturally mediated, I seek to understand the ways in which the tools a team of teachers use are understood by that team.

Dynamic Interplay

In addition, socio-cultural learning theorists presume a dynamic interplay between the individual and the community. Individuals affect communities and communities affect individuals. Gallucci (2008), citing Boreham and Morgan, explained, "Sociocultural theories of learning imply 'the simultaneous transformation of social practices and the individuals who participate in them, and thus the social and individual dimensions of learning are mutually constitutive'" (p. 547). If the world around us has meaning because we give it meaning through our interactions with one another (cultural mediation), then we come to understand the world around us through those with whom we interact. Individuals and communities cannot be fully understood without the other.

This premise leads to a focus on both the individuals within the CLP team as well as the team itself. I designed protocols that allow for the exploration of individuals, teams, and the interactions among individuals within a team. When analyzing data, I keep this dynamic interplay in mind, reflecting on individuals, teams, and the interactions between the two, based on the idea that the learning of individuals and communities are inextricably linked.

Context Matters

Likewise, one cannot understand learning without understanding the context within which it is taking place. Context affects the meanings people make and the ways in which individuals interact within a community. Context is the world outside of the phenomenon being investigated. In the case of a study on teachers collaboratively planning lessons, context includes the personal lives of the team members, the school, the school district, and the broader educational environment. Context also involves the families and community surrounding the school. Socio-cultural learning theory highlights the idea that teachers do not work in a vacuum—they are affected by policies, politics, and people in many ways. These ways must be understood if one is to understand the work teachers engage in. Context is not merely background knowledge, but is integral to understanding the participation and changes in participation of individuals and communities.

Context is especially germane to this study given the research on effective professional development indicating the importance of aligning and combining professional development with comprehensive reforms and policies across a school and/or district (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999), as well as the research on teacher communities cautioning about the influence of school norms on how communities function (Hargreaves, 1994; Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). This study foregrounds teams of teachers, but both prior research as well as this theoretical lens point to a need to design study protocols and processes that allow for the investigation of contextual factors influencing the teams.

History matters

Finally, socio-cultural learning theorists believe that the past influences the present. The history of individuals, tools, and contexts are omnipresent influences in human interactions.

Socio-cultural learning theorists express that it is important to consider historical development of people, speech, artifacts, and contexts involved in anything being investigated.

This is another aspect I build into my study design and methodology, as well as the data analysis process. Throughout the study, I seek to investigate and understand the history of individuals, teams, tools, and context involved in each team of teachers I worked with.

These key premises of socio-cultural learning theory undergird the entirety of this study, including the questions asked, the methodology used, and the ways in which data is analyzed. They form the conceptual foundation of the study.

Framing Constructs

In order to fully conceptualize CLP and opportunities for teacher learning, I turn to a theorist within the field of socio-cultural learning theory—Etienne Wenger and his CoP perspective (1998). This perspective builds on the premises of socio-cultural learning theory and offers specific constructs that aid in the conceptualization of both the process of collaboration as well as the process of planning lessons.

Collaboration Constructs

Teachers engaged in CLP, as I defined it (teachers of the same grade level or content area planning future lessons together across curricular areas on a weekly basis, and then implementing the collaboratively planned lessons in their own classrooms) can be conceptualized as a CoP, just as Levine and Marcus (2010) did in their study of teacher collaboration. Wenger (1998) defines a CoP through the existence of three dimensions: *mutual engagement*, *joint enterprise*, and *shared repertoire*. These constructs offer a way to unpack the complex nature of human interactions within a particular setting. I use these constructs to assist

in my quest to understand the nature of the work of CLP and the learning opportunities that arise when teachers engage in it.

Mutual engagement. Mutual engagement, as defined by Wenger (1998), refers to people doing things together in particular ways. In a CoP, there are practices and actions that people are mutually engaged in. These practices are culturally mediated and locally defined. In this study, I use the term practices to refer to the agreed-upon things a team of teachers participates in on an ongoing, normalized manner as a part of their collaborative work. This includes meeting at a set time, setting and following an agenda, and so forth.

The construct of mutual engagement includes not only the external and visible practices a CoP engages in, but also the more tacit understandings, underlying assumptions, or unspoken expectations that are integral to the CoP. This includes the reasoning and/or mindset members of a CoP bring to their practices, as well as the purpose or rationale behind the work. Intended focus, as understood by team members, is an example of an implicit practice.

Engaging in these practices results in ongoing relationships among individuals, regardless of whether those relationships are harmonious, conflict-ridden, or some combination of both. These relationships require work, or what Wenger (1998) refers to as “community maintenance” (p. 74). Research on teacher collaboration indicates that the interpersonal dynamics of a team of teachers may influence the opportunities to learn that are presented when teachers collaborate (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001). Therefore, this concept of community maintenance, or how teachers build and maintain their relationship with one another, is an important aspect of mutual engagement for a team of teachers engaged in CLP. Also included in this are the ways in which members of a CoP contribute to the CoP’s work. Individuals may contribute in diverse ways, as Wenger explains, “Mutual engagement involves not only our competence, but also the

competence of others” (p. 76). I therefore use the term community maintenance to refer to both the interpersonal dynamics of a team as well as the individual contributions of team members. In doing so, this construct offers a mechanism for understanding the dynamic interplay between the individuals within the team and the team itself.

In order to understand the nature of the work of CLP for teachers in this study, I use this construct of mutual engagement to help unpack what it is that the team does. I investigate the practices (both visible and understood) and the community maintenance (both individual contributions and interpersonal dynamics) of teams. This includes what they do when they routinely meet, the tone of their meetings, the ways in which each team member contributes to the team, and how the team deals with conflict.

Joint enterprise. Wenger’s (1998) construct of joint enterprise refers to how the practices negotiated by the community are carried out. It is how a CoP functions. Wenger uses the analogy of rhythm in music to express how joint enterprise is the process of expressing the full complexities of mutual engagement: “An enterprise is a resource of coordination, of sense-making, of mutual engagement; it is like rhythm to music” (p. 82). In other words, the ways in which practices are carried out by a CoP are akin to the ways in which notes are played when creating music--this constitutes the joint enterprise of a CoP. This rhythm includes the norms, routines, structures, and protocols used by a team of teachers engaged in CLP. This term is particularly pertinent to this study, given the research indicating the importance of structures, cultural norms, protocols, and conversational routines when considering teacher collaboration and the opportunities to learn that may be presented through collaboration (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Hargreaves, 1994; Horn & Little, 2010; Louis et al., 1996; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Supovitz, 2002).

Wenger (1998) discusses how every CoP will have a different rhythm, for joint enterprise is an indigenous enterprise:

It is defined by the participants in the very process of pursuing it. It is their negotiated response to their situation and thus belongs to them in a profound sense, in spite of all the forces and influences that are beyond their control. (p. 79)

Embedded in this is not only the idea of cultural mediation, but also that context matters.

Wenger suggests that every CoP will differ, even if the broad definition of their purpose or work is the same and that every CoP will be influenced by outside forces in different ways. In the case of teachers engaged in CLP, this may be personal history, school or district policies, state or federal educational politics, or a myriad of other contextual influences. Understanding these outside influences is an important piece of unpacking a team's joint enterprise.

A final aspect of joint enterprise relevant to this study is the sense of mutual accountability that arises as a result of a team's work. When a group determines, through a constant process of negotiation, how it will function, the individuals within the group will likely feel a sense of ownership over these norms, structures, and ways of being and will naturally hold one another accountable to them. Understanding what teachers hold one another accountable to helps a researcher, as an outsider of the CoP, understand the most important aspects of the work, as experienced by the members of the CoP.

In order to investigate the nature of the work of CLP for a particular team of teachers, it is necessary to explore their joint enterprise, or how the team carries out their practices through their rhythm, responses to outside influences, and expressions of accountability.

Shared repertoire. The third dimension of a CoP is shared repertoire. Wenger (1998) explains:

The repertoire of a CoP includes routines, words, tools, ways of doing things, stories, gestures, symbols, genres, actions or concepts that the community has produced or adopted in the course of its existence, and which have become part of its practice. (p. 83)

More succinctly, shared repertoire refers to the ways of talking or doing things that has become a part of a CoP's practice; it is the agreed-upon nature of talk.

Wenger's (1998) definition of shared repertoire is not limited to talk, however. It also includes objects that have been culturally mediated to such an extent that they have a taken-as-shared meaning (Yackel & Cobb, 1996) for the group. In the case of teachers engaged in CLP, these objects include things such as planbooks, teachers' manuals, district mandates, and so forth.

Prior research on the act of collaboration identified various ways collaborating teachers interact with each other and concrete materials, through the use of reform slogans, classification systems, and renderings of classroom events (Horn, 2005) as well as different conversational routines (Horn & Little, 2010). Researchers assert that differences among teams of teachers result in different opportunities to learn. Therefore, in this study, I identify and examine the particular ways in which teachers participate in the work of CLP through talk and interactions with each other as well as with documents. Wenger's (1998) construct of shared repertoire aids my ability to do so.

Summary. Taken together, the constructs of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire are the "source of coherence of a community" (Wenger, 1998, p. 72). It is what distinguishes a group of people from a CoP. By conceptualizing teams of teachers engaged in CLP as CoPs, I am able to understand the unique aspects of each team including what they did, how they did those things, and the ways in which they interacted with one another and their

work. This understanding enables me to answer research questions regarding the nature of the work of CLP and provides insights into how CLP can offer opportunities for learning.

Lesson Planning Constructs

One of the unique aspects of CLP, in contrast to other acts of collaboration, is that teachers are collaborating around a particular task—to plan upcoming lessons for their classrooms. Wenger's (1998) CoP perspective aids in the conceptualization of what happens when teachers plan lessons collaboratively. Wenger posits that human beings engage in the *negotiation of meaning*, which is “the process by which we experience the world and our engagement in it as meaningful” (p. 53). In the case of lesson planning, this refers to the process by which teachers come to understand and make sense of the lessons they anticipate implementing in their classrooms. According to Wenger, the negotiation of meaning is a constant process—we continually make new meanings as we experience new things. This suggests that teachers will constantly come to understand lessons differently as they interact. In other words, lessons are culturally mediated through the process of the negotiation of meaning. The negotiation of meaning involves two processes that form a duality: *participation* and *reification*. These two processes are distinct but complimentary; they both require and enable each other. Participation refers to how people take part in a CoP, in terms of both their actions as well as their sense of connection. The construct reflects the profoundly social nature of life and learning as understood by socio-cultural learning theorists. Wenger (1998) states, “Participation refers to a process of taking part and also to the relations with others that reflect this process” (p. 55). Individuals engage, or participate, in a CoP, across time and space, through both thoughts and actions.

Reification is “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (Wenger, 1998, p. 58). The “thing” can be a concrete object, such as a lesson plan or textbook, but can also be an abstract idea that takes on a form that is understood by everyone in the CoP. Reification refers to both objects and ideas that have been culturally mediated to such an extent that they have taken on their own distinct meanings. When something is reified, that thing has gone through (and will continue to go through) a process that results in a particular meaning and form to those within the CoP. The process of reification can refer to both taking meaning from an object, such as a teacher’s guide, or creating an object, such as a lesson plan.

It is through the process of participation and reification that both individuals and communities come to understand the world around them. Applying this construct to collaborating teachers, I view lesson planning as the negotiation of meaning of lessons to be taught. Teachers participate in the reification of resources. I use the term resources to refer to teachers’ manuals, district mandates, lesson plans, and other concrete objects and ideas that are reified by the team. Hence, reification involves using and creating resources.

Opportunities to Learn Constructs

This is a study investigating the learning opportunities afforded as teachers participate in a particular act of collaboration. Wenger (1998) asks, “What if we assumed that learning is as much a part of our human nature as eating or sleeping, that it is both life-sustaining and inevitable?” (p. 3). The CoP perspective is built on such a conceptualization. In this study, I also think of learning as inevitable, ongoing, and a natural part of living.

However, in order to investigate the kinds of learning opportunities that arise as teachers participate in CLP, there needs to be specific ways to identify opportunities to learn, for I cannot

simply say that everything is a learning opportunity. Building off Horn's work, I "focus specifically on conversational moments that entail accounts of classroom experience and that signal problems of professional practice" (2010, p. 188). I define these moments as rich learning opportunities, for as Levine and Marcus (2010) explain, "Colleagues' work is more likely to be a resource for individual and collective learning when depicted with clarity and concrete detail" (p. 390). I identify rich learning opportunities through the use of three constructs from Horn's work: *replays*, *rehearsals*, and *episodes of pedagogical reasoning*.

Replays are instances where teachers "provide blow-by-blow accounts of classroom events, often acting out both the teacher and students' roles" (Horn, 2005, p. 27). They are reflections; teachers are discussing with one another things that have already happened in their classrooms, although this may or may not come with analytic statements about how things went. Replays include discussion and/or sharing of events that happened recently, such as last week, as well as events from past years.

Rehearsals are similar to replays in that they render classroom events, only here "they do so in an anticipatory fashion" (Horn, 2005, p. 27). In a rehearsal, teachers may verbalize what they will say, what they anticipate students will say, or state what they will do during the implementation of a lesson being discussed. Rehearsals are instances of talk when teachers are imagining the future.

The third construct I use to conceptualize the rich opportunities to learn through talk is Horn's (2007) concept of episodes of pedagogical reasoning, which she defines as:

Units of teacher-to-teacher talk in which teachers exhibit their understanding of an issue in their practices. Specifically, episodes of pedagogical reasoning are moments in teachers' interaction in which they describe issues or raise questions about teaching

practice that are accompanied by some elaboration of reasons, explanations, or justifications. (p. 46)

In this study, I hone in on the instances where teachers explicitly state rationales for pedagogical choices.

Combined, replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning represent the instances where teachers are provided with rich learning opportunities—opportunities to learn about another’s practice and/or thinking. It is these moments of rich learning that I investigate most intensely, keeping in mind Wenger’s framing that learning is like breathing—it’s omnipresent. I therefore use the term opportunities to learn, rather than rich opportunities to learn, because while I focused on rich opportunities, I did not limit analysis to moments of replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning. Thus, this study is focused on the nature of the opportunities to learn that arise when teachers engage in CLP, but the study primarily focuses on the nature of the rich learning opportunities.

Putting It Together

In this chapter, I described the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation as well as the particular constructs that frame the study design, data collection, and data analysis processes. In seeking to answer the research question, “How do teachers engage in CLP and what opportunities for learning are presented when teachers do so?” I conceptualize teachers engaged in CLP as a CoP that participates in the negotiation of meaning, which provides opportunities to learn through talk including replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning. (See Figure 3). This conceptualization aids in the quest to answer the questions: What is the nature of the work of CLP? What kinds of learning opportunities are afforded by engaging in CLP? And what enables learning opportunities to arise when teachers engage in CLP?

Teachers engaged in CLP are a CoP, that engages in the negotiation of meaning, which provides opportunities to learn through talk....

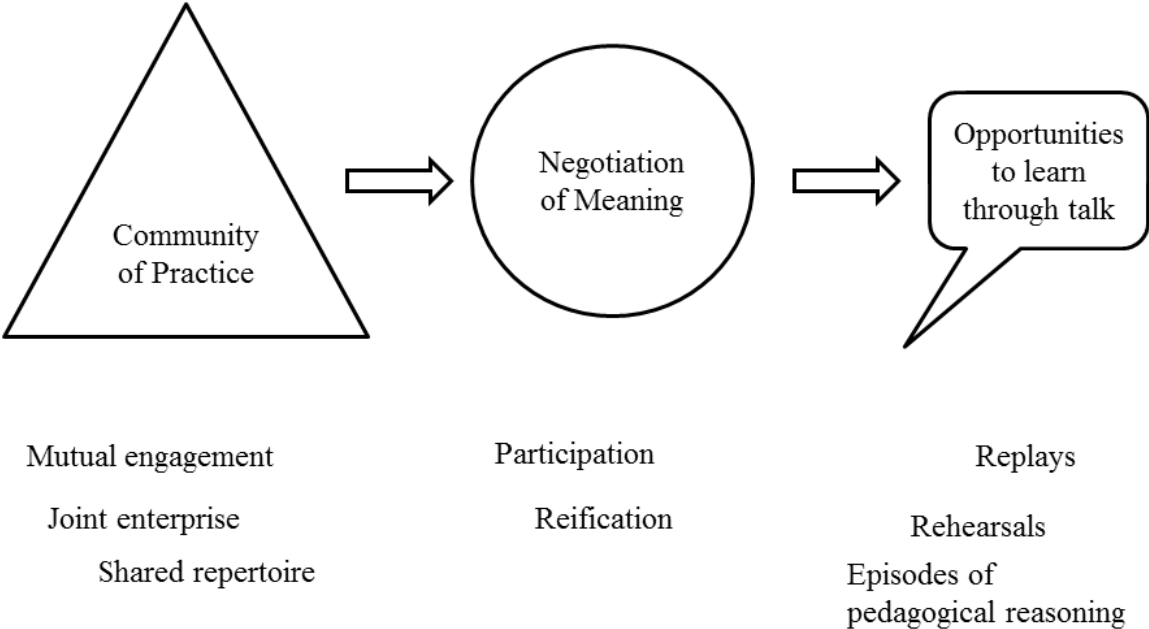


Figure 3. *Visual of Conceptual Framework*

Chapter Four: Study Design and Methodology

This study investigates how teachers engage in Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) and the nature of the learning opportunities presented when teachers do so. It serves as a descriptive study, seeking to add to the research on the act of collaboration, through investigating a particular act of collaboration with teachers at an elementary school level, in contrast to the current literature on high school teachers engaged in collaboration. The study is grounded in socio-cultural learning theory and draws on constructs from Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective, as well as constructs within the teacher collaboration literature (Horn 2005, 2007).

The research questions, prior research literature, and conceptual framework all informed the study design and methodology described in this chapter. In this chapter, I first explain the rationale for designing a qualitative case study. I then describe the participants and the data collection methods used. Following this, I outline the data analysis process. Through this chapter, I hope to illuminate the scientific process that led to the findings presented in this dissertation.

Rationale for Study Design

This study was a qualitative, two-phase, multi-case case study. Each aspect of this design was intentionally chosen to help answer my research questions and add to the body of research on the act of collaboration. In this section, I explain these decisions.

I chose to conduct a qualitative study because I was interested in going "inside teacher communities" (Little, 2003) to understand the nature of the work of CLP and the learning opportunities presented when teachers engage in it. I knew I did not want to rely solely upon

self-reported data, because much of the research on teacher communities has done that, and I felt it important to continue to expand the research methodologies being used to study teacher collaboration. In addition, a socio-cultural learning theory lens suggests the importance of understanding the dynamic interplay between individuals and their environments, thus requiring research methodologies that offer insights into this interplay. These points led me to a qualitative study, where “researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

I further narrowed the study design by choosing to conduct a case study. Case studies are an “in-depth description and analysis of a bounded system” (Merriam, 2009, p. 40). The work of CLP and the teachers who engage in it can be thought of as a bounded system, or a specific case. Case studies allow a researcher to examine a phenomenon within a real-life context, as Yin (2008) explains, “A case study is an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (p. 18). Prior research, as well as socio-cultural learning theory, point to the importance of context. However, not much is known about this particular system. Together the lack of knowledge regarding CLP and the ability to explore the phenomenon within its influential context made a case study most appropriate for this research.

I chose a multi-case case study design in order to look across more than one instance of CLP. A multi-case case study allows a researcher to look for similarities and differences across cases in order to make assertions based on patterns found beyond one group of individuals in one context. While the goal of qualitative research is to generalize to theory and not entire populations, findings based on patterns found across groups are likely to be more robust than

findings based on only one group. A multi-case study design guards against (although does not completely eliminate the possibility of) idiosyncratic findings. Hence, having multiple cases within a study helps strengthen the findings (Yin, 2006).

Due to time and financial constraints, I could not investigate several teams thoroughly within this multi-case case study, but wanted to ensure the teams I did investigate in-depth would provide sufficient and rich data. Therefore, I chose to break the study into two phases. During Phase One, I worked with five teams of teachers. I then selected the two teams I believed exemplified the work of CLP for Phase Two. This provided a general sense of the work of CLP across multiple teams, but also provided in-depth data on the work of two exemplary cases. This dissertation focuses primarily on the data collected during Phase Two, although the experience and understanding developed during Phase One certainly influenced the entire process.

Sampling

In order to study the nature of CLP and the learning opportunities presented when teachers engage in it, I needed to find teams of teachers who engaged in CLP. I used a sampling process known as *purposeful* or *purposive sampling* (Merriam, 2009), where a researcher develops criteria and chooses participants who meet those criteria. I used two primary criteria for this study. First, teams needed to meet my definition of CLP. I defined CLP as teachers of the same grade level or content area planning future lessons together across curricular areas on an ongoing basis, and then implementing the lessons in their own classrooms. Second, I narrowed the field of possible teams to elementary school teachers, due to a gap in the research literature on the act of teacher collaboration at the elementary school level, as well as my personal experiences as an elementary school teacher, which provides me with increased

expertise that offers a more nuanced lens through which I can explore what is happening (Bransford, 2000).

However, I not only wanted to sample for teams of elementary school teachers who engaged in CLP, but rather teams of teachers who exemplified the act. Purposeful sampling, where the phenomenon of interest is not only present, but profoundly present, is known as *intensity sampling* (Patton, 2003). In this study, I not only looked for teachers who planned future lessons together on an ongoing basis, but I looked for teachers who did this across their school day and saw it as a normative part of teaching. I also looked for teams who desired coherence and consistency across their classrooms, and demonstrated a sense of collective responsibility for *our* kids and *our* plans. These additional criteria were drawn from research indicating characteristics of highly functional teacher communities (Bryk et al., 1999; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Lee & Smith, 1996).

I conducted this purposeful, intensity sampling by utilizing available networks. The university with which I am affiliated has several elementary schools that participate in a network partnership. I approached individuals at the university who work with these partner schools and asked them to identify teams of teachers who they believed embodied the act of CLP. I also approached individuals outside of the network with whom I had professional relationships. This can be seen as a modified form of snowball sampling, because while I asked people to refer me to people who might meet my criteria and therefore serve as appropriate participants, those whom I asked did not become participants themselves.

Once teams were identified and consented to participate, I visited the teams and informally observed a CLP meeting. Through talking to the teachers and observing the meeting,

I obtained first-hand knowledge of the extent to which the team engaged in CLP as I defined it.

During this visit, I asked myself the following questions:

- *What do teachers do during their planning time?* Are they mutually engaged in the work of planning? Does there appear to be relationships that are maintained as a result of their work? Are they striving for coherence and consistency across classrooms?
- *How are teachers working together?* Does there seem to be an agreed upon understanding of what the work of planning together entails? Are there routines and/or norms that seem to be in place? Is planning together a normal part of work for them?
- *In what ways do the teachers function as a collective?* Are there discourses, stories, and/or documents that appear to have meaning to the group? Are the teachers speaking about “our kids” and “our plans”?

Hence, for this study, purposeful, intensity sampling involved using networks to identify teams and observing those teams to ensure they met the following criteria:

- Elementary teachers of the same grade level or content area that plan future lessons together on an ongoing basis across the school day, and then implement the lessons in their own classrooms.
- Teachers see this work as a normative part of teaching and desire coherence and consistency across their classrooms.
- Teachers demonstrate a sense of collective responsibility for our kids and our plans.

Participants

This process resulted in five teams of teachers. These teams worked in four different schools, in three different school districts in the Pacific Northwest of the United States. Each school served approximately 300 elementary students. Demographic information for each school

can be found in Table One. Due to the relatively small nature of the schools, each team consisted of two teachers. Below, I discuss information about schools, teams, and teachers relevant to this study.

Table 1. *Demographic Information of Schools*

School Name	School district	Number of students in school	Grades school serves	% of students from non-white background ^a	% of students receiving free or reduced lunch ^a
Sanford	Metropolitan	300	K-6	72.8	58.1
Ginbrook	Metropolitan	260	K-6	71.5	75.5
Pilkhurst	Northern	400	K-6	56.9	43.1
Cedar Forest	Southern	300	PreK-6	83.5	78.8

Note. All names throughout this study are pseudonyms

^aInformation retrieved from state’s on-line school report cards

Sanford Elementary

The first team that met my criteria for embodying CLP was a team of teachers from Sanford Elementary. Sanford Elementary is an open-concept school where multiple classes share space, rather than have each class contained within a room, as is more typical in the United States. The open nature of the school promotes collaboration, yet the teachers and principal pointed to this team as the only team who truly planned together on a regular basis.

The team consisted of Kathy and Jane, who were in their 19th year of collaborating at the time of the study. These women met during their planning time daily, but remained after school on Mondays or Tuesdays to complete whatever planning had not been done already. They stayed “however long it takes.” The professional relationship between these two women was palpable. They would often finish each other’s sentences, spoke almost entirely in plural during CLP meetings (“We’re going to do this”), and told me how much they were going to miss each other when Kathy retired at the end of the year. Their physical classrooms, located in one large

space without walls, seemed to be echoed in their conversations—two voices within one corpus of thought.

I chose not to invited Kathy and Jane to participate in Phase Two of the study because of Kathy’s retirement. While Kathy still met with Jane each week and was dedicated to working to meet the needs of her students, her anticipation of retirement was also evident. I felt that as the school year progressed, Kathy’s pending retirement might change the nature of CLP for this team, thus giving me a skewed understanding of the work and the learning opportunities it provided them.

Ginbrook Elementary

The next team in the study that met the criteria for CLP consisted of Sherri and Gretchen, who taught kindergarten and first grade at Ginbrook Elementary School. The school is a “lab school” for literacy and hosts many professional development opportunities for teachers across their school district. To support their literacy instruction, the school has an expectation of collaborative planning and teachers are provided release time twice a month to create joint plans for the upcoming month-long reading or writing unit. These plans are collected and reviewed by the principal. The principal typically visits teams during this time, to support their collaborative work, and to ensure they are engaging in it.

During the year of the study, Sherri taught first grade, while Gretchen taught a kindergarten/first grade split. This meant that they only collaborated around literacy, due to teaching different math curricula, and integrating social studies into literacy. (Science is not taught directly at the school.) Although they did not collaborate the year prior to this study, they were both on a large collaborative team two years prior. Due to changes in school enrollment, during the year of the study, Sherri and Gretchen were the only teachers teaching first grade,

hence the team of two. These women expressed gratitude around this, as they had a challenging experience with other teachers previously. They reported that they were very similar, work well together, and are good friends. Sherri was on the hiring team and felt as if she wanted to work with Gretchen when she hired her. Both are young, unmarried women without children who are in the beginning stage of their career. They appeared to have many similarities, on both a personal and professional level and expressed great joy to have one another.

Although this team met the definition of CLP and spoke passionately about the work of CLP, they differed from the other teams in the study in substantial ways. They only collaborated around literacy, and in contrast to all of the other teams that met weekly, this team only met once a month, due to school-wide systems and structures. This would have limited opportunities to observe the work, and would not have offered as many opportunities for comparison between teams. Hence, I chose not to include this team in Phase Two of the study.

Pilkhurst, Grade 4

Two teams from Pilkhurst Elementary School participated in this study. The school is deeply invested in a Response to Intervention model that includes frequent collaborative meetings across grade bands (first and second grade, third and fourth grade, etc.) to discuss strategies for meeting the needs of struggling students. In addition, the primary grades have a reading block time, where students are placed into a classroom based on their performance on an internal assessment, regardless of who their “homeroom” teacher is. The teachers at the school also create a master schedule each year, taking into account teachers’ preferences for collaborative planning. Teams can choose to have a small amount of planning each day, or longer chunks of common planning time a few days each week. Overall, the teachers and principal at Pilkhurst reported that the school is a collaborative environment.

The first Pilkhurst team consisted of Pat (the only male teacher in the study) and Sarah. Pat and Sarah were new to collaborating at the time of this study. Sarah previously taught in the primary grades at Pilkhurst, and was teaching fourth grade for the first time. She wanted to collaborate, as she had done in primary, and Pat agreed. In the beginning of the year, the team met on Tuesdays during their planning time. However, in December, they changed both the time and location of their meetings to afterschool at a nearby bar. Over the course of the study, there was a visible and audible professional relationship developing between Pat and Sarah, as the number of “inside” jokes increased and the conversation bantered back and forth more.

I asked Pat and Sarah to continue to participate in the study during Phase Two, but they declined. This was likely for one of several reasons. First, Pat and Sarah both had young children at home and were hesitant to take on anything “extra.” Second, Sarah only worked part-time and shared the classroom with another teacher. While she was the one who collaborated with Pat and communicated any relevant information to the other teacher, this set up meant that there was already another person peripherally in the team, and adding a researcher to this mix may have felt overwhelming to the participants. Third, as a teacher new to fourth grade, Sarah likely focused her energy on learning the curriculum and children of this age, and did not want to feel as if her collaborative practices were under investigation. While I believe the development of the team over time would have been fruitful information, their decision to only participate in Phase One is understandable.

Pilkhurst, Grade 2⁷

The other Pilkhurst team consisted of Miriam and Emeline who both taught second grade, and had been collaborating with one another in various ways for more than five years at the time

⁷Because only this team continued through Phase Two of the study, I refer to this team as the Pilkhurst team in the remainder of this dissertation.

of the study. Planning together was extremely important to both women. Over the years, they each taught different grades between kindergarten and third grade, sometimes teaching split level classes and sometimes teaching a straight grade. Regardless of the configuration, both women participated in collaborative meetings, either as a full participant or as more of an observer, depending on the class they were teaching in any given year. In the year of this study, Miriam and Emeline were the only teachers teaching straight second grade classes. Their classrooms were adjacent, with a door connecting the two. When the door was open and Miriam and Emeline both at their desks, the two could see one another and easily converse. They reported that they often opened the door during the school day to check in with one another and left the door open before and after school.

In addition to these frequent, short conversations throughout the school day, the team had a scheduled time to meet each week. In September of the year of this study, the team met after school on Tuesdays for approximately one hour; but in the middle of year, they changed this time to accommodate Stephanie, Miriam's student teacher. From approximately January through June the team met for 45 minutes on Wednesday mornings, with an agreement that they would complete the meeting after school on Thursdays, if necessary. At the end of the year they reported that they preferred meeting afterschool, so they can be "more planned."

Valuing collaboration was one of many commonalities between these women. Both were unmarried without children and were veteran teachers. Miriam had been teaching for 15 years, whereas Emeline had been teaching for 8. However, there were also differences among the women. Miriam collaborated with colleagues at a previous school and chose Pilkhurst because the school and school district were more "connected and smaller." Emeline, on the other hand, had not taught outside of this school district. She attended Pilkhurst as a student, and while she

hopes to someday go abroad, possibly to Hong Kong where she has family, her life thus far has been centered in the small city in which Pilkhurst is located. Miriam and Emeline were close colleagues with many similarities.

I invited Miriam and Emeline to participate in Phase Two of this study, as they appeared to be engaging in CLP exactly as I had defined it. Their enthusiasm for the work of CLP, coupled with their desire to keep the workload contained served as a model for what could be reasonably expected from a team of teachers.

Cedar Forest

The final team in the study was comprised of Celia and Anna, who taught fourth and fifth grade at Cedar Forest Elementary School. Celia taught a fourth/fifth grade split, while Anna taught a straight fifth grade. Celia had been at the school for 13 years and reported that teachers in the school had slowly been warming to the idea of collaboration, but she and Anna are “easily the anomaly, in that I think we’re the strongest team that partners together.” The principal of the school appeared to be extremely active in teachers’ lives, pushing them to try on new practices, including collaboration.

Despite the fact that these two women had been collaborating for less than two years at the time of this study, several factors led them to be an extremely connected pair. First, Celia was involved in the hiring of Anna. She served on the hiring team and told me that she chose Anna due to feeling as if she would have a “really good gelled relationship” with her. Celia engaged in CLP with her previous grade level partner and wanted to hire someone with whom she could continue this work. Secondly, the team met on Saturdays, at Celia’s house, for approximately 3-4 hours, with time built in for socializing and eating lunch. This meant that over the course of their short-lived collaboration, they had spent more than 100 hours together!

In addition, Anna taught several of Celia's students for mathematics. Due to the nature of this set up, coupled with Celia's history at the school, both teachers clearly knew all of the students in both classrooms. Finally, their classrooms were physically adjacent and the teachers reported they would frequently visit one another throughout the school day.

As individuals, Celia and Anna had different professional histories. At the time of the study, Celia was in her 13th year of teaching, all at Cedar Forest; whereas Anna was in her 1st year of full time teaching, although she previously worked as a substitute teacher for a few years, including almost a full year of serving as a long-term substitute at Cedar Forest.

Their connectedness and dedication to spending time planning together were the reasons I invited Celia and Anna to participate in Phase Two of the study. Although I was cognizant of the extreme nature of their collaboration (3-4 hours every Saturday), I felt this could offer interesting insights about the possibilities CLP holds when teachers spend significant time engaged in it.

Summary

These teams were recommended to me by principals, colleagues, and teacher leaders. Upon meeting each of these teams, I was quickly able to determine that they engage in CLP. Each team embodied the definition of CLP, in that they planned future lessons together on an ongoing basis as a normative part of their work as teachers. For each team, they collaborated around every subject they taught in common. They demonstrated a desire for coherence and consistency across their classrooms and functioned as a collective. While there is much more to each individual teacher and each particular team, a table of pertinent collaborative information is shown in Table Two.

Table 2. *Participants and Collaborative Information*

Name of school	Grade level	Teachers' names	Timing of meetings	Average length of meeting ^a	Years collaborating together
Teams in Phase I only					
Sanford Elementary	K	Kathy & Jane	Every day during planning and after school	1.5 hours	19
Ginbrook Elementary	K & 1	Sherri & Gretchen	Wednesday after school	1 hour	2
Pilkhurst Elementary	4	Pat & Sarah	Tuesday during planning ^c	1 hour	0
Teams in Phase I and II					
Pilkhurst Elementary	2	Miriam & Emeline	Tuesday after school ^b	1-1.5 hours	6
Cedar Forest Elementary	4 & 5	Celia & Anna	Saturday morning	3-4 hours	1

^abased on reported length

^bmeeting time changed mid-year to Wednesday before school due to student teacher

^cmeeting time changed mid-year to afterschool at a local bar

Data Collection

As is the tradition within qualitative case studies, I collected multiple sources of data, in order to triangulate data to create robust findings (Merriam, 2009; Miles & Huberman, 1994; Yin, 2008). These sources include interviews, observations, and document collection.

Interviews

I conducted a total of 18 interviews over the course of this study. Interviews are important because they offer insights into how participants understand their experiences, as Patton (2003) states, “The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person’s perspective” (p. 341). This perspective taking is important because I seek to understand the meaning participants make of their work. I am not a member of the team, nor was I present for every interaction among the team. Thus, I relied on the participants as the experts in their

work, context, and history. Interviews allowed me to gain information about the work of CLP, from participants' perspectives.

Interviews followed a semi-structured protocol. Semi-structured protocols allow the researcher to determine in advance the topics and issues to be discussed while also allowing opportunities for new ideas to emerge (Patton, 2003). I prepared questions in advance, in order to ensure interviews addressed my research questions and built upon my conceptual framework. I wanted to gain similar information across teams/participants, in order to compare and contrast meanings made across teams and team members. However, I also wanted flexibility to allow interviews to unfold in a natural manner and explore any avenues unique to a particular team or participant. A semi-structured interview protocol was most appropriate for this study, as this type of interview “allows the researcher to respond to the situation at hand, to the emerging worldview of the respondent, and to new ideas on the topic” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90).

All interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed. During the interviews, I took notes on any pertinent body language or contextual factors that could not be captured via audio-recording. Additional notes were relatively scarce, as I tried to ensure the interviews had a conversational feel. As soon as possible after the interviews, I used these notes and memory to create a memo describing the interview and my reactions to it. This served as an initial analysis and created documentation in the event that something happened to the audio-recording, as was the case with one of the 18 interviews.

Five sets of interviews took place during the course of this study. During Phase One, I conducted a group interview with each team. This interview served the purpose of learning about the team from their perspective, in order to build upon my own observations and recordings of CLP meetings. In this interview, I asked about the history of the team, the ways in

which the school supports and constrains their work, and asked multiple questions geared towards having participants describe their work to me. These interviews lasted approximately 50 minutes each.

I began Phase Two by conducting individual interviews with each team member. This allowed me to build a deeper relationship with each participant and hear more about each person's history, thoughts, expectations, and so forth. I asked questions about personal and professional experiences, as well as questions about the interviewee's relationship with the other team member. I also, once again, asked questions aimed at having the participant describe her collaborative work to me. This allowed me to compare and contrast answers given as a group to answers given, at a date later in the school year, alone. These four interviews lasted between 30 and 45 minutes and took place in the participant's classroom.

The other set of individual interviews conducted consisted of a before and after interview. These interviews took place before and after an observed CLP meeting, in order to focus interview questions on a particular meeting, rather than meetings in general. The before interview asked questions about the participant's expectations of the meeting—for example, “Can you walk me through what you think you are going to talk about tomorrow?” and “Are there any specific terms you think will be used during the meeting that I might not be familiar with?” This interview also asked about preparation for the meeting, including what preparation the individual had done, what preparation she anticipated the other team member will have done, and what she will bring to the meeting. This set of interviews shed light on the practices of the CLP meetings, including the goals and definitions of success participants held regarding a particular meeting.

The related after interview took place after a CLP meeting observation, typically on the same day or the day after the before interview. This interview served to gain insights into how participants made sense of what just happened. In these interviews, I asked for reactions to the meeting, clarified anything I did not understand, and asked about the typicality of the meeting. Combined, before and after interviews took approximately 45 minutes.

The next set of interviews conducted in this study consisted of a concluding group interview. This interview took place at the end of data collection and served to explore my research questions from new angles and to collect additional data specifically about my hunches at that point in time. In these interviews, I asked about changes in CLP over the course of the year, the emerging theme of accountability in my data, as well as influences of curricular materials, my presence, the presence of student teachers, and school policies. I also asked questions about the role of students, content, and teaching in their conversations, to begin to test my emerging findings related to talk about the instructional core. These interviews ended with questions specific to each team, related to terms used during the course of the study that I did not yet understand.

Finally, an unforeseen element of Phase Two was the presence of student teachers. One of the participants from each focal team served as a cooperating teacher during the course of this study. I, therefore, interviewed each student teacher to gain an understanding of her perceptions of CLP and the work of the team she became a temporary member of. These interviews asked about personal history and experiences with the team. I also asked a question to garner how the student teacher felt about CLP based on her experience.

Combined these 18 interviews provided rich data to explore the perceptions of participants in relation to themselves, their collaboration, and their contexts.

Observations

A second data source for this study involved observations of CLP meetings. Observations serve an important role in qualitative case study research because they allow a researcher access into a phenomenon in its naturally occurring setting and provide a firsthand account of the phenomenon (Merriam, 2009). I conducted a total of 18 observations over the course of six months. During Phase One, I observed each team twice; during Phase Two, I observed the focal teams an additional four times each. Multiple observations, over time, guarded against collecting data that was idiosyncratic. For the two focal teams, I was able to see multiple curricular units and responses to different times of year, including school vacations, testing, and report cards.

While I was interested in CLP as it manifested itself across time, I chose to focus observations on CLP meetings. I listened for evidence of outside interactions during these meetings, but did not formally observe teachers outside of meetings. The rationale for this is that it is during CLP meetings where the work of CLP can be seen most intensely.

In this study, I took the stance of “observer as participant” (Merriam, 2009) in that I attended meetings as an observer and outsider, yet I established myself as an educator with experience teaching elementary school in order to support an environment where my presence did not overly influence the behavior of the team. Over the course of data collection, I tried to be non-participatory, but occasionally found myself swept away by the process of brainstorming and offered ideas or asked questions. However, my overall stance was that of an observer.

As an observer, I audio-recorded meetings and took field notes. Audio-recordings were later transcribed in full using conventions adapted from Horn (2008). Field notes included description of what I saw as well as commentary (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). This

commentary included emerging hunches, questions that arose, and overall personal reactions to the meeting. Although field notes were typed during the CLP meeting observations, I reviewed them as soon after the observation as possible (Bogdan & Biklen, 1998), ensuring they were as accurate and complete as possible.

Field notes served several purposes. First, they provided a running account of what happened during the CLP meeting, in the event that the audio-recording did not work. (Luckily, this was not the case with any of the observations in this study.) Secondly, they assisted in transcription, as they noted non-verbal behavior, such as writing in planbooks, funny faces made, and so forth. Field notes also included descriptions of what participants were looking at and/or writing, which is information not captured through audio-recording. In addition, field notes provided contextual information, such as what occurred before the meeting, what the room in which the meeting was taking place looked and felt like. Finally, the commentary sections of the field notes served both as an initial stage of data analysis and a mechanism for keeping my biases in check by being aware of them as they arose.

The purpose of these observations, both audio-recordings and field notes, was to go inside the work of CLP to collect data that would provide insights into the nature of the talk of teachers engaged in CLP and the opportunities for learning that are presented when teachers engage in it.

Document Collection

The final source of data for this study was documents collected towards the end of the study. While I initially anticipated collecting documents throughout the study, the quick-paced nature of teachers' school days and the exhausted feeling I sensed at the end of CLP meetings resulted in me not asking for documentation immediately following CLP meetings. I prioritized

teachers' comfort level with me as an observer, and therefore did not interrupt the work happening immediately following meetings in order to make photocopies. However, at the end of data collection, I photocopied pages from planning grids that corresponded to my observations for each participant in the two focal teams. I also photocopied pertinent documentation, such as pages from a teacher's manual and district frameworks. Together, these documents provided an additional source of data that was used in the process of understanding observations, as Merriam (2009) explains "(documents) can furnish descriptive information, verify emerging hypotheses, advance new categories and hypotheses, offer historical understanding, track change and development and so on" (p. 155).

Overall, the data collected through this study offered multiple sources of evidence to allow for triangulation that can lead to robust findings (Yin, 2008). This data was collected during the 2011-2012 school year. Specific dates of the various data collection sources described in this section are in Table Three.

Table 3. *Data Collection Dates*

Phase One

	Sanford	Ginbrook	Pilkhurst, grade 4	Pilkhurst, grade 2	Cedar Forest
Observation 1	November 7	November 9	October 25	October 25	November 4
Observation 2	November 28	December 5	November 8	November 8	December 3
Group interview	November 30	December 14	December 12	November 23	December 15

Phase Two

	Pilkhurst, grade 2	Cedar Forest
Individual interviews	January 30 & February 1	January 30 & January 31
Observation 3	February 8	February 11
Observation 4	February 29*	March 3*
Observation 5	March 21*	March 24*
Observation 6	April 4	April 21
Student teacher interview	April 18	April 12**
Concluding interview	May 22***	May 4***

*=conducted a before and after interview around this observation

**=interviewed both student teachers on this date

***=collected documents on this date as well

Data Analysis

Data analysis for this qualitative study took place both during and after data collection. Throughout data collection, I created a *data record* (Graue & Walsh, 1998). This included field notes, transcripts of CLP meetings and interviews, and periodic analytical memos attempting to capture what had transpired as well as the emerging hypotheses I developed.

Upon completion of data collection, in June 2012, I began analysis by reading all field notes and interview memos while taking note of “any and all ideas, themes, or issues they suggest, no matter how varied or disparate” (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995, p. 143). I read line by line and took notes on what arose, a process known as open coding (Merriam, 2009). This allowed me to begin to think about the entire corpus of data.

I then began the process of focused coding by developing codes for Wenger's (1998) constructs of mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, while also responding to key categories of data already identified through the data collection and open coding processes (such as personal information, student teacher, etc.) (see Appendix A). These broad codes served as a first entry point into reorganizing the data into conceptual bits in order to understand the work of each team. This step aligned with Coffey and Atkinson's (1996) conceptualization of coding as "a way of relating our data to our ideas about those data" (p. 27). There was significant overlap in the codes, as I was merely trying to identify parts of the data that could support my investigation of the various dimensions of a CoP. I focused this step of analysis on the interviews from the two focal teams.

After this initial coding of interview data using broad conceptual codes, I then focused on each team, looking within each the codes for mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. For each of these codes, I developed sub-codes by looking for themes/patterns that emerged within the code. I continued a process of sub-coding until I felt confident that the data had been unpacked to an extent that I could make a statement about the data, taking into account all instances of the data under that sub-code. While the specific sub-codes varied slightly between the two focal teams, this was the process I engaged in in order to understand the nature of the work of CLP for each team of teachers, according to interview data. Through this process, I created documents recording these statements. At the end of this step of analysis, for each focal team, I had memos addressing what it was that the team did, how the team went about their work, and what were the ways of talking or doing things that had become a part of the team's practices. In other words, I had isolated data to develop an understanding of the team's mutual

engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire, as understood and reported by the team members.

The next step involved looking across the two focal teams in a process referred to as clustering (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Through this process, I developed categories to help understand what I learned from both teams through their interviews. By doing so, I travelled up the *ladder of abstraction* (Carney, 1990) and continually asked myself the following questions:

- What is happening when teachers engage in CLP?
- Between the two teams, what things are like and unlike each other?
- What is this an instance of?
- To what more general class might this belong?

This process resulted in 11 categories that subsumed the particulars of each team.

These 11 categories formed the basis of my initial observation codes. They were my entry point to the observation transcripts (see Appendix B). I then followed a similar procedure of coding each focal team, looking within each broad code and creating sub-codes wherever necessary until a statement could be made that explained a particular chunk of data. This process also included creating charts to better understand the data. I created a memo, articulating these statements and the data that corresponded to them. Through this process, I continually asked myself the question, “What is the nature of the talk during CLP meetings when teachers are talking about X?” The X was whatever code was being explored at that particular moment. My goal was to develop an understanding of what happened at the CLP meetings I observed that accounted for all data.

It was during the analysis of observation transcripts that I also analyzed the documents collected. The majority of the documents collected consisted of lesson planning grids, although

some jointly created worksheets and district provided teacher's guides were also collected. These documents offered more nuanced understanding of what happened at the meetings. For example, I took note of what was in the planning grids that was not discussed and/or places where what was recorded differed from what was spoken. These analyses were included in the observation analysis memos.

Unpacking observation transcripts and documents was followed by another step up the ladder of abstraction (Carney, 1990) through a process of clustering and subsuming particulars (Miles & Huberman, 1994) similar to that followed for the interview data. I looked across the observation memos for each focal team to develop categories to help understand the connections and relationships between the focal teams. I did this by looking within the statement memos from observation data and asking myself the following questions:

- How can I describe the nature of the talk of teachers, based on these two teams, taking into consideration what is known via prior research as well as my conceptual framework?
- What "classes" or "categories" can I place these statements into?
- What constructs put these individual claims together?
- What learning opportunities are presented as teachers engage in CLP?

This resulted in eight categories that accounted for what was observed in both focal teams.

A final step in the analysis process that led to the findings discussed in this dissertation involved looking across the categories created based on interview data and categories created based on observation data. I referred to these as "overall claims" and used them to create the understandings discussed in the subsequent chapters.

Throughout these steps of analysis, I took several measures to ensure the quality of the claims made in this dissertation. First, I consistently looked for both confirming and

disconfirming evidence. As Miles and Huberman (1994) explain, “Patterns need to be subjected to skepticism—your own or that of others—and to conceptual and empirical testing” (p. 246). I maintained the stance of a skeptic and looked for discrepant cases for, “The object of the game is continuously to refine a hypothesis until it accounts for all known cases without exception” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 309). I also worked to keep my own biases in check, through field notes and frequent memoing. Being aware of these biases assisted me in not allowing them to cloud behavior or analyses. This quality assurance strategy is referred to as *researcher’s position or reflexivity* (Merriam, 1998). Finally, I consulted with colleagues, a process known as *peer debriefing*. Miles and Huberman (1994) suggest, “Show your field notes to a colleague. Another researcher is often much quicker to see where and how you are being misled or co-opted” (p. 266). Combined, these steps aided me in the process of conducting and analyzing research that can be considered dependable and credible. In other words, they helped create a study where “the results are consistent with the data collected” (Merriam, 2009, p. 221) and where I believe “the findings of (my) inquiry (are) worth paying attention to, worth taking account of” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290).

Conclusion

By conducting a qualitative, two-phase, multi-case case study using data collection methods such as interviews, observations, and document collection, I gathered a great deal of data in which to analyze. Through the steps described above, I was able to systematically explore the data in order to answer my research questions. The following chapters discuss what was found through this research.

Chapter Five: Pilkhurst, Grade 2: Doing Our Job Well Together

Emeline: We have the same goal.

Miriam: Exactly.

Emeline: What's best for the kids.

Miriam: I mean there are times that Emeline will say, 'I'm not gonna do that. I don't want to do that.' And I'll say, 'Right. Because *you're* what matters, not the kids.'

(h) And then she'll go, 'Okay, I'll do it.'

Emeline: 'Yeah, I'll do it. Alright!' I mean... (h)⁸

Miriam and Emeline, the teachers who constitute the Pilkhurst second grade team⁹, participate in Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) as a way to keep themselves and each other focused on the work of supporting children.

In this chapter, I first describe the teachers in the Pilkhurst team, followed by an examination of the particular practices the team engages in as a part of their CLP work. In doing so, I highlight the nature of the work of CLP for this team of teachers and offer an analysis of their community of practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998). Investigating the work of this team demonstrates some ways in which CLP can serve as a form of professional development.

⁸ Transcription conventions were adapted from Horn, 2008. Below are the conventions used:

(5)	Five second pause
//,]	Beginning of overlapping utterances, end of overlapping utterances
-h, h, (h)	In-breath, out-breath, laughter
(?)	Unclear reading
(())	Marks other voice qualities or actions

⁹ During the year of the study, Miriam served as a cooperating teacher for Stephanie, a student teacher from a local university. Although Stephanie was in Miriam's classroom to some extent for the entire school year, she was not a full member of their Community of Practice. Hence, I discuss Stephanie's comments and influences to some extent in this dissertation but do not focus on her as a full participant.

Personal Histories

As per my conceptual framework, who Miriam and Emeline are as individuals, including their personal and professional histories, affects how each participates in the work of CLP as well as how the team as a whole functions. In this section, I describe aspects of each woman pertinent to the analysis of the team that follows.

Miriam

At the time of the study, Miriam was a veteran teacher with 15 years of teaching experience. She reported that she began to value school context when she was in secondary school, having attended a “competitive...top-down...very intense” high school. After working in the restaurant business and traveling for a few years, she realized she wanted to be a teacher. At the beginning of her teaching career, Miriam worked in a school district where teachers collaborated but the district as a whole was growing. She wanted a “more connected and smaller” environment, which she felt she found with the school district where Pilkhurst is situated. For the past ten years, she taught first or second grade at Pilkhurst.

Outside of her professional work, Miriam was single and did not have children. She told me about the extensive tutoring she did in previous years, in order to make enough money to buy her own home. She described several years of living with her parents, spending all of her time either teaching or tutoring. She is now “trying to do more...you know, getting out there and doing more things, and trying to remember what I like to do other than work!”

These qualities—wanting a connected environment and time to engage in activities outside of work---are prevalent in the data and likely contributors to the ways in which the Pilkhurst team functions.

Emeline

Emeline was also a veteran teacher, who had been teaching for eight years at the time of the study. Those eight years were all at Pilkhurst, in kindergarten, first, and second grade. Pilkhurst was the school Emeline attended as a child. Her mom still lived in the area and volunteered in Emeline's classroom once a week.

Like Miriam, Emeline did not have children and was able to work long hours. For example, the year prior to this study, Emeline taught a first and second grade combined class and attended the CLP meetings for both grade levels, staying after school multiple days a week.

Emeline appears to be a teacher with great dedication to the geographic area of the school, but also longed to teach abroad someday. Her parents were immigrants from Hong Kong and she spoke about wanting to live there, but appeared to be having difficulty both making the commitment to do so, as well as finding an agency to sponsor her that would not result in financial set-backs.

As suggested by socio-cultural learning theory, Miriam and Emeline brought their life experiences with them to the work they did as a team. At the time of the study, they had collaborated with one another in some manner for six years. The ways in which the team functioned, described in the next section, were influenced by both their individual histories as well as their years of working together. The analysis presented in this dissertation focuses on Miriam and Emeline's CLP work during the 2011-2012 school year, when they both taught second grade.

Practices of the Community of Practice

The conceptual framework guiding this study conceptualizes the work of CLP as teachers engaged in a CoP who negotiate the meaning of lessons to be taught, offering opportunities to

learn through talk, such as replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning (Horn, 2005, 2007). To understand the practices this CoP engages in, analysis involved first investigating the mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire of the team. I then looked across these dimensions in order to understand the CoP as a unit. In doing so, particular practices were illuminated that speak to prior research on the act of collaboration, teacher communities, and professional development. These practices involve cultural norms, a distinct CLP meeting, positioning themselves as mediators, sharing about the past, and getting ready for the future. Students are at the heart of these practices. In addition, Miriam and Emeline believe there to be particular outcomes of these practices. These practices constitute the work of CLP for the Pilkhurst team and are explained below.

Cultural Norms

Looking across the dimensions of the CoP for the Pilkhurst team, particular cultural norms appear integral to their work, both during and outside of CLP meetings. Prior research on teacher communities indicates that in order for teacher communities to lead to meaningful discussions around curriculum and instructional issues, there must be a sense of respect and a willingness to engage in conflict among community members (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Louis et al., 1996). While both of these were present in the Pilkhurst community, the norms which the team members spoke about most readily differed: they were the norms of sharing, flexibility, and professional and personal respect.

Sharing. There is a culture of sharing amidst the Pilkhurst team. Miriam told me, “We share the load! There’s no need for people to reinvent the wheel and do things twice. You know if someone’s going to go make 25 copies for their class, why not make 50? It takes ten seconds

more.” During observations, the teachers frequently stated that they’d find homework for both classes—an example of sharing the workload of teaching.

Miriam and Emeline also share resources. During observations, they repeatedly told one another things such as, “I have a bunch of that stuff, too, if you can’t find anything” and “I might have some random fraction stuff.” This sharing of resources broadens each individual’s repertoire of material that can be used in the classroom. In addition, sharing of both workload and resources likely reduces the teachers’ stress, which may increase job satisfaction and decrease any feelings of burnout that the teachers may experience, as other researchers have suggested (Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

As will be discussed further in this chapter, the team also shares experiences with one another, particularly things that have happened in their classrooms. For example, in one observation, Miriam explains a class book the students in her class made a few years ago:

Miriam: Well, you know how we just, um, one year I had just a three ring binder, and we did, I know one year I had a three ring binder and we did scary stories, um, and we put them in just plastic sleeves and a three ring binder and kept that in the class library.

Emeline: Oh.

Miriam: And then the kids got to go, they could go read each other's stories. And they loved it.

Emeline: I didn't know that.

This sharing of experiences serves as a way to deprivatize practice for the team, or allow one another to “see” the practice of the other teacher. Deprivatization supports teachers in learning from one another (Bryk et al., 1999).

Combined, this sharing of workload, resources, and experiences provides an overall culture of sharing for them.

Flexibility. Another cultural norm integral to the work of CLP for the Pilkhurst team is a sense of flexibility. For example, they are flexible in terms of how their CLP meetings are run. While the intended focus of the meetings is to plan the upcoming week, the team is willing to change this focus if something more immediate is needed. For example, a few weeks prior to report cards being due to the principal, I observed Miriam and Emeline use their CLP meeting time to ensure they were aligned on their grading of a writing assessment. In addition, Miriam told me they would also use CLP meeting time to find materials, when necessary, saying, “And then in the process of doing that I might say, ‘Oh! Do you have that book?’ ‘No.’ ‘Okay.’ Then I’ll get up and I’ll go look for it, I’ll bring it back, we’ll find it.” Their meetings have a typical routine or rhythm, as described later in this chapter, but the team is willing to alter that routine when necessary.

Likewise, Miriam and Emeline are reportedly flexible when it comes to their implementation of lessons. Although they plan together and strive for coherence and consistency across their classrooms, they are also comfortable with plans being implemented differently. Miriam told me, “You have to have a certain amount of flexibility and respect to make it be a good situation where you just say, ‘You know what? I was in the middle of the lesson and I did this, and it worked really well.’” In other words, they feel a sense of flexibility when they are teaching—they can make professional decisions in the moment of instruction.

Finally, this cultural norm of flexibility is evident in their stated expectations of one another. For example, in an interview, Emeline expressed that she hoped to get some grading

done that evening, in preparation for tomorrow's CLP meeting; but she also expressed that if this did not happen, the team would simply change their plans.

Emeline: We have kind of an informal verbal agenda in which because she's already done the writing, I will try to do my writing, and then we'll come together. But of course that all goes out the window if I don't get to my writing tonight.

Interviewer: Right. And then...are there any repercussions for that?

Emeline: No. No, it would be like, 'Okay, then I'll have it done by Thursday' or, 'Okay, I will try to have it done by whatever time' and then we can just quickly meet—like, during our [common] planning or something like that.

Emeline knows that the team creates plans, agendas, and routines but is also flexible when necessary. Miriam explicitly described this cultural norm to me:

It just has to be really open and very flexible around what you can do. And I think that as soon as you make it too rigid it becomes, it's not fun anymore, and it doesn't work. 'Cuz there's going to be times when she says, Wednesday morning, 'Actually, oh gosh, I have to go to a doctor's appointment' or 'I have to do this or I have to do that' 'Okay, great. No problem. Let's plan on this time instead.' And so the attitude really needs to be flexibility and working together and not having expectations.

Here she is stating her belief that flexibility is a necessary component of the work of CLP.

Applying Wenger's CoP perspective, flexibility is part of the community maintenance for this team. It is how they maintain their ongoing relationship, and thus, is an integral part of the work of CLP for them. This is a concept not yet explored in the research literature on teacher communities.

Professional and personal respect. The final cultural norm that emerges from an analysis of the Pilkhurst data both corroborates and extends prior research on teacher communities. Louis et al. (1996) investigated respect as one of the conditions necessary for a teacher community, defining respect as “honoring the expertise of others” (p. 763). This definition refers to professional respect. However, the Pilkhurst team demonstrated not only professional respect, but also personal respect.

Miriam and Emeline recognized and honored the expertise they each brought to the team. For example, in a group interview, the team explained that Emeline is more comfortable with technology than Miriam, while Miriam has more experience with teaching writing.

Emeline: So it’s kind of like we both bring in our—

Miriam: Kind of complement each other. She’s got more the techy, and I’ve done a lot of writing instruction.

Emeline:—expertise.

Miriam: And so we complement each other on those kinds of things. Yeah. For sure.

Emeline:… So that it makes my writing instruction a lot better than if it were just being me reading from the teacher manual.

Miriam: Right. And Emeline encourages me to use my technology with the kids—

Here they are demonstrating their professional respect for one another, just as they do when they offer and accept advice, as in this excerpt:

Emeline: Have you tried Spanish?

Miriam: Yah. And they know it when I //say it

Emeline: ((word in Spanish))

Miriam: ((word in Spanish))] and ((word in Spanish)) and they know it when I say that.

Emeline: ((whispering)) That's so good.

Miriam: So, I just, but you're right, I need to use that as well. Okay.

Emeline: (h) Yeah, pull out your Spanish.

Emeline knows that Miriam has a skill she does not—knowledge of Spanish. Miriam is able to accept Emeline's advice because she respects her professional knowledge of how to work with students learning English.

However, the team demonstrates more than professional respect. They recognize and care about one another as people.

Miriam: Sometimes we bring each other lunch. ((h))

Emeline: Yes. We started that this year.

Miriam: We've kind of started doing that.

Emeline: And everybody in the lunchroom is like, "Uhhh..."

Miriam: Like, I'll make a big pot of soup. It's kind of like we're becoming this, like, married couple or something. I'll make a big pot of soup and I'll bring some for her and some for me, and some bread or whatever. And she'll do the same thing.

Miriam and Emeline have no obligation to provide one another lunch, but this act is evidence of their personal relationship and the respect they have for one another as people. Miriam and Emeline are genuine friends who care about each other as people, not only as teachers with expertise.

Another aspect of this personal respect is how they help one another maintain a balance between work and life. Stephanie, Miriam's student teacher, explained, "I think they do a really good job of 'Miriam, you need to get out of here today. Like, you need to go home.'... Or 'Emeline, you're crazy. We're not going to do that. Sorry. Like, we're just going to scale it

back.”” This concern with balancing work and life is another way the team expresses a culture of respecting each other as people, as well as professionals.

For Miriam and Emeline, their relationship is maintained and the work of CLP happens in a context of both professional and personal respect. This is a cultural norm for the team that is omnipresent, both in and out of CLP meetings. This finding suggests that the present conception of respect in the teacher community literature may be too narrow.

Summary. These norms of sharing, flexibility, and professional and personal respect create the context in which CLP meetings take place for the Pilkhurst team. Although these norms were not always explicitly enacted during the CLP meetings I observed, the teachers consistently spoke about these norms each time they were asked to reflect on their work. These norms particular to the team, although Miriam and Emeline believe the school as a whole possesses a sense of sharing. The norms go beyond those discussed in the research literature and are illuminated due to an analysis of the locally defined dimensions of this team’s CoP. The norms allow Miriam and Emeline to engage in the work of CLP, because they save time photocopying and finding materials, feel empowered to make changes when necessary, believe they have something to learn from one another, and enjoy each other’s company. While these norms do not directly provide rich learning opportunities (with the exception of sharing experiences that deprivatize practice), they create a context in which the work of CLP can be maintained.

Distinct CLP Meetings

The majority of the work of CLP takes place during CLP meetings. These meetings are designated times for the team to plan upcoming lessons for the following week. Miriam and Emeline told me when meetings would begin and end and these distinctions were clear because

the teachers would sit down at a particular table at the beginning of meetings and get up from the table when meetings ended. Miriam and Emeline explained,

Emeline: In the beginning of the year, it's like, okay well what's your schedule like this year? Like, and we set aside Tuesday afternoons. I have this and this and this.

Miriam: Yeah. We make a commitment. It's not an every week thing, like, 'Well, when are we going to plan?' Well, let's just talk about it on Monday. No. So every week. So, when I'm making doctor's appointments or if I'm going to, you know, that's a priority.

And, I'm not going to make it for Tuesday afternoon because that's when I'm planning.

The team sets aside time and tries to honor that time, although they are flexible when necessary, as previously explained. Stephanie referred to their meetings as “kind of an intentional time for them to talk.” Their planning grids, which include time slots for various subjects, lunch, and recess, also have these meetings written into them. For Miriam and Emeline, the CLP meeting is a scheduled part of their workday, despite taking place outside of the normal school day.

Using Wenger’s CoP perspective to analyze the data, including how the teachers talk about CLP meetings, what was observed during meetings, and the lesson plans created during these meetings, particular norms for the meetings emerge. These norms include a protocol involving planning subject by subject, a focus on filling in planbooks using an agreed upon recording system, and two different rhythms which are understood by both team members. These norms result in the reification of CLP meetings—meetings are a “thing” that creates time and space for learning opportunities to emerge.

Predictable protocol. CLP meetings follow a predictable routine each week, as Miriam explained,

And then we just sit down and we'll say, 'Okay, what do you want to start with?

Writing? Math? What do you want to start with?' And so we'll start with one of those subjects. And we'll just open up our books. We each have our own book. And we'll just start writing in our planbooks for the subject, and talking as we go. And then we're done with that subject. We go to the next subject. You know?

Meeting observations noted this linear process of choosing a subject, planning the week generally sequentially, and then moving to a different subject. As they discuss each subject, they utilize district resources such as teacher manuals from particular curricula, along with their own experiences, to determine what they will do during each time block in their weekly schedule. Although not a formal or recorded protocol, this was a self-designed protocol the team typically followed during CLP meetings. Taken together with an intended focus on (planning) instruction, the Pilkhurst team corroborates Levine and Marcus's (2010) research suggesting that when teams of teachers engage in an act of collaboration focused on instruction and guided by a protocol, opportunities to learn are likely to emerge. The team also brings to light the possibility that protocols can be self-designed.

Filling in planbooks. For Miriam and Emeline, the purpose of CLP meetings is to fill in their planbook with the plans for the upcoming week. When I asked the team to talk through a typical meeting, they began with, "So we both have our planning books." Then they explained how they will "really plan." "So there *is* time within our hour block when we're writing and it's quiet and we're just writing," they told me. Writing was audible in the audio-recording for each observation, and teachers often mumbled or talked slowly while writing. In addition, when asked about her goals for the upcoming meeting, Emeline said, "I guess it would just be to plan

out the following week.” Following that meeting, when prompted to discuss how the meeting went, Emeline said,

I felt at one point...I looked up at the clock and I was like, ‘Oh crap!’—because definitely I was like, ‘Oh shoot, we’re still only on writing.’ And kind of, you know, realistically, I kind of wanted to get... you know, to kind of get through the week, and we hadn’t plotted down anything on our planbook.

Combined these comments suggest that the intended focus of CLP meetings is to write plans for the upcoming week into planbooks.

On the surface, this focus could be easily dismissed by those interested in the connections between CLP and teacher learning. The teachers are not meeting with an intention of reflecting on practice, providing feedback, pushing thinking, or even learning. They are meeting to write lesson plans. However, in the course of doing so together, they are often (though not always) offered opportunities to learn, as will be discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Different rhythms. Using Wenger’s CoP perspective illuminates an additional norm held by the Pilkhurst team. While CLP meetings are consistent in timing, purpose, and protocol, Miriam and Emeline have two different rhythms under which they function. There is a “typical” meeting and there is “speed planning.” “Speed planning” is understood by the team as “kind of really plot everything down, go back, read it for yourself.” In other words, the teachers view speed planning as deciding what lessons they will teach, but do not discuss how to teach those lessons. However, there is an expectation that they will each figure out the lessons on their own and are likely to touch base with one another some other time during the week to flesh out the lessons more fully.

Based on field notes and interviews that took place immediately after observations, of the six observations conducted for this study, three of them were considered by the teachers to be representative of “speed planning.” However, the number of learning opportunities, as represented by the combination of replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning did not differ significantly between meetings considered “speed planning” and those considered typical. This is likely because the teachers discuss lessons in depth that they believe will be difficult to teach or challenging for students to learn, regardless of the rhythm they are trying to maintain. In other words, Miriam and Emeline will talk about anticipated problems of practice, regardless of time constraints. They will “take the time” as Miriam often told me. Emeline gives a concrete example of how they will push through the planning of certain lessons, but discuss those lessons they anticipate being more difficult for students,

The math is pretty self-explanatory, just because the geometry is pretty straightforward—talking about the different attributes of solid figures. So we didn’t have to talk too much. Where like the last couple weeks, last month, we were doing double-digit addition and subtraction where we had to break it down a little bit more and talk more about that.

This statement reflecting on their work may be why no contrasts were seen between the two different rhythms of planning. Although two different rhythms was a clear practice for the team, it appears to have little influence on the ways in which CLP serves as a form of professional development for the Pilkhurst team.

Summary. These meeting norms constitute what Miriam and Emeline view as a CLP meeting. In other words, their meetings have been reified into a mutually understood “thing.” Meetings take place at a given time, during which they talk through subjects on at a time in order to fill out their planbooks for the upcoming week, either at a regular or a speedy pace. This

reified meeting creates a setting where the teachers can talk about what has happened and what will happen in their classroom. These distinct CLP meetings are a part of the work of CLP for this CoP.

Position Themselves as Mediators

Miriam and Emeline position themselves as mediators between the content the district mandates students learn and actual student learning. Data indicates that they conceptualize the work of teaching to be teaching what the district tells teachers to teach in such a way that students learn that content. This positioning influences the way they participate in CLP meetings and the learning opportunities that arise through this participation.

The district communicates mandates through the published curriculum materials purchased, assessments the students are expected to do well on, and assorted documents given to teachers, such as printed copies of the state standards. Miriam and Emeline use these materials to determine what they will plan for in their classrooms. They bring these materials, along with their planbooks, to meetings. During CLP meetings, Miriam and Emeline discuss what “they” want them to do, referring to the district and/or teachers’ manuals. For example, during the following vignette, the teachers reference their Teacher’s Manual to determine what to do during their Writing block the following week.

Emeline: So, day 3 is proofreading. Informal proofreading.

Miriam: So, basically, listening for where periods should go, which I think is really good because that also of course immediately translates into capitals because if you know where your periods are then you know where your capitals are. So, and a lot of the kids we really need to focus on this, because they just, they just don't quite get it yet. ((Short exchange about materials needed.)) Do they have us, how do they want us to edit?

Emeline: So, they basically, they, um, read it aloud without pauses or expression and then basically you ask them, what's strange. What's strange way about, about the way I read this passage,

Here Miriam and Emeline allow the curriculum to dictate what they will teach. Miriam articulates why she believes this is a good approach to proofreading, but relies on how the manual says teachers should teach this, as evidenced by her statement, “Do they have us...” This desire to teach how and what is stated in the various teachers’ manuals may be due to an expectation that has been communicated to them. They said, “We’re expected to follow the math curriculum with fidelity for sure. The writing curriculum, we need to follow that as closely as we can.” Regardless of the reason why, Miriam and Emeline position themselves as needing to teach what they have been told to teach.

However, the team is not focused merely on teaching the mandated curriculum, but is also concerned with ensuring students learn mandated content. The teachers discuss how to support student learning. For example, in the following excerpt, the teachers reference their manuals, but then plan on deviating from the prescribed lessons:

Emeline: I almost think that when we teach this lesson, um, we need to do like three lessons and an intervention day.

Miriam: Mmmhmm. Yeah, because it's going to be hard for them because they haven't had it.

Emeline: They haven't had money.

Miriam: So, let's do the game. I don't think we need to do the story.

Following this, Miriam and Emeline decide to take two additional days to introduce the next topic, based on their students’ prior learning. This was a professional decision they made

together to ensure that students would learn the content they were being told to teach. In other words, the teachers are willing to modify curriculum, when necessary to ensure student learning.

By positioning themselves as mediators and taking into consideration both what the curriculum wants to be taught and what the students are learning, the teachers engage in conversations about each aspect of the instructional core (Elmore, 2004; Hawkins, 1974)—what they are expected to teach, how to teach that content, and how students are going to learn that content. This is discussed further in Chapter Seven.

Share about the Past

As anticipated by the conceptual framework guiding this study, the Pilkhurst team engages in replays, or “blow-by-blow accounts of classroom events” (Horn, 2005, p. 27). For example, during an observation, Miriam told Emeline about an unplanned activity she did earlier that day.

Um, so, in here, so, what I ended up doing is, just because, you know, I knew we were just starting and I just kind of did it on the fly, is I grabbed the pumpkin book by Gail Gibbons....And then I talked about how we are working on monitoring our thinking and how we leave tracks of our thinking on post it notes when we want to remember what we've read and we want to really think about what we're reading. Um, so, today, I just read the book out loud and then I had them have post its and I only read like four or five pages and we talked about it and then they wrote questions or things they thought were interesting or things they learned.

By sharing what was done in one classroom, the other teacher has an opportunity to hear and learn beyond her own experience. In other words, practice is deprivatized. In the example above, Emeline may have learned a strategy for helping students practice the skill of monitoring

thinking while reading. Levine and Marcus (2010) explain, “Opportunities to ‘see’ actual practice--or to learn about it with some specificity via others’ descriptions--are essential for others’ development of their own practice or of shared practice (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Little, 2002, 2003)” (p. 393). In other words, the practice of participating in replays, as the Pilkhurst team does, has the potential to offer rich opportunities to learn.

Miriam and Emeline recognize the value of replays and believe they learn from engaging in them. This often takes the form of sharing what recently took place in the classroom. For example, Miriam said,

It really is helpful to talk about what we’re doing right now as we do it, ‘cuz then the week isn’t over, it’s Wednesday, we still have two more days, and it can really help to talk about things that are happening right now this week.

Here Miriam is saying that they will talk about what happened already in the week during CLP meetings to help them clarify what they will be doing during the rest of the week. The teachers also mentioned giving one another advice about a lesson just taught, such as “You know if there’s a lesson that I do in the morning that she’s doing the next day, I’ll say, ‘You know what? I did this and this is what I’d recommend.’” Miriam and Emeline deprivatize their practice for another through replays and believe they utilize those replays to assist them in planning upcoming lessons.

Miriam and Emeline also draw on more distant experiences, such as previous years or when Miriam taught the writing curriculum in summer school. For example, in the following excerpt, Emeline shares what she did the previous year and Miriam takes up that practice.

Emeline: One thing we could even start, cause here they do this and I think I did this last year with this before and after between

Miriam: Mmmm. Mmmhmm

Emeline: I just took the hundreds chart

Miriam: Mmmhmm

Emeline: And I would just I think I did a hundreds chart like this and I, I, started this earlier not at this lesson.

Miriam: Mmmhmm

Emeline: Because, I mean it

Miriam: Well, didn't we use to have clear, like clear things that you could put over the number

Emeline: Chips

Miriam: Or chips or something and then we would just say, 'Okay, fi, what number is this on? It's on 25.'

Emeline: //I use the foam squares

Miriam: which number?] What did you use?

Emeline: Those blue and red foam squares

Miriam: Okay

Emeline: To cover it up. But, I felt like I did that last year and I felt like it was kind of doing growing with math.

Miriam: Are you talking about you did it under the document camera?

Emeline: Yeah.

Miriam: Oh. Okay. ...So, I'm going to use the hundreds chart on Tuesday.

Emeline: Yes. I have that.

This conversation led both teachers to plan on using a hundreds chart on Tuesday, rather than waiting until Thursday to introduce the chart, as suggested by the teacher's manual. Both teachers wrote "100's chart" in their planbook. Thus, the replay by Emeline changed how they both planned on participating in their classroom the following week. There were a total of ten such replays in the first two observations.

However, these replays that offer an opportunity to "see" each other's practice were scarce during the CLP meeting observations that took place before school. There were only seven such replays in all four before-school observations, compared to ten in the two after school meetings observed. The teachers were aware of this. In an interview, Miriam explained that when they met afterschool they would often spend time debriefing their day and unwinding, but when they meet before school they "get right down to business." It is likely that the "debriefing" she refers to includes replays.

Overall, it appears that Miriam and Emeline engage in replays in ways that offer opportunities to learn as a part of their CLP work, but this is a practice they typically engage in outside of CLP meetings and is a practice they put aside when they feel short on time. It is possible that for teachers engaged in CLP, the amount of available time significantly affects engagement in replays. This corroborates research indicating that time is an important structural factor in teacher communities (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). In addition, research has found that discourse differs among teams of teachers engaged in the act of collaboration (Horn, 2005; Horn & Little, 2010; Little & Horn, 2007). The Pilkhurst team suggests that discourse may even differ within a team, due to structural and other factors.

Get Ready for the Future

In addition to sharing what has already happened in their classrooms, Miriam and Emeline engage in the practice of getting ready for the future. In doing so, they talk about lessons and anticipate student response.

Talking about lessons. Miriam and Emeline talk about the lessons they will teach during the upcoming week. As Miriam explained,

It just ends up that you talk about it and you end up with an idea that you both put into....Usually we talk about it and it ends up being something we both kind of create together.... It just ends up that we talk about stuff.

Miriam uses the word talk in each sentence. The team is not focused on questioning one another or practicing their lessons together, but rather on talking about what they will teach. In the following excerpt, the teachers plan three days of writing.

Miriam: Mmmhmm. (19) ((some pencil writing and erasing is heard)) Okay, so then day two, (2) is writing stories f, ((reading)) focus on writing a story using ideas from their lists.

Emeline: Okay. (5)

Miriam: So, I'm assuming we're going to model.

Emeline: Yeah. (14) ((pencils are heard))

Miriam: And then day three is re-reading to tell more and add details. (24) ((During this silence, Emeline sighs deeply. Pencils and some page turning are heard.)) And exploring commas. Mmmm. (22) ((During this silence, Emeline mumbles, presumably as she is writing as pencils and page turning are heard once again.)) And then day four is just sharing.

Emeline: Yup. (4)

The teachers talk about what they will do, with some mention of strategies they will use, such as modeling, but do not engage in fully “rendering classroom events.” In other words, there are no rehearsals in the excerpt above.

Wenger’s CoP perspective offers a possible explanation for why this may be. Having worked together for six years, Miriam and Emeline have a great deal of shared repertoire, or ways of talking and acting that have “become a part of [the CoP’s] practice” (Wenger, 1998, p. 83). For example, it is likely that when Miriam says, “So, I’m assuming we’re going to model,” she does not need to explain what that would sound like, because modeling has a taken-as-shared (Yackel & Cobb, 1996) meaning for the team. Emeline knows what Miriam is thinking and how that modeling will sound for both teachers. Thus, there is no need to fully rehearse what will happen.

This claim is supported in two ways. First, during the final CLP observation, when Miriam’s student teacher, Stephanie, was doing the bulk of the teaching, there were significantly more rehearsals than most of the previous observations. All three teachers engaged in rehearsals as they planned, presumably because Stephanie did not possess the same shared repertoire as Miriam or Emeline. Secondly, the team recognized that they spend more time discussing subjects they are less familiar with. Emeline gave the example, “Math, we might be discussing a little bit more when we plan together. It’s a new program still.” In other words, they might engage in more rehearsals due to not having as extensive of a shared repertoire in math.

Thus, the team talks about lessons and appears to discuss lessons to varying extents, depending on the shared repertoire of those involved for the particular content being discussed. This results in varying, or differentiated, learning opportunities. For situations where teachers

are less versed, more rehearsals are present. In other words, richer opportunities to learn are provided in areas where teachers may have more to learn from one another.

Anticipating student response. The other aspect of getting ready for the future for the Pilkhurst team involves anticipating student response. The team talks about how to support students, based on how they anticipate students will respond to instruction. When asked how they would respond to someone suggesting that collaborative planning is not necessary due to the specificity of teachers' manuals, Miriam said,

[A teacher's manual] tells you what to teach but it doesn't tell you specific transitions, it doesn't tell you 'what about this kid who doesn't get something? What about my ELL kids?' I mean, sure they usually have now little 'For ELL Learners' kind of things, but there's nothing better than experience and talking about what's actually happening in your classroom.

Here Miriam is suggesting that she uses CLP meetings to think through transitions and supporting struggling students, both of which require anticipating student behavior—how are students going to behave during this lesson? Which students are going to struggle? These types of conversations were heard during observations. For example,

Miriam: They're basically, oh gotcha, okay. So, descriptive words, so it's kinda going from revising to more detailed editing, or not really editing, but more detailed revising.

(3) But, I find when I do things like that, like I say, you know, think about colors, then they end up writing really weird stories

Emeline: Yeah

Miriam: I went on the slide, it was red, then I walked on the grass, it was green.

Emeline: was green, instead of //lush green grass or whatever

Miriam: So, I would almost] yeah, I kind of liked to just, when I do it, I usually model writing something and I model adding describing words, not just color words

Emeline: Right, right, right

Miriam: 'Cuz, you know. Ach. It doesn't really work. Um. (2)

Emeline: ((sounding as if reading)) What colors could you add to your story to help your readers imagine what things look like

Miriam: Yeah, it doesn't really work. (h)

Emeline: colors

After realizing what the teacher's manual was suggesting, Miriam anticipated how students would respond—she believes they will add colors in ways that do not result in better writing. Miriam and Emeline then talk about this briefly and both wrote the word “descriptive” rather than “color” in their plans.

Not only do Miriam and Emeline anticipate student response, but when planning homework, they anticipate how families will respond to what they send home. For example, in the following excerpt Emeline anticipates how the families of their English Language Learners in particular would respond to a particular homework assignment Miriam wants to send home. In doing so, she changes Miriam's plan and the two determine an assignment that more families would likely be able to support their students in completing.

Miriam: So it's kinda tempting, like I like this one, I think this is a good one, so I had, um, Stephanie copy it. Where they read the Scholastic News

Emeline: Mmmhm.

Miriam: Talk like a pilgrim, and then they re-write, so we could re-write the f, I could re-write the first one so that it, they know what to do, so, how are you Mr. Jones would be 'How now Mr. Jones.' And then, yes I love dolls would be Aye, (h)

Emeline: Aye, //dolls

Miriam: I love] poppets.

Emeline: Oh, oh, oh, they're

Miriam: You know what I mean?

Emeline: That's hard.

Miriam: Oh no, I forgot to get them marbles.

Emeline: I think that's too hard for homework.

Miriam: You think so? Oh, I think it would be so fun. Okay, then there's this. //Why did the turkey cross the road?

Emeline: That one's too hard because] you think about our ELL families

Miriam: I know.

Emeline: Like can barely (h) get across in English and here you're talking pilgrim words (h)

Miriam: That's true. For a lot of these. This is hard. This is really hard.

Emeline: So maybe something, I'm thankful for, or I don't know. There's some real fun crossword puzzles

Miriam: Yeah.

The practice of anticipating family response to homework demonstrates how Miriam and Emeline engage in anticipation as a part of their planning. They anticipate student response when planning in-class lessons, and family response when planning activities for home.

Anticipating the response of both students and families causes Miriam and Emeline to plan instruction and instructional materials they believe will best meet the needs of their students. In doing so, they talk about their assumptions and anticipations. Through this talk, they have the potential to increase their collective understanding of students and families and alter their plans accordingly. While this practice was not originally part of the conceptual framework for this study, anticipating student response is another way engaging in CLP serves as a form of professional development for the Pilkhurst team. They talk about students and families as they anticipate response, thus providing an opportunity to make changes in their instruction and instructional materials.

Summary. As a part of their CLP work, Miriam and Emeline get ready for the future. This involves talking about lessons and anticipating student response. The extent to which they talk about lessons relates to how well they believe they already know the lesson, whereas the extent to which they talk about student response relates to how aligned with their desires the anticipated response is. Occasionally, the teachers made comments such as, “they’ll love that,” which indicates they are anticipating response and do not need to discuss their instruction or instructional materials any further, because students will respond positively. Through talking about lessons and anticipating student response, Miriam and Emeline have opportunities to change their planned instruction.

Students at the Heart

Students are omnipresent in Miriam and Emeline’s talk both about and during CLP meetings. “It’s for the kids” they reported. This was something Stephanie observed as well, for she stated, “I think, specifically, they, more than anything, want to meet the needs of their kids.”

Every observation included multiple instances where teachers discussed individual students or their students in general.

One way students pervade their talk is in how the team grounds pedagogical decisions in what they believe is good for student learning and engagement. For example, in the following quote, Emeline talks about needing to add words to her word wall, not because a teacher's manual or administrator tells her to do so, but because her students are asking for words:

And, I need to, um, like I just introduced the word wall this week. But I haven't added any words. So I need to just pull out some words and just put them up. Because a couple of times kids were like, 'How do you spell?'

This demonstrates how Emeline's decisions are based not only on what she is told to do, but also on the actions and behaviors of her students.

Similarly, when planning a shared reading activity, the teachers spend time revising a poem so as to not alienate students who do not eat meat. Despite feeling the need to implement curriculum "with fidelity" Miriam and Emeline will modify their instruction based on what they believe will support student learning and engagement.

The intended focus of CLP may appear at first to be about Miriam and Emeline as teachers—to save time and to prepare themselves for lessons, but on multiple occasions the teachers stated that the "ultimate" goal was student learning. For example, Emeline said,

So I guess our collaborative work would be us coming together to basically map out our day, map out our year, and kind of just get kids where they need to be in all academic areas. We come together with ideas—and compromise. If that doesn't work, we're fine with both doing our own thing. *But, ultimately, it's just we're trying to do what is best*

for kids [italics added]. And that's kind of what our collaboration I think would be summed up pretty quickly.

This statement demonstrates that while the focus of their collaborative work is not solely student learning and achievement, it is an important aspect of their work. A focus on student learning is thought to be the reason teacher communities lead to improved student outcomes (Vescio et al., 2008). Miriam and Emeline believe their work together improves student learning. However, prior research suggests an “intense focus on student learning” (Vescio et al., 2008, p. 88) but for Miriam and Emeline, student learning is an underlying intention, not the main focus. The Pilkhurst team does not meet for the purpose of improving student learning, but improving student learning inspires them to focus on planning lessons collaboratively. This difference may be worth further investigation.

Students are at the heart of Miriam and Emeline's CLP work. They talk about students throughout their meetings, plan based on their anticipation of student response, and believe that doing what is best for students is “ultimately” the goal. This suggests that collaboration may not need an “intense” or explicit focus, on student learning in order to serve as a form of professional development, so long as student learning is part of the intention behind the collaboration.

Perceived Outcomes

Miriam and Emeline believe there to be particular outcomes from their collaborative work. Most prevalent for the team are emotional benefits. In the excerpt below, Miriam makes a general statement about people, reflecting her own experience as a member of this CoP. She said:

People are happier in community than they are in isolation. I mean and that's just a philosophy that I have about just humans in general. But I think most people are happier

in community. And I think when you foster that kind of community feeling, it really makes for happier people!

Similarly, although not as vocal about her beliefs, Emeline chose to collaboratively plan with two grade level teams the year prior to the study. In addition, she consistently agreed with Miriam's comments throughout group interview, such as when Miriam said, "We just find it to be really helpful!" Emeline responded with an enthusiastic, "Yeah!" These actions demonstrate a similar belief that collaboration is a positive element of her work.

Two main themes emerged from the data indicating that the teachers receive emotional benefits as outcomes of their work together. These themes are the presence of relationship and a sense of reassurance.

Relationship. An outcome of the team's CLP work is in the relationship they have with one another. The two socialize and are genuine friends. "We definitely do socialize as well when we plan together," they reported, which was observed during CLP meetings. Stephanie said, "Like, you can tell that they're legitimately friends and like to do life together and talk about funny things that have happened." Miriam summed up her belief that having a relationship with Emeline brought her happiness when she said, "Let alone the fact that you have colleagues that you get to know. And it just makes it better! It's just about relationships."

Having a personal and professional relationship with someone is one way to break down the egg crate nature of schools (Lortie, 1975) and may influence the team's ability to avoid feelings of burnout, as prior research has also suggested (Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996).

Reassurance. A related benefit of CLP for Miriam and Emeline was the sense of reassurance they offer one another. They reassure one another that their experiences are not anomalies. Miriam said,

It's good to know what she's experiencing in her class—because then I don't feel, especially if it's similar to what I'm experiencing. I'll say, 'Gosh, I'm glad to know that your kids are struggling with that too, because my kids are.'

This is akin to the kinds of normalizing conversational routines Horn and Little found in other teacher communities (2010). Miriam and Emeline want to be reassured that they are not alone in what they are experiencing, particularly when they feel lessons do not go well or when students are not learning.

In addition to wanting their experiences normalized, the teachers in the team want another voice to offer reassurance that the pedagogical decisions they plan to make are sound decisions. For example, they want to be reassured around decisions to move on to new topics before students achieve mastery or to remain longer than the district recommends on a topic in order to further student learning of that topic. In this excerpt, the team responds to a prompt asking what they would say to someone who asked, "Why bother collaborating?"

Emeline: I think it just really keeps each other accountable for pacing. Like, 'We're moving way too slow.'when you need your partner to be like, 'You know what? We've spent however many days. We need to just move on.'

Miriam: Right...And then on the other side it's the same thing, as far as if we have kids that are struggling with... it gives her permission also to say, 'You know, I'd kind of like to do that too. I think I'm going to just take a day and reteach.' And I am taking a day and reteaching. And you just don't feel that pressure of, 'Gosh, what is this person over

here doing? And what is this person over here...?’ because you don’t know what they’re doing.

Here the teachers express how they give one another reassurance to make pedagogical decisions they believe are in the best interest of their students. During observations affirmations such as, “I think that’s perfect” or “That’s great” were heard frequently.

In providing one another reassurance, Miriam and Emeline are likely doing several things. First, they are making one another feel good, or providing the happiness described in the beginning of this section that can ward off feelings of burnout. Second, it can be assumed that they are increasing their own and one another’s sense of self-efficacy, as they may be unconsciously thinking things such as, “If she thinks I’m doing great, then I must be great” or “I’m doing as well as this other person whom I respect, so I must be doing well” or other related thoughts. Bandura’s theory of self-efficacy (Pintrich & Schunk, 1996) suggests that higher levels of self-efficacy lead to higher levels of motivation. Thus, CLP likely contributes to Miriam and Emeline’s motivation to engage in continual learning. This aligns with prior research on teacher communities and increased motivation to learn (Johnson, 2003; Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997; Warren & Payne, 1997).

Finally, drawing on Hargreaves and Fullan’s recently published work on professional capital (2012), Miriam and Emeline are increasing their own and one another’s “decisional capital” defined as “the capital that professionals acquire and accumulate through structured and unstructured experience, practice, and reflection—capital that enables them to make wise judgments in circumstances where there is no fixed rule or piece of incontrovertible evidence to guide them” (p. 94). In other words, by offering reassurance around decisions made or planned, Miriam and Emeline increase their ability to make wise decisions in the future.

Summary. Both their professional and personal relationship as well as the reassurance they offer one another result in a feeling of happiness for each member of the Pilkhurst team. They laugh together and generally feel better about teaching, as Miriam said, “I just feel more relaxed and comfortable teaching because I’m talking about things with somebody.” These emotional benefits can change how Miriam and Emeline participate in the work of teaching, due to positive feelings about their work, higher levels of self-efficacy and motivation to learn, as well as a larger amount of professional capital to draw upon when making decisions in the future. While different than how learning opportunities were originally conceptualized in this study, these opportunities to change participation corroborate other research on teacher communities and may help explain the relationship between an act of collaboration such as CLP and professional development for teachers.

The Team at a Glance

By utilizing Wenger’s CoP perspective to analyze data for this team, particular practices emerge. These practices are locally defined by Miriam and Emeline and reflect the mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire of the team. They are influenced by Miriam and Emeline as individuals as well as their dynamics as a community. They are also influenced by the context of the school in which they work. In this chapter, I have explained the key practices the team engages in and how those practices corroborate and inform research on the act of collaboration, teacher communities, and professional development.

As a team, Miriam and Emeline have established particular cultural norms such as sharing, flexibility, and professional and personal respect. They engage in distinct CLP meetings which have been reified with norms and expectations. As they plan, they position themselves as mediators between district mandates and student learning. They share about the past and get

ready for the future together, all the while keeping students at the forefront of their thinking and reminding themselves and each other that students are “ultimately” the focus of their work. By engaging in this work, they report particular outcomes, such as happiness, which is likely due to their professional and personal relationship and the reassurance they offer one another. (See Appendix C for a visual summary of these practices.)

There are moments throughout the Pilkhurst data where Miriam and Emeline engage in opportunities to learn through replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning. However, there are also moments where the team offers one another opportunities to learn through other conversational routines, such as anticipating student response and offering reassurance. This analysis of the Pilkhurst team contributes to the growing understanding of how collaboration can serve as a form of professional development and, more specifically, adds nuance to our understanding of the relationship between a particular act of collaboration and opportunities to learn.

Chapter Six: Cedar Forest: We the Experts Know Our Students

Interviewer: On a rating scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the most, to what extent do you believe collaboration provides you opportunities to learn?

Anna: 5

Celia: Yeah, 5. Absolutely.

Interviewer: And why do you say that?

Celia: Because it's that opportunity to not only hear somebody else's perspective, but to hear your own out loud and either realize like 'That makes a lot of sense, I believe in what I just said' or 'Wow, I've been thinking that for years; but now that I've had to articulate it or justify it or support it to Anna, I'm not really sold on that anymore.' And it just makes me more reflective. And kind of playing out those scenarios of like 'So what are you going to do when X happens in your class?' 'Oh, yeah, I didn't think of that.'

Anna: Oh my god, yes. Like, oh so many...! 'You know when we do this they're not going to have...blah blah blah blah.' Yeah. Yeah, I completely agree. It gives you the opportunity to fine-tune your thinking. But also to get another perspective.

Celia: Yeah, play out those scenarios.

Anna: Clarify.

Celia: 'So what is this going to look like? You're going to have 40 kids on the floor doing a math lesson with white boards??' 'Oh yeah.' You know. Yeah.

This excerpt typifies how the Cedar Forest team understands the work of Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP). In this vignette, they imagine the conversations they have as they work

together. The work of CLP for the Cedar Forest team is in some ways similar to that of the Pilkhurst team. However, this team is considerably more metacognitive about their practices and spends significantly more time planning collaboratively.

In this chapter, I first provide information about the personal history of each team member. I then examine the practices of this Community of Practice (CoP), using the same broad categories as offered in the previous chapter, but explaining the particular practices for this team. By doing so, I present a second case of teachers engaged in CLP in order to further knowledge about a particular act of collaboration and its relationship to professional development.

Personal Histories

Celia and Anna taught fourth and fifth grade at Cedar Forest Elementary School¹⁰. The teachers reported loving the school, but being the anomaly when it comes to collaboration—other grade level teams do not plan collaboratively. For Celia and Anna, CLP took place Saturdays at Celia’s house for three or four hours, in addition to talk before, during, and after school on a daily basis. Both women also knew all of the students in both classrooms.

As suggested by socio-cultural learning theory, Celia and Anna both had life experiences they brought with them to their teamwork. These histories influenced their participation in the team and are described below.

Celia

Celia, who proudly told me she was 48 years old, had been teaching for 13 years at the time of the study. She grew up in Utah, but moved away as a young adult. She then “traveled

¹⁰ During the course of the study, Celia hosted two student teachers, Flinker and Betty. Both of these women were peripheral members of their Community of Practice, being present for only part of the school year. Therefore, I include their comments and influences in this dissertation but do not focus on either as a full participant.

around a lot” and planned on being a nutritionist. After moving to the Pacific Northwest, she volunteered with youth in schools and realized, “This is what I should be doing.” She thus enrolled in a teacher education program and began her teaching career. All of her full time teaching experience was at Cedar Forest.

Celia told me about her first years of teaching, where she felt completely alone and “just floundered.” Over the years, Celia participated in different iterations of collaboration. For several years, she was expected to collaborate with colleagues she viewed as “set in their ways” and unwilling to “change things up” to increase student learning. Then, four years prior to this study, she began engaging in CLP with Eve. “I felt like I lost 50 pounds!” she told me about that experience, indicating she felt this was a positive experience for her. When Eve left for maternity leave and Celia had the opportunity to serve on the hiring committee, she looked for someone with whom she would have “the good dynamic with” in order to engage in similar collaboration. Celia’s willingness to change her teaching practice, focus on student learning, and dedication to CLP are apparent throughout the Cedar Forest data.

Anna

The person Celia and the hiring committee chose was Anna. Anna (age 26) was in her first official year of full time teaching at the time of the study, having served as a long term substitute for Eve during the majority of the year prior. Before that, Anna spent a few years as a substitute in a variety of schools. She reported that this experience, coupled with her own background as a student helped her “understand [the kids] a little bit better.” As a student, she experienced being “an outcast,” “one of the bad kids,” and needing to work her “butt off.” She explained to me, “When it comes to a kid that’s driving me nuts, I know how to relate to them because at some point I’ve been there.”

When asked about her previous experiences collaborating with colleagues, Anna spoke of an experience working as a substitute in an ELL classroom for a month and a half where the “fifth and sixth grade banded together to work.” She told me this was a “nice” experience because her opinion was valued, but it was “more of an overlook.” The teachers did not meet weekly, but collaborated around large units, such as deciding together that they would work on poetry for the last two months of the school year. When asked about her first reaction to the idea of CLP, Anna told me, “I loved it. To me it was supportive and challenging at the same time. It’s like two people working 100% to get the best outlook.” Anna’s desire to relate to students, feel valued, and work towards being “the best” teacher she could be are demonstrated in her behaviors throughout this study.

These personal histories influence how Celia and Anna function as a CoP. This difference in teaching experience affects the community maintenance, or how the team maintains their relationship through individual contributions. Different life experiences, due to age, travel opportunities, and so forth, affect what each woman brings to the collaborative work. These influences are evident throughout the subsequent analysis in this chapter.

Practices of the Community of Practice

After analyzing the dimensions of practice (mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire) for this team of teachers separately, I looked across these dimensions to understand the practices the team engages in as they negotiate the meaning of lessons to be taught. I defined practices as the agreed upon things a team of teachers engages in on an ongoing, normalized manner. I took into consideration the participation and reification which occurs during CLP meetings and sought to unpack the opportunities to learn that arose during

this work. In this section, I describe the nature of the work of CLP by discussing the practices the team engages in. (See Appendix D for a visual summary of this section.)

The Cedar Forest team participates in particular practices. Celia and Anna have established cultural norms for their team and engage in a distinct CLP meeting. During this meeting, they position themselves as the experts, reflect on the past, and fully visualize the future. At the heart of these practices are students. In addition, Celia and Anna believe there to be particular outcomes of their work together. This is the nature of the work of CLP for this team of teachers and encompasses the practices the CoP engages in.

Cultural Norms

The Cedar Forest team functions as a community, in the colloquial sense of the word where people care about and take care of one another. They are friends who share about their personal lives and express how much they enjoy each other's company. However, their CoP involves more than friendship. They are able to continually negotiate the meaning of lessons to be taught due to their norms of recognizing individual contributions, interacting frequently, and their trust of each other's professional decisions.

Recognizing contributions. Wenger (1998) states, "What makes engagement in practice possible and productive is as much a matter of diversity as it is a matter of homogeneity" (p. 75). This is the case for Celia and Anna. They contribute to the team in different ways, and are both aware of and appreciate their own and each other's contributions. Celia has significantly more teaching experience and resources that the team draws upon, whereas Anna brings fresh perspective and flexibility to their work. These contributions, coupled with an awareness and appreciation of them, are prevalent throughout the team's interactions.

An incident during an observation demonstrates both the contributions the team members make to their CLP as well Celia's appreciation of this. After a lunch break, Celia expressed frustration at not being sure how to craft their non-fiction writing unit so students would have choice but the project would still be manageable and scaffolded. She went to get a resource book to help the planning process, while Anna came up with an idea to have students narrow down their topic by coming up with three categories or questions they have about the topic. Anna's idea got taken up, and Celia later remarked that she believes Anna is brilliant.

This ability to articulate their own and each other's contributions was demonstrated in multiple interviews as well. For example, Anna described a new teaching strategy the principal wanted them to implement and how she was ready and willing to do so, but Celia was resistant. She encouraged Celia and helped her see the value of the principal's suggestion. In addition to recognizing her own contributions, Anna valued the experience and physical resources Celia brought to their work. In fact, Anna told me that the only challenging thing about working with Celia was feeling like "the height man"—in other words there were times when she felt like she was less than Celia because she learned so much from her.

Just as Wenger (1998) suggests, this CoP involves "the contributions and knowledge of others" (p. 76) within the CoP. In the case of Celia and Anna these contributions are not only present, but recognized by the members of the CoP. This recognition allows the team to continually engage in CLP and the negotiation of meaning of lessons to be taught. It is a cultural norm that is part of their CoP.

Frequent interactions. Research indicates that teacher communities require structures such as scheduled planning time in order to lead to meaningful discussions around curricular and instructional issues (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). While Celia and Anna were provided

common planning time, they reported that this was only one of the many times they interacted during the school day.

According to interview data, , it was not this structured time in the middle of the school day that allowed them to function as a CoP, but rather the multitude of interactions across the day, afforded to them by their physical proximity. Celia and Anna’s classrooms were next to one another and they reported being in and out of both classrooms throughout the day. Flinker, Celia’s first student teacher, told me, “I mean they were always talking. They talked before school, they talked after school. You know? And there were always like ideas being exchanged and, you know, things being shared.” I also observed this, as each time I visited the school for interviews, the teachers were either together when I arrived or stopped by for some reason during the interview.

These interactions often took the form of sharing how something went, either to give or receive advice, according to the team and those who worked with the team. For example, Betty, Celia’s student teacher in the spring of that year, told me, “And if Anna gave a lesson a day ahead, she’d come over at the 15 minute recess and be like, ‘That went really great! Here’s what I would tell you to do!’” In other words, these frequent interactions provided teachers opportunities to learn from one another’s practice.

Hence, part of the work of CLP for Celia and Anna involves their cultural norm of interacting across the school day (and at their Saturday meetings), not only during the common planning time provided by the school. These frequent interactions are an aspect of the mutual engagement of this CoP.

Trust professional decisions. Another cultural norm for the Cedar Forest team is to trust one another to make professional decisions. Although Celia and Anna plan together and

strive for coherence across their classrooms, they are comfortable with lessons being implemented differently, because they trust each other's professional decisions.

Sometimes these professional decisions are made in the course of planning. For example, in the following excerpt, the teachers are trying to determine what content to use for a lesson on strategies for reading non-fiction text. After brainstorming several topics, Celia states that she likes an article about women's rights, and Anna first states that she's "not feeling it," but then continues and tells Celia:

No, try that out and see how it goes with your class, maybe your class loves it and is jazzed, but with me, the last thing I've been doing is I've seen a few where they're invested and when they're not...so I'm, I want to find something [else].

Here Anna is saying to Celia that she trusts her judgment and thinks she should do what she wants, but she also trusts her own judgment and is not going to go along with Celia on this particular topic. She, therefore, suggests they make their own professional decision in this instance.

At other points, moments of trusting professional decisions occur in the implementation of lessons. There is evidence across data sources that despite planning for coherence and consistency, both Celia and Anna will deviate from plans during implementation. This is demonstrated by a short exchange during an observation:

Celia: You're going be mad.

Anna: Why?

Celia: Because I read an extra chapter.

Anna: That's okay. I read a little bit too....I'm never worried if you get ahead.

Based on the team's reflections, it appears that these deviations from plans occur for several reasons, including because a new idea emerged during the course of instruction, students needed more practice or explanation with a concept than anticipated, or management needs trumped instructional plans. The teachers trust one another to make professional decisions during implementation of lessons. Anna told me, "I can think of times where we've each done our own thing and we'll come back and be like, 'Well how did yours work out?' And then 'Oh, I do want to do that then!'" Whether the decisions are made in planning or instruction, the team trusts one another to make professional decisions and values the discussion of these decisions.

Both the concept of trust as well as the willingness to disagree has been explored elsewhere in research on teacher communities. Trust has been found to be an important factor in teacher communities, although there is limited research discussing this (Bryk et al., 1999). Similarly, research suggests that only mature teacher communities demonstrate a willingness to disagree with one another (Grossman et al., 2001). However, for the Cedar Team their disagreements are not framed as conflict, as they often are in the research literature (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001), but rather as opportunities. Celia and Anna would not state that they engage in conflict; instead, they would explain that they "agree to disagree" and have opportunities to hear one another's rationales and learn what happened during implementation because they trust one another's professional decisions.

Summary. Combined, this recognition of their own and each other's contributions, frequent interactions, and trusting one another's professional decisions describe the cultural norms for the Cedar Forest team. They demonstrate one way a teacher community can function and suggest an alternative to the concept of conflict within a community—an ability to agree to disagree and share rationale behind professional decisions.

These norms illuminate the Cedar Forest team's mutual engagement and create a context which enables the team to continually engage in the work of CLP. They are present throughout Celia and Anna's work as teachers, including their lengthy CLP meetings.

Distinct CLP Meetings

Just as it did for the Pilkhurst team, the majority of the work of CLP for the Cedar Forest team takes place during CLP meetings. These meetings typically occurred on Saturday morning, at Celia's home, and lasted between three and four hours. These meetings followed a predictable protocol, centered on the reification of planbooks, and had a distinct rhythm.

Predictable protocol. The Saturday morning CLP meetings followed a predictable protocol, although the protocol existed only in the minds of Celia and Anna. First, they set an agenda on Fridays, so they would know what to bring with them the following day. Then, Anna would arrive and the two would spend the first half hour to hour "just decompressing and drinking coffee." During this time, the team viewed themselves as gossiping, although field notes indicate that casual conversations related to the work of teaching, such as an activity that would be fun to use in a classroom, lessons that had not gone well the previous week, upcoming field trips, and so forth frequently took place. After this chit-chat time, they would move from the kitchen to the dining area—physically representing the change from this informal conversation to more formal planning. This shift resulted in each meeting having a feel of an official start. At this point, they would have their planbooks and other resources on the table and would begin working through their agenda. They reported to me that they tried to prioritize what needed to be discussed, but ultimately, they always wanted to ensure they knew what they were going to do during each part of their day the following week. Conversations were generally organized around subjects taught or times of the day such as calendar, class novel, reading,

writing, word study, homework, and science. At some point, they would take a break for lunch. This would sometimes involve a physical move, although it sometimes was simply a change in level of focus and general atmosphere. I experienced this protocol each time I observed at Celia's home.

It appears that over time, the Cedar Forest team created personalized structures and protocols to support their work. Research has found that structures are important for teacher communities to flourish (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002) and that protocols influence the extent to which collaboration can serve as a form of professional development for teachers (Levine & Marcus, 2010). However, prior research has not investigated the ways in which teacher communities create their own structures and protocols as a part of their collaborative work. Celia and Anna have a distinct meeting with a self-designed protocol which creates a structure that enables opportunities to learn to arise.

Reified planbook. Wenger (1998) posits that a CoP engages in the negotiation of meaning through a process of participation and reification, and through that process, the CoP learns. Reification refers to, “the process of giving form to our experience by producing objects that congeal this experience into ‘thingness’” (p. 58). For Celia and Anna, their planbooks are a reified object that anchors their work and represents the learning opportunities presented during their work. In an interview immediately following an observation of a CLP meeting, Anna explained the meaning she gives to her planbook:

I had my planbook. That's really important. I've forgotten to bring it a couple times, and it sucks! Because to me, it anchors what we're talking about. If we just have a lot of fluffy conversation, it doesn't help me at all—because I will not remember it by the time we get to class. So having my planbook is my guide

Planbooks are the “thing” that represents Celia and Anna’s discussions with one another. They write what they believe to be necessary in order to remember their conversations. In fact, when asked what she learned during a specific meeting, Anna replied, “Can I get my planbook?” indicating that the planbook would help her discuss her learnings.

Similarly, there were repeatedly moments in observation recordings where no one spoke and writing was audible. In these moments, the teachers were writing in their planbooks, capturing the ideas they spoke about and their plans for the following week.

Filling out planbooks is a practice the Cedar Forest team engages in as a part of their CLP work. This practice involves the reification of the planbook, into an object that captures the ideas discussed that team members want to remember. The learning opportunities that arise through this process are discussed in Chapter Seven.

Distinct rhythm. Wenger’s (1998) CoP perspective suggests that a CoP will have a distinct rhythm that is locally determined and influenced by both history and context. This was the case for the Cedar Forest team. CLP meetings have a humor-filled and relaxed yet fast-paced rhythm. Laughter occurred multiple times during every observation. Whether it was as the team sang songs to one another, teased one another, watched YouTube videos, or simply stated something in a tone that evoked laughter, Celia and Anna demonstrated how much they enjoyed themselves during their CLP meetings. . Field notes indicate that I experienced their meetings as “fun.” Betty also expressed this sentiment. She described the Saturday morning meetings as “super fun.” The work of CLP does not feel like work to this team, but rather an enjoyable opportunity to engage with one another.

Relaxed can be defined as “set or being at rest or at ease” or “easy of manner” (Merriam-Webster dictionary). This was the word that came to mind as I observed meetings. In fact,

during my first CLP meeting observation, Celia was so relaxed she took her bra off! In general, Celia and Anna dressed casually, sometimes in pajamas. However, describing the meetings as relaxed is not meant to indicate that there was not a sense of urgency about the work they were doing. Celia and Anna described the feel of the meetings to me as “fast-paced and perky.”

During their concluding interview, they explained:

Anna: And I feel like things just move faster with you and me. Like, I feel like when it's on my own or when it's us...I'm intentional, but it's...You would think with two voices it would take a lot longer to get done with things. You know? You've been there where it's like we each have to say our part and blah blah blah and it'd just be like we're dragging. And I think you and I, when we get into a car, it's like super speed!

Celia: Oh yeah.

Anna: And it's like super speed and everything gets done.

Applying Wenger's (1998) analogy that the joint enterprise of a CoP is like rhythm in music, the music of this team could be described as vivace or “in a brisk spirited manner” (Merriam-Webster dictionary). This fast-paced, relaxed, and humor-filled nature is a key element to the work of CLP for Cedar Forest and likely influenced the perceived outcomes of the work as well as the learning opportunities afforded by it.

Summary. The Cedar Forest team participates in distinct CLP meetings that follow a self-designed protocol and center around the reification of planbooks. These meetings have a distinct rhythm. By mutually engaging in CLP meetings in the manners described in this section, Celia and Anna plan for the upcoming week while learning from one another. The specifics of how they participate in CLP meetings are part of what enables learning opportunities to arise, as will be discussed in the next chapter.

Position Themselves as Experts

The practices explained thus far do not account for every aspect of Celia and Anna's CoP. They are mutually engaged in distinct CLP meetings, but what is their joint enterprise? In other words, how do they go about their work during CLP meetings? Celia and Anna position themselves as experts in regards to what they need to teach their students and believe they can construct high quality lessons through a process of "pushing back" on one another's thoughts. This results in talk about students, content, and teaching that is rich in opportunities to learn. In this section, I illuminate the ways in which the teachers position themselves as experts through the use of resources and conversational routines.

Use of resources. As described in Chapter Three, I define resources as objects or ideas that are reified by the team. In other words, resources have a taken-as-shared meaning (Yackel & Cobb, 1996) to the team. Using this definition, Celia and Anna use a variety of resources to supplement and support their ideas about what to teach. In other words, they are the experts about what needs to be taught, and resources simply assist them in determining the details of their upcoming lessons. For example, when planning science, they did not refer to some outside force that told them what to teach (such as state standards or curriculum materials), but rather what they wanted to teach. "We know we want observable properties in the question....Cause I want them to be thinking more about what does observable properties mean." Here, Anna is stating what she believes to be important in this upcoming lesson on observable properties.

Similarly, in the following excerpt, the team plans what they want to teach and then look toward resources to support the lesson:

Anna: Persuasive writing. Let's hammer out writing....

Celia: We're looking at the element of persuasive writing and the first category that (the literacy coach) encouraged us to look at where, what are the characteristics of the genre. So, then we identified bandwagon, testimonial, glittering generalities. So, you and I know that those are three elements of persuasive writing that we want to teach the kids. Now we've identified, we're going to start with bandwagon. So then we have two windows we need to fill. One is, the writing process itself, and the other is, what skill do you want to teach. So, the first mini-lesson is, "Hey guys, here's what bandwagon is, here's the definition, here's a couple of examples."...So, Monday, would be, we introduce persuasive writing. We tell them one way people try and persuade people to do, or say, or buy things is bandwagon and we show an example.

Anna: Multiple examples.

Celia: And where are we getting those?

Anna: Um. You have a book. The persuasive book. Is there examples in that?

Celia: There's that one of the, um. This is a picture. Look in the table of contents. So. Can you think of. Persuasive. (3) slash

Anna: I wish we had YouTube, because there's a ton of great examples on YouTube. I don't know what happened, but

Celia: So, the def, can you read me the definition of bandwagon?

Anna: Um

Celia: I mean, I know that we know what it is, but I kinda want to like

Anna: No, we need to, we need to be clear

Celia and Anna begin with what they want to teach the students, and turn to resources such as “Celia’s persuasive book” and YouTube to support their teaching. This indicates that the team

positions themselves as the experts and uses resources as references, rather than blueprints, as they plan lessons.

It is possible that Celia and Anna use resources in this manner due to the nature of the materials provided to them by the district. For example, in literacy, the district provided frameworks that were intended to guide teacher's units, projects, and lessons. Although Celia and Anna kept to the general topics recommended by the district (i.e. non-fiction, poetry, etc.), as well as the timeframe suggested, they did not always believe the frameworks engaged students in rigorous learning. Celia explained:

Our district—as I told you yesterday—has these frameworks, and there's always a culminating project. And some of them are mediocre. And Anna and I tweak 'em to make 'em better. But the one for nonfiction is just pure crap. I mean a first-grader could do it. 'Is it cause-and-effect or problem/solution? Share a caption you read. Share a piece of dialogue. What map did you see?' And I'm like, 'Really? In fifth grade??'

Due to this belief that the expectation set forth in the frameworks was not high enough, Celia and Anna created their own non-fiction research project, based on their understandings of what fifth grade students can and should be able to do. This once again demonstrates that Celia and Anna believe they are experts in what their students need to be taught, regardless of whether or not this aligns with what their district is telling them needs to be taught.

Conversational routine. Another way the team positions themselves as experts is through the use of a conversational routine they refer to as “push back.” When asked about the most important things a hypothetical new team member should know about their work, Celia explained:

I mean the first thing that I immediately think of is what Anna was saying earlier, which is like that whole play of ‘No, I don’t like that idea’, ‘Okay, tell me why?’, ‘Oh...’ It’s that openness to... And it’s not about having a thick skin, it’s just about being thoughtful and reflective—‘cuz we do that constantly. Like, ‘I’m not doing that with my kids with [Time for Kids magazine].’ ‘Why (not)? Because then they’ll learn cause-and-effect!’ ‘Oh! You’re right! I didn’t see that.’ And that openness to just like push back or say what you believe in, but then be willing to hear the other person’s side of it...It’s that immediate right-after-you-say-I-don’t-think-so ‘why’. You kind of like justify your answer.

Here Celia is explaining her perception of their typical conversational routine—they ask each other why, expect justification of ideas, and have back and forth conversations. This suggests they view themselves and each other as having expertise they can elicit and draw upon.

Observations illuminate a different, but related routine. The team consistently provides rationale behind thinking. For example, in the following excerpt, Celia offers her rationale even without Anna asking for a justification:

Celia: I'm going to propose that we read *The Great Body Shop*, *Those Crazy Mixed Up Emotions*. It's a quick, one-shot no note taking, it's just like, it's all about, what do you do if you're parents are getting a divorce or what do you do if you know your friend is suicidal or what do you do

Anna: Mmmhmm

Celia: It's just all about problems kids go through, ((They talk about Anna’s friend for 15 seconds.))

Celia: But the reason I propose that is because, a parent letter went home saying that fifth grade is going to be doing the reproductive system.

Anna: Mmmhmm

Celia: So, I feel like we should get, this has to come before that, so let's just get that puppy out of the way, and then we can spend some serious time on the reproductive system. You know. In the next week or two.

This routine of stating an opinion and immediately following the statement with an explanation of why, without the other team member asking or “pushing back” was seen throughout observations. This is likely due to the team’s shared understanding of “push back” as a part of the work of CLP.

Both “push back” and providing rationale can result in talk that matches Horn’s (2007) definition of an episode of pedagogical reasoning:

I define the episodes of pedagogical reasoning to be units of teacher-to-teacher talk in which teachers exhibit their understanding of an issue in their practice. Specifically, episodes of pedagogical reasoning are moments in teachers’ interaction in which they describe issues in or raise questions about teaching practice that are accompanied by some elaboration of reasons, explanations, or justifications. (p. 46)

However, most prevalent in the research literature are episodes of pedagogical reasoning where teachers discuss a problematic issue and then expand on reasoning related to solving that problem. The Cedar Forest team differs from this, because they are anticipating practice rather than discussing issues that already arose in their classrooms. Celia and Anna anticipate practice and ask one another for, and often simply provide, reasons, explanations, and justifications. For example, Celia tells Anna, “I think observable properties we really need to stay heavy on them

because that's the thing that's so easy for the kids to be like, to not understand or for to go past them." Celia and Anna provide one another pedagogical reasoning, or rationale, as a normalized part of their work together.

By positioning themselves as experts, using resources to supplement their ideas, engaging in conversational routines such as "push back," and providing rationale opportunities to learn arise. Many of these opportunities can be categorized as episodes of pedagogical reasoning. In addition, as will be explained in Chapter Seven, these opportunities can also be categorized as talk about students, content, and/or teaching.

Reflect on Past

The Cedar Forest CoP reflects on the past as a part of their CLP work. All six observations had multiple instances where teachers discussed what already happened in their classrooms. For example, in this excerpt, Anna explains something she had students do during a previous class novel.

Anna: I always had my kids do the written response

Celia: Every day?

Anna: Yeah. No, that's not every day, but most days, yeah, and I had them do prompts for Stargirl for homework. I have them come up with three [questions and answers] and then we come back and talk about them. They like it.

Celia: But they read the whole Stargirl book, in class, right?

Anna: Mmmhmm. So they would have to go back and re-read it.

Celia: So, why do they take it home? Oh.

Anna: Because I was seeing that if, it was them coming up with three questions ((tangent about self-tanning that lasted 16 seconds))

Celia: How'd that work for you?

Anna: tanner?

Celia: No. (h) The three questions coming back prepared.

Anna: I liked it. I liked it especially because when there's a good, I like, one of the reasons I like it is because when I had them bring it back, I was looking at it more for them to start creating complete sentences...and they started stepping up, stepping up and writing more thoughtfully and like with them restating the question, they're getting a lot better with that... they're learning how to restate the question

This excerpt meets Horn's definition of a replay, where teachers "provide blow-by-blow accounts of classroom events. Replays were prevalent throughout the Cedar Forest data.

Levine and Marcus (2010) suggest that replays (as well as rehearsals) offer opportunities to learn because "teachers make their own specific teaching available for colleagues' learning and critical scrutiny" (p. 393). This is the case with the previous excerpt. Celia had an opportunity to learn about the strategy of having students come up with things questions and answers and how this strategy supports student learning.

However, Celia and Anna demonstrate another purpose replays can serve. They assist the speaker in learning, as well. Celia told me that when a lesson does not go well, she feels a need to reflect on it with Anna. They will talk about what happened, why it might have happened, and what to do next. In these instances she does not replay for Anna's benefit, but rather so she can be "reflective and thoughtful" and learn from her own experience. Replaying classroom events to Anna helps Celia learn.

In addition, replays serve the purpose of solidifying thinking for Celia and Anna. For example, when planning how they would conduct their lessons on strategies for reading non-

fiction text, Celia reflected on what had not worked in the past. She does this not to caution Anna, but as a way to remind herself of what she believes she should do during these lessons:

Celia: ...we like plow through it instead of stopping and modeling that.... Like, that whole thing about stop and think and re-read and question yourself. //and make predictions

Anna: I completely agree with you.]

Celia: And like I can think of when I did the Great Body Shop on the respiratory system and all I did was I would put it up and like, 'Raise your hand if you want to read this passage.' 'Good job, Marni.' 'Raise your hand if you want, good job Michael.' You know, instead of like, they would get to words like in the br-on-ci-al and then they'd say it and I never stopped them to say, 'So what is the bronchial? You guys? Try to find it on your own body. What would it look like if it was your fingers?' You know?

Anna: Yeah!

Here Anna states that she agrees with Celia, but Celia continues and gives a blow-by-blow account (replay) of what she's done in the past. Because Anna is already in agreement, it appears that Celia is not saying this for Anna's benefit, but rather to solidify for herself what she believes she has done wrong and needs to do differently in future lessons.

An unexpected aspect of replays for the Cedar Forest team was that they did not always offer rich opportunities to learn. Sometimes, replays were tangents away from planning and simply served to share a story. These replay stories were often funny things students did or celebrations of student behavior. While these stories centered on students and could have offered insights into the individuals they teach, the stories were often told and then dismissed as

the team refocused on planning. For example, in the midst of a conversation about how they will teach factoring through their calendar routine, Anna says:

Anna: Oh, did you hear that Gabby said fuchsia today?

Celia: No.

Anna: You were leaving and he was like, ‘Can we get colors of pink?’ And Gabby raised her hand and said fuchsia.

Celia: That's awesome.

Anna: I was like, smart.

Celia: So, factor tree, LCM, GCF, story problem on Wednesday

Here, Anna gives a blow-by-blow account of what happened, thus meeting the definition of a replay, but no discussion follows the account. Rather, it is a story that is quickly celebrated but then conversation returns to planning. This demonstrates that while the team engages in replays, not all replays provide rich opportunities to learn.

The Cedar Forest team reflects on the past, or engages in replays, as a part of the work of CLP. These replays offer the listener “windows” into another’s practice, as understood in current research literature on the act of collaboration (Horn, 2005; Levine & Marcus, 2010). They also aid the speaker in learning from experience and solidifying thinking. Yet, replays do not always offer rich opportunities for learning for this team.

Visualize the Future

The complement to replays is rehearsals, or instances where teachers “act out classroom interaction...in an anticipatory fashion” (Horn, 2005, p. 27). Celia and Anna engage in frequent rehearsals. In fact, they do so with great specificity, giving the impression that they are trying to truly visualize their classrooms as they plan. I use the term visualization, to encompass moments

of “acting out” the classroom, as well as moments that involve picturing what will happen within the classroom. This sometimes involves drawing pictures of imagined student work in their planbooks. Celia and Anna’s visualization can be broken down into three categories: practicing what they will say to students, anticipating how students will respond, and clarifying their expectations of students and their work.

Practicing teacher talk. The Cedar Forest team would often rehearse the delivery of upcoming lessons during CLP meetings. “Not only have I planned it, but I’ve kind of role played it with her.” Betty referred to this as “getting into the voice of Miss C.” I observed these rehearsals throughout observations. Celia and Anna frequently spoke as if they were talking to their students, saying things such as:

So, everybody, we’ve just did Stargirl, and we read through that together and we had great discussions and you guys have grown so much as readers in the way you think and the way you work. We’re going to be pushing you a little bit harder.

Here Anna spoke to Celia, but pretended to be speaking to her students. This practice exemplifies Horn’s (2005) construct of rehearsals. These rehearsals offer opportunities for learning, through the deprivatization of practice, as well as the solidification of thinking described in the section above.

Anticipating Student Response. Not only do Celia and Anna rehearse what they will say, but they also anticipate how students will respond, in a similar fashion to how Miriam and Emeline (the Pilkhurst team) do. This frequently happened when planning homework and thinking about what kinds of assignments are realistic for students, such as when Anna said:

What do you think they're going to do, do you think they're going to go, 'Let me go look up what a bullet is,' or are they going to go, 'Let me think about, I'm going to take my best guess and as long as it's written, it's going to get checked anyways.'

This also happened when planning mini-lessons and wanting to use references (such as celebrities) students will know. Celia and Anna visualize their students and anticipate what the students will do in response to lessons.

Sometimes, this anticipation involves rehearsals with the voice of students, combined with the teacher's voice. For example, when planning an upcoming writing lesson, Anna anticipates what students might write, how she could respond to that, and how the students might subsequently respond:

Yeah, so if they come up with 'The captain was being careless and he hit a rock', and okay, 'Explain more about that.' 'When the captain was being careless, he was taken aside, he went off the trail to go wave to another captain...and going off the track made it hit the rock and that's why the ship sank. It's all his fault.'

In this rehearsal, Anna is anticipating how students will respond with and without her support.

Anticipating student response through rehearsals was a normalized, ongoing part of the work of CLP for this team. This offers the teachers opportunities to learn about students, content, and teaching, as discussed in Chapter Seven.

Clarifying Expectations. In addition to rehearsing both what they will say and how they suspect students will respond, Celia and Anna discuss their specific expectations of student work. This often involves planning for differentiation. For example, in the following excerpt, the team decided that students will write a non-fiction essay on a topic of their choosing and determine three categories related to that topic (which they refer to as yellows). Students will

then research and write details about those categories (which they refer to as reds), and create a poster to accompany their essays. After fleshing out this general project, the following conversation took place:

Anna: and I'd say our IEP kids, like,

Celia: Easy to modify!

Anna: Yeah.

Celia: Michael, come up with two yellows about what you want to know about, one red for each

Anna: See and I could even, I would give them all a topic, or have them choose one. I would not leave it very open, because I'm thinking, when it comes to them doing the poster, they could all do the poster together, and it could be where Jamie makes a timeline, and Frank and so and so make ah the captions, and it's like everybody's working together for this one.

Celia: Mmm

Anna: I'm just thinking about that, like that could work.

Here they are thinking through what they expect a group of students who struggle with writing to produce for this project, after having visualized and recorded what they expect the class as a whole to produce. These clarified expectations are another way the team ensures they have fully visualized the lessons they plan together.

Summary. When Celia and Anna plan upcoming lessons, they do not just think about and write down what they will teach, but additionally ask themselves and each other, “How do you do this? How do you see this in your head?” In other words, they fully visualize what will happen in their classroom during these lessons through rehearsing what they will say to students,

anticipating how students will respond, and clarifying their expectations of students and their work. This visualization is a key practice of CLP for this team and offers opportunities to deprivatize practice, solidify thinking, and learn about students, content, and teaching.

Students at the Heart

At the heart of the work of CLP for Celia and Anna are their students. Talk about students permeates conversation both in and out of CLP meetings throughout the school year. Through this talk, it is apparent that Celia and Anna know each of their students well and plan with their particular students in mind. Analyzing this talk highlights how Celia and Anna think about their students' social and emotional well-being, as well as their academic learning.

This team of teachers thinks about each individual in their classrooms as a person with whom they have the opportunity to interact with on a daily basis. I heard several conversations celebrating individual students, sharing funny things students did, or expressing concern about students' interactions with one another. Celia and Anna demonstrate deep knowledge of students, students' families, and students' lives outside of school through the stories they share. For example, in the following excerpt, Celia shares something the student's mom told her that helps both Celia and Anna understand the student and why she may need more positive reinforcement than they initially realized:

Celia: I love it! Get grade book and show off [student homework] every Friday. You're right, and Krista's a good choice.

Anna: Do you feel like, I don't know, after her mom says like, I haven't ever, I was surprised that she's stressing out that much, you know?

Celia: Oh, she's always been like that though.

Anna: Really?

Celia: Her mom told me that, before we took [a district assessment] I said, ‘I just want you to do the best that you can because you are already so bright and hardworking and I don't want you to stress over this’ and she kinda smiled and laughed a little bit and she's like, ‘I just,’ something like, ‘I just want to get it right’ or ‘I just want to, whatever’ and I'm like, ‘Just do the best you can but don't, don't stress over this. This is just one of many things that we're going to ask you to do. And your best work is going to be good enough for me’ and you know blahblahblah. She just needs those little pep talks.

This awareness and focus on students as individuals demonstrates Celia and Anna's commitment to “seeing the student” (Ayers, 1993). CLP offers a venue in which they can share what they see with one another.

In addition to thinking about the individuals they teach, Celia and Anna talk about how to meet the academic needs of their students, both as individuals and as a collective. This is akin to McLaughlin and Talbert's (2001) pattern of “innovating to engage students in high-content” where “teachers move beyond or outside established frames for instruction to find or develop content and classroom strategies that will enable students to master core subject concepts” (p. 25). For example, Anna talked to me about some of the struggles her English Language Learners were having. She said, “So we've been trying to talk about that and how to get them stronger in that area. And we've had a ton of conversations about that.” Here, Anna reports that she and Celia work to find new ways to meet the needs of their students learning English.

Observation data corroborates this abundance of talk about students as academic learners in order to ensure students are able master core subject concepts. Celia and Anna frequently use students as examples in their planning, such as “So I'm thinking about Ruth. So, okay, so in my

mind I'm trying to visualize what is going to be the most logical flow for a Ruth." This comment is then followed by a clarification of what will happen for the majority of the students during this lesson. Here, Celia is mentally checking her plans for instruction to make sure they will meet the needs of students similar to this student.

This mental checking of plans and their appropriateness for students was particularly true for their students identified as having special needs. The teachers often followed talk about a particular lesson with thinking and talking through how the students identified as having special needs would respond to this lesson. For example, after planning a research report, the following exchange took place:

Anna: Mmmhmmm and I'd say our IEP kids, like

Celia: Easy to modify!

Anna: Yeah.

Celia: Margaret, come up with two yellows about what you want to know about, one red for each.

Anna: See and I could even, I would give them all a topic, or have them choose one. I would not leave it very open, because I'm thinking, when it comes to them doing the poster, they could all do the poster together, and it could be where Jimmy makes a timeline and Frank and so and so make ah the captions, and it's like everybody's working together for this one.

This is then following by a conversation regarding how the individual students they are thinking about work together. This once again demonstrates how the team is willing to move beyond their initial frames of instruction in order to plan instruction that they anticipate will meet the

needs of all students. They mentally check how various students will respond to planned instruction and alter instruction when they feel it necessary to support student learning.

The preponderance of talk about students, during their informal conversations, official planning, lunch breaks, and times throughout the school day, demonstrates that Celia and Anna think about and plan with their students in mind. Students are at the heart of their CLP work. This supports the teachers to “see” the students as individuals, as well as innovate to engage students in learning content, when deemed necessary.

Perceived Outcomes

As per my conceptual framework, investigating the nature of the work of CLP and the practices teachers engage in includes not only the outward actions taken by team members, but the more tacit understandings, underlying assumptions and unspoken expectations that are integral to the work. In the case of CLP, one of the ways to identify these implicit practices is through the perceived outcomes of planning together. The Cedar Forest team engages in CLP because they believe the work leads to new teaching strategies, emotional benefits, and a sense of preparedness. These beliefs were part of the ongoing, normalized manner of the work of CLP for this team.

New teaching strategies. As part of their collaborative work, the teachers in this team push themselves to try on new teaching strategies. While it is not clear the extent to which either Celia or Anna would push herself without the other, nor is it clear how much they would push themselves if they were not being encouraged/required to do so by the principal, it is clear that part of the work of CLP for this team, in this context, is to plan to try new strategies. I witnessed several instances of this, including the following where Anna and Celia discuss trying a new way to support vocabulary development:

Anna: Can we start doing vocab on Thursday, um, it's supposed to be a meaningful sentence with the word, can we start doing meaningful sentence and a picture? I like them when they draw the picture that shows what the word means....

Celia: So, what are you saying, that worked for the kids? They had fun with that?

Anna: I think it's

Celia: I've never done it. I'm just asking.

Anna: Well, today, I mean on Friday, I, on the back of the, I gave the test and on the back I had them do the chart where it's the word, the picture, the synonym and antonym, right?

Celia: Oh the model.

Anna: Yeah. And when we collected them back you could really see the kids that knew what it meant and could apply it and it's a, it's kinda like a fun way for them to play with the word, like

Celia: Oh, I love it....So, in addition to the meaningful sentence they would also be doing an illustration to show that they understand the meaning of the word?

Anna: Yeah.

Here Anna stated something she wanted to begin doing on a regular basis, Celia asked why, Anna explained her reasoning, and Celia agreed and planned to take up this new strategy. A situation similar to this occurred in almost every observation, where one of the teachers would suggest a new strategy, they would discuss why this strategy was or was not appropriate, and they would plan to take up some iteration of the strategy.

Celia offered a reason why this may be, referencing a particular experiment they recently conducted with their class:

And I have somebody that I can touch base with. So even if it's the chicken bone experiment that we did and I'm totally out of my comfort level here, I had somebody that I could say, "How did you do it? Did you...? Did this happen? Blah blah blah." And so it just makes me feel more confident and responsible and organized. Yeah.

In other words, they believe their collaborative work results in a willingness to get out of their comfort zones and try on new teaching strategies. This corroborates previous research findings that suggest working in a community leads to teachers willing to change their practice (Bryk et al., 1999; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Vescio et al., 2008).

Emotional benefits. Celia and Anna reported that CLP brings them happiness, energy, and myriad of other positive emotions. "People will say, 'I can't believe you plan on Saturdays' and I'm like, 'Yeah, but we really enjoy it!'" Celia told me. This joy was evident in the atmosphere of their planning meetings. Field notes from my fifth observation state:

Anna talked about how she was in a bad mood, due to traffic, before coming, but now that she heard Betty and my enthusiastic talk, she was feeling better. Celia also talked about being in a bad mood but feeling better after being with all of us.

Their community and work together not only improved their moods, but gave them energy, as Anna stated, "I feel like we get our armor together. And so it's like, 'Aaaah! I can take over anything! I know what I'm doing.'" This comment indicates the sense of energy Anna believes she gets as a result of their work together. Throughout data collection comments were also made that CLP makes them feel more confident, alleviates stress, and offers reassurance. Overall, part of the work of CLP for this team of teachers is experiencing these emotional benefits and attributing them to their collaborative work.

This finding is noteworthy due to the preponderance of discussion, among both practitioners and researchers about issues of teacher burnout (Anderson, Levinson, Barker, & Kiewra, 1999; Schlichte, Yssel, & Merbler, 2005; Schwab, 1983). Some researchers have pointed to opportunities for teacher collaboration as a way to mitigate these feelings (Kilgore & Griffin, 1998; Cooley & Yovanoff, 1996). Burnout was not detected in the data for the Cedar Forest team, but the teachers demonstrated and discussed emotional benefits of the work of CLP that could certainly relate to the reduction of burnout.

Sense of preparedness. The most salient outcome of CLP for the Cedar Forest team is a sense of preparedness. Anna talked about how she knows what she's going to teach more when she and Celia plan together. This includes knowing the questions she will ask, what the point of the lesson is, and how the lesson will look. She gave the example of not planning due to a snowstorm and how those days did not feel as smooth as the days where she had planned with Celia, because she did not know what she was going to do as clearly. Similarly, during the interview immediately before a CLP meeting, when asked how she will know if the meeting is successful, Celia answered, "I won't have any loose ends in my mind....It will be more just a feeling of like, 'Yeah! I feel really solid. I'm ready to go into next week.'" In others words, she will feel prepared. Celia and Anna repeatedly told me how planning together makes them feel more prepared, sometimes using phrases such as "so much more on top of my game."

While being prepared is not directly related to the theory of action (Argyris, 1993) underlying the connections between CLP and professional development (see Figure 1 in Chapter 1), logic suggests a connection between teacher preparedness for a lesson and effectiveness of a lesson—when teachers are prepared for what they are going to do in the classroom, in contrast to “winging it” they are more likely to be able to meet the needs of their students. The notion that

teachers should plan their lessons in advance of implementing them is logical and generally accepted in the field of education. However, there is great variation among veteran teachers when it comes to lesson planning (Panasuk & Todd, 2005). CLP helps ensure Celia and Anna have prepared their lessons in advance, which they believe makes them more effective teachers.

Summary. This exploration of CLP and the opportunities for learning that arise when teachers engage in it involves the visible practices as well as the tacit understandings, underlying assumptions, and unspoken expectations those who participate in the work hold. For the Cedar Forest team, this includes the perceived outcomes of new teaching strategies, emotional benefits, and a sense of preparedness. These perceived outcomes support the notion that collaborating can lead to changes in teaching practice, but also provide insights into additional benefits of collaboration, emotional benefits that can ward off feelings of burnout, and a sense of preparedness. These benefits are likely to influence how teachers participate in their classrooms, and thus can be seen as learning opportunities.

The Team at a Glance

This study investigates CLP as a case of professional development for teachers. In this chapter, I unpacked the practices of the Cedar Forest team. I outlined the work Celia and Anna engage in as a normalized part of their ongoing work together. This work takes place within particular cultural norms. Their practices include having a distinct CLP meeting, positioning themselves as experts, reflecting on the past, and visualizing the future. A key aspect of these practices is that students are always at the heart of their work. Also important to the nature of the work of CLP for this team are the perceived outcomes of new teaching strategies, emotional benefits, and a sense of preparedness. (See Appendix D for a visual summary of these practices.)

I entered into this research conceptualizing a team of teachers engaged in CLP as a CoP that engages in the negotiation of meaning, which provides opportunities to learn through talk. The Cedar Forest team does indeed function as a CoP with locally defined mutual engagement, joint enterprise, and shared repertoire. The practices uncovered by an analysis of these dimensions reveal that the teachers negotiate the meaning of lessons to be taught by participating in the work of CLP during meetings and throughout the school day, and reifying resources such as district frameworks and planbooks. In the process of doing so, the teachers talk; they replay what has happened in their classroom, rehearse what they believe will happen in their classrooms, and continually provide their reasoning for pedagogical decisions.

Socio-cultural learning theory and Wenger's CoP perspective enable the investigation of the nature of this work, which highlights areas in which the Cedar Forest team functions as would be suggested by current research on teacher communities and the act of collaboration. For example, Celia and Anna report that they feel better about themselves as teachers and are more willing to change their practice due to their collaborative work, findings that align with previous research (Bryk et al., 1999; Johnson, 2003; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Warren & Payne, 1997).

However, this investigation also indicates areas in which the team's practices function differently than would be expected given current understandings of collaboration as a form of professional development. For example, replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning function not only to provide the listener windows into another's practice, but also to provide the speaker an opportunity to learn from his/her own experiences. Hence, this investigation of the work of a particular act of collaboration within a team of elementary school teachers adds new nuance to prior research.

Chapter Seven: Learning Opportunities Across Teams

In the previous two chapters of this dissertation, I explored the practices of the Pilkhurst team of teachers and the Cedar Forest team of teachers. In doing so, I addressed the first research question guiding this descriptive study: What is the nature of the work of Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP)? Using Wenger's (1998) Community of Practice (CoP) perspective, I conceptualized each team as a CoP and described the locally defined practices for Miriam and Emeline (the Pilkhurst team) as well as Celia and Anna (the Cedar Forest team).

Looking across the practices of the two teams, common practices emerge. (See Appendix E for a visual summary of these practices.) The teams each have cultural norms that create a context in which the work of CLP takes place. For both teams, this includes interacting throughout the school day, not only during CLP meetings. In addition, teachers in these teams demonstrate respect for, and trust in, their grade level partner. These feelings towards one another are coupled with an acceptance that lessons may be implemented differently in each classroom, despite an overall desire for coherence and consistency across classrooms.

In addition to overall cultural norms, both teams in this study have distinct time set-aside for CLP meetings. These meetings follow established norms and routines. During these meetings, the teams position themselves in a particular way as they discuss both the past as well as the future, although the positioning and discussions differ from one another. The Pilkhurst team positions themselves as mediators, while the Cedar Forest team positions themselves as experts. In addition, one team typically shares stories of the past and talks about upcoming lessons, while the other typically replays details of the past and practices what will happen in the future. However, another commonality between the teams is that their work focuses on students

as the “heart” of the work. Finally, Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna all perceive their CLP work as having a variety of positive outcomes.

These common practices offer insights into the second and third research questions guiding this study: What enables learning opportunities to arise when teachers engage in CLP? What kinds of learning opportunities are afforded by engaging in CLP? This study finds that for both teams, it was through the process of using and creating resources that learning opportunities arose. In addition, the work of CLP offered opportunities to learn about each aspect of the instructional core (Elmore, 2004; Hawkins, 1974). In this chapter, I use findings from both teams to analyze the process of using and creating resources that enabled learning opportunities, as well as the kinds of opportunities the teachers had to learn about students, content, and teaching.

Resources Enable Learning Opportunities

As per my conceptual framework, I anticipated the teams of teachers in the study would negotiate the meaning of upcoming lessons through a process of participation and reification (Wenger, 1998). For this reason, I focused attention on what the teachers did and how they came to understand or produce tools, including concrete objects and abstract ideas. Data for both teams highlights that negotiating the meaning of upcoming lessons involves using and creating resources. I define resources as concrete objects or ideas teachers use to guide what they and/or students will do in their classrooms. During CLP meetings, teachers in this study jointly worked to understand a variety of resources and created resources for themselves and sometimes for their students. This focused conversation and gave purpose to CLP meetings for both teams. By doing so, teaching practice was deprivatized and opportunities to learn arose. It was the process of using and creating resources that enabled those opportunities.

Using Resources

Both teams used teacher-focused resources during CLP meetings. During meetings the teachers spent time making sense of materials, or resources, at their disposal. These resources included teachers' manuals, district mandated assessments or curriculum guides, and other teacher materials collected over time. As suggested by socio-cultural learning theory, the teachers mediated these tools and came to a collective understanding of what they meant. As Wenger further suggests, this process involved engaging with the materials and ensuring they had a taken-as-shared meaning (Yackel & Cobb, 1996) for the team. As the teachers interacted with their resources, they engaged in the practices described in Chapters Five and Six of this dissertation.

For the Pilkhurst team of teachers, talk about resources often involved explanations of why a particular resource was or was not appropriate for their students, and how to modify the resource to make it more appropriate. Typically, this took the form of an episode of pedagogical reasoning, defined as, "moments in teachers' interaction in which they describe issues or raise questions about teaching practice that are accompanied by some elaboration of reasons, explanations, or justifications" (Horn, 2007, p. 46). Through these episodes of pedagogical reasoning, teachers were provided the opportunity to change how they anticipated participating in their classroom during the implementation of a particular lesson. For example, in the following excerpt, when planning math lessons for the upcoming week, Miriam and Emeline used their teachers' manuals and anticipated that a particular lesson might be too difficult for their students. They discussed why and came to a joint understanding of what instruction should focus on in order to address this problem.

Miriam: Order numbers for Four-Seven.

Emeline: ((page turn heard)) This one is hard.

Miriam: Order numbers is. Ooooh. Least to greatest. This is so hard for the kids.

Emeline: I don't know why.

Miriam: Well, because it's not. It's not, um

Emeline: It's always

Miriam: It doesn't go up by ones

Emeline: Right.

Miriam: So. 27, 44, and 72. You know, I almost feel like it would be easy for them if they could see it all in a line, you know.

Emeline: 'cause it's sequent

Miriam: Cause it would be

Emeline: left //to right

Miriam: left to right]

Emeline: Like we read

Miriam: But, even looking at it on the hundreds chart makes it kinda hard, because you are going down and left and right. So, what we really probably need to focus on is looking at the tens place.

Here, the teachers had the opportunity to learn how to best implement lesson Four-Seven. They planned on focusing on the tens place and using a number line, which was an idea that emerged through their episode of pedagogical reasoning. The episode of pedagogical reasoning took place as a result of working to understand what the teachers' manual was telling them to do.

Hence, it was the using of this resource that enabled conversation which provided an opportunity to learn.

The Cedar Forest team used resources to supplement their ideas and knowledge. For this team, the planning process typically involved the presentation of a problem or issue, often understood by the team as needing to “hammer out” plans for a particular subject. In CLP meetings, Celia and Anna used resources, such as teacher materials purchased over Celia’s years of teaching, to find passages or experiments for the students. As they jointly investigated these resources, they discussed the content of what they would be teaching as well as what they liked and did not like about the various possibilities they found. For example, during an observation, the teachers engaged in an extended episode of pedagogical reasoning that began with the statement:

Anna: I don't feel comfortable with reading. Like, what do we even say about reading?
...I know we were going to look at non-fiction. I know we're going to start talking about the cool, why it's important, I know we're going to start talking about text structures more than text features, so we're looking at a compare and contrast. We need to find a compare and contrast. We need to find a, all the different structures.

Anna presented a problem—she does not feel they are teaching non-fiction text structures well. This statement is followed by an exploration of their Time for Kids magazine and a discussion of how they can use the magazine to teach the desired content. They talk about what text structures are in the magazine and engage in multiple rehearsals of how to present the various structures to students. For example:

Celia: I think that picture is just amazing. And like, here we go to the cause and effect. Now Italian officials are worried about the environmental effect. So, guys, up here, on

my text structures we have cause and effect and I mean it even says the word effect, but like, what is going to happen? Did oil spill out of this? Do boats run on gasoline, I don't even know, but is it going to effect sea life, is it going to effect the company? Are they going to go bankrupt? What's going to happen to the captain of the ship, like, man, this ship sank and it's going to have a lot of effects. It might effect the environment, it might effect the the cruise line, it might, you know. I think, like, just for me when I see this I really get in the habit of putting it up on the overhead and saying, okay, who wants to read the first paragraph, okay.

Here Celia is using the resource of a Time for Kids magazine and rehearsing how she might utilize this in the classroom. By doing so, she provides herself and Anna opportunities to consider how to participate in the classroom while teaching this lesson.

In addition to providing opportunities to change participation in the classroom, Celia and Anna also state many beliefs about students, teaching, and learning in the course of evaluating what resources to use in their classrooms. For example,

Celia: Yeah. But, I think that's what we share with them. We say like, 'You know, Ms. Anna and I sat and my god we must have spent an hour and half looking at this and she was all over this thing about the dots. Did you guys read that? And see what it is, like, would you pay money to go see that? Would you want to do it? Ms. Celia loves figure skating and I was like what's up with figure skating? Blahblablahbal.' I mean. The fact that we're kind of just tearing this apart and genuinely interested in it is what we want to see our kids doing instead of what I think that I've had a tendency to do which is put your finger on the caption, everybody put your finger on the key.

Anna: I know. We so take the fun out of it, or we don't bring the fun to it.

Celia: Yeah.

In this excerpt, Celia first rehearses something she might say about the Time for Kids magazine to students, and then shares her belief that “we want to see our kids doing [this]” which Anna corroborates. In this moment, the teachers not only have an opportunity to learn what they might say in the classroom, but they also confirm their beliefs about what should happen in schools. This sharing of vision occurred throughout observations. Having an opportunity to solidify or come to new understandings of one’s vision of good teaching aligns with Korthagen’s (2004) framework that suggests teacher learning ought to focus on both “outer layers” of behavior as well as “inner layers” of beliefs, identity, and mission. Statements of belief from the participants in this dissertation grew out of conversations about resources that were being utilized to solve a problem. Hence, for the Cedar Forest team, using resources resulted in talk that provided opportunities to learn new ways of participating in the classroom as well as opportunities to consider beliefs. In other words, using resources enabled learning opportunities to arise.

Although the process was different for each team, both teams used existing teacher-focused resources and talked about how those resources could be used to support student learning.¹¹ By doing so, they deprivatized practice and were afforded opportunities to learn, either by changing their planned participation in the classroom or by considering their beliefs about teaching.

¹¹ While the participants in this study did not typically reference student work or student data as resources to inform their instruction during CLP meetings (they, instead relied on their memories and impression of student work), it is likely that this additional type of resource may also enable learning opportunities to arise. The relationship between CLP and looking at student work is worth further investigation.

Creating Resources

In addition to using existing resources, the teachers in this study created resources for themselves, and sometimes for their students. The most prevalent resource created was the planbook. As discussed in Chapters Five and Six, teachers brought their planbooks to meetings and spent time during the meetings writing in their planbooks.

Both teams of teachers expressed and demonstrated the importance of planbooks.

In fact, to complete the planbook appears to be one of the goals or intended foci of the meeting. During an interview before an observation, Celia explained how she would know if the meeting is successful:

It will be more just a feeling of like, ‘Yeah! I feel really solid. I’m ready to go into next week. I can crack open my planner and see at 1:00 on Thursday we’re doing ‘this’.’

Yeah. So that I’ll have the feeling, but I’ll see it written down.

In other words, the planbook is the concrete representation of their conversation and her preparedness for teaching. However, this idea can be flipped around—to Celia, she and Anna will engage in conversation in order to complete their planbooks.

Prior research indicates that intended focus affects the extent to which teachers have opportunities to learn through collaboration (Levine & Marcus, 2010) and that effective professional development is relevant to teachers’ work and involves opportunities to talk (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). This dissertation supports these notions and highlights that teachers do not necessarily need to collaborate for the purpose of developing professionally. Teachers may learn from collaboration intended for other purposes, such as planning lessons. The teachers in this study met with an intended focus of completing planbooks. They engaged in talk as they created this tool, and the

talk enabled learning opportunities to arise. Miriam and Emeline spoke more frequently about the practical aspects of their work together, such as how they fill out their planbook, than they did about the learning opportunities they were provided by their work. However, when explicitly asked if their planning together serves as a form of professional development for them, the team responded with the statement, “Yeah definitely...I mean I just think it’s the way to go.” It seems that collaboration may not require a professional development focus. Rather, a goal of creating a resource, such as a completed planbook, may enable learning opportunities to arise.

Celia and Anna created other resources during their meetings, as well. During one CLP meeting, they spent an hour creating a graphic organizer for a final product in their fiction reading unit. During this activity, they talked about various students and how those students would respond to this organizer, how this organizer connected to the frameworks and content they were teaching, and how they would present the organizer to students. In other words, during the creation of this resource, the teachers engaged in talk about students, content, and teaching. This talk included replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning and offered rich opportunities to learn. Once again, it was the task of creating a resource, in this case a graphic organizer, that focused the teachers’ conversation, and during the conversation, the teachers engaged in talk that offered opportunities to learn.

Summary

By investigating how teams of teachers engaged in CLP negotiate the meaning of what they will teach in the upcoming week, this study finds that the process of using and creating resources can give focus and purpose to CLP meetings and can enable learning opportunities to arise. In other words, as the teachers in this study jointly used resources, such as teachers’ manuals and district frameworks in order to create resources, such as a completed planbook, they

engaged in talk that provided opportunities to learn. It is unknown the extent to which CLP meetings would offer learning opportunities without this process, although Miriam stated that she experienced this and did not find it useful:

I have planned with people before that was very, it didn't feel like as much of a good use of time for me, but maybe it was for them, where they would just come and talk about what they were doing but they're not writing anything down in their planning book, they're not really planning. They're just kind of sitting there, you can tell, sort of feeling like they're wasting their time, because they're just kind of telling you. 'Well, yeah, this is what I'm going to do.'

For Miriam, it is the discussion that takes place during the process of understanding the curriculum and writing in her planbook that makes CLP worthwhile.

This finding suggests that teachers may need concrete objects to engage with and/or create in order to participate in and maintain collaborative activity that offers continual opportunities to learn. Many theories under the umbrella of socio-cultural learning theory foreground tools as key elements in understanding the process of learning. However, research has not fully explored the role of resources in professional development, teacher communities, or teacher collaboration. While "active learning" is considered a characteristic of effective professional development (Desimone, 2009), this characteristic does not include using or creating resources. This is an area worth further investigation.

Opportunities to Learn about the Instructional Core

The previous section illustrates how learning opportunities were enabled through the process of using and creating resources during CLP for the two focal teams in this study. This section explores the question of what kinds of learning opportunities arose. While the

conceptual framework for this study posits that teachers will have opportunities to talk through their participation in CLP, findings suggest that teachers not only have opportunities to talk, but more specifically, talk and learn about students, content, and teaching. These three categories are frequently referred to as the “instructional core” (Elmore, 2004) or “stuff” of teaching (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001). They align with the categories Wilson and Berne (1999) used to classify the research on effective professional development. If effective professional development provides opportunities to talk about students, content, or teaching, and these categories encompass the key elements of instruction, then it is logical to assume that opportunities to talk about all three categories would be desirable.

In this section, I analyze the learning opportunities within each category that arose for both focal teams. In doing so, I demonstrate ways in which CLP can serve as a form of professional development. While learning opportunities were originally conceptualized as replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning, the teachers engaged in other kinds of talk, such as anticipating student response, which also offered opportunities to learn. Therefore, it is the categories of students, content, and teaching that encompass more of the learning opportunities provided by engaging in CLP.

Students

The teachers in both teams talked about students frequently, both in and out of CLP meetings. “We talk about our students *all* the time,” Miriam and Emeline reported. Every observation had multiple instances of talk about students. As described in previous chapters, students were at the “heart” of their collaborative work. Vescio et al. (2008) suggest that working in a teacher community positively impacts student learning when teachers have “an intense focus on student learning and achievement” (p. 88). However, their literature review

does not offer provide an explanation of what a focus on student learning sounds like. It is unknown if the talk the teachers in this study engaged in aligns with what Vescio et al. conceptualize as an intense focus.

The teams of teachers in this study discuss how their students think and what to expect from students. While this study does not investigate the impact of teachers' discussion on students, it is likely that these types of discussion, which offer opportunities to learn about students, lead to changes in teaching practice that result in improved student outcomes.

How students think. Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna all talked about how students think as a part of their CLP work. For example, in discussing what to do with the variety of papers students have in their writing folders, Emeline recommended,

I feel like we should have them pair up their prewrite to their story, because what if, 'cuz I feel like if they want to write a stor, a new story, I'm not going to say no, but I want them, like, 'Oh, for my pre-write, I wanted to go back and write a story about this.' Like, if it's off of their prewrite and it's not just a random thought."

Here Emeline suggested they explicitly pair prewrites with drafts, because otherwise students might not think about the two as connected. Likewise, Celia reported that in the year prior to the study, when they planned math lessons together, they would often discuss how students might think about mathematical problems:

So, before [I began collaborating], it was kind of like I'm in my own world, and I think everyone's going to struggle with 12. So I think there's that kind of beauty in talking about, 'Well, I imagine this misconception. What misconceptions do you imagine?'

This practice of imagining misconceptions, or anticipating how students will think about problems, is similar to recommendations made by mathematics education researcher, Magdalene

Lampert (2001). The team engaged in similar practices in literacy as well by imagining how students would interact and think about particular texts.

In fact, understanding student thinking has been the focus of much research, particularly in the area of mathematics education (Fennema et al., 1996). This research found, “developing an understanding of children’s mathematical thinking can be a productive basis for helping teachers to make the fundamental changes called for in current reform recommendations” (p. 403). It is logical to assume that if developing a deeper understanding of children’s mathematical thinking is beneficial for teachers, developing a deeper understanding of children’s thinking in other disciplines may also be beneficial. The teachers in this study frequently discussed student thinking, across subject matters. This provides opportunities to learn about student thinking which can influence decisions teachers make when working with students.

Student expectations. In addition to talking about how students think, the teachers in both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams discussed their expectations of students. In explaining why she participated in two CLP meetings each week the year prior to the study, Emeline explained that she wanted to learn what would be appropriate expectations. She said:

I’d never taught that high. So it was like, ‘What *is* second grade? What should I be expecting? How much should they be writing?’ And some of the standards. And stuff like math facts. You know? ‘They need to know 16 to 20, sums to 15, in the second trimester.’

Emeline turned to her colleagues to learn what was reasonable to expect from second graders because the work of CLP includes talk about student expectations. In addition, the team does some grading together, as they said, “because it helps us to figure out are we grading the same.” In the course of discussing grading, they talked about their criteria for giving students different

grades, and looked at examples of student work meeting and exceeding expectations. For example, after reading a student's paper, the following conversation took place:

Emeline: She's a four. In conventions

Miriam: She is, you're right.

Emeline: cause she had dialogue, she had //almost

Miriam: everything]

Emeline: that I saw, every single period

Miriam: Yeah

Emeline: every single capital. She's a four

Miriam: Yeah, she is.

This conversation served to remind both Miriam and Emeline of what they expected from students and what they considered being above expectations.

Similarly, when the Cedar Forest team designs a project for their students to complete, such as a reading fiction report, persuasive writing essay, or non-fiction reading poster, they talk about what this project will look like when it is completed. They talk about their expectations of student work. This includes coming to a joint understanding of their expectations for the majority of their class, as well as for specific students. For example, while planning the reading fiction report, the following exchange took place:

Celia: Wait, I've got a quick question though before we go on. If we're chunking this out so we don't go through what we did with our country reports last year, is the expectation that by the end of Monday they have their rou, they've used this as their guide? Let's say

I'm Minnie, I've used that as my guide, I don't even want to fill it in on the rinky dink paper because I know how to write, and she starts writing it out, that's, is the expectation her rough draft is done or her final draft?

Student teacher: //Oh. Oh. Oh. I. Oh.

Anna: On Monday?

Celia: Yeah.

Anna: I say rough draft.]

Celia: Okay. //I just wanted to make sure we were clear.

Here Celia and Anna are discussing their expectations of Minnie, a proficient writer. Later in the meeting, they also discuss their expectations of students who struggle.

By talking about student expectations, the teachers had opportunities to learn what is reasonable to expect from students at a particular grade, and how those expectations might differ based on the individual students in their classrooms. This aligns with research on professional development that suggests that effective professional development involves talk about where students are and where they should be (Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna engage in such talk as a part of their CLP work. This is one way in which talk about students offered opportunities to learn.

Summary. Combined, talk about student thinking and expectations of students may be examples of the “intense focus on student learning” Vescio et al. (2008) refer to in their literature review when explaining why teacher communities are likely correlated with increased student outcomes. Through this talk, the teachers have an opportunity to develop what Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) refer to as “human capital.” Human capital involves “knowing children and understanding how they learn, understanding the diverse cultural and family circumstances that

your students come from...and having the emotional capabilities to empathize with diverse groups of children” (p. 89). It is one of the aspects of professional capital, and building professional capital is theorized as a way to improve teaching. It appears that both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams are increasing their human capital through their CLP work, therefore building their overall professional capital, or ability to be effective teachers. In addition, while their talk offers some opportunities to learn about students in general, there is significant talk about specific students they teach. This offers teachers opportunities to better “see” their students (Ayers, 1993) and likely results in the teachers being more equipped to meet the needs of individual students. In other words, they have provided themselves opportunities to learn about students.

Content

In addition to talking and potentially learning about students, the teachers in both focal teams talked and had opportunities to learn about content. I define content as what is taught to students. The teachers in this study talked about multiple subject areas, including reading, writing, science, and mathematics. Through their collaborative work, the teachers had opportunities to develop new understandings of what they teach. Prior research on professional development indicates that effective professional development has a content focus (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001). This is one way in which CLP appears to be serving as a form of effective professional development for the teachers in this study.

For the Pilkhurst team, the teachers focused conversation on making sense of their district provided curriculum materials, as previously discussed. One of the key premises of socio-cultural learning theory, which undergirds this study, is that tools (which would include teachers’ manuals), have meaning because humans interact with them to give them meaning (Vygotsky &

Cole, 1978). This is what Miriam and Emeline do with their curriculum materials. They interact with the materials together in order to jointly make meaning out of them. The teachers understand this as getting someone else's perspective, as explained by Miriam, "I think also there's, it's just, sure, I mean you've got the book in front of you, you can read through it and sit down and do it, but you're missing out on somebody else's perspective and ideas." Here, Miriam is expressing the idea that by making sense of curriculum with someone, there are opportunities to talk about the materials and learn not only from the written word but from the other person as well. For example, during an observation, the team planned the final week of a writing unit, which involved students creating a final draft of a piece of writing. During planning, they discussed what this final, polished copy of writing will look like.

Emeline: Okay, so what does Day 2 say?

Miriam: So, day 2, um, re-read and add to writing. So, really, I think we should just have them

Emeline: That's when they choose the story that they want to

Miriam: Mmmhmm.

Emeline: Polish.

Miriam: Choose the story they want to polish up. ((sounds of writing)) (8) And polish is going to mean?

Emeline: Okay.

Miriam: Check (3) capitals ((sounds of writing))

Emeline: Well, and then Day 2 then we have to teach ((sounds of erasing))

Miriam: Actually, you know what we should do instead of check u, for polish? For polish, what we should do, um, re-read story to their writing buddy.

Emeline: Okay. Yeah, that's fine.

Miriam: Read their story to their buddy and see if they want to change or add anything to make it clearer or more interesting.

In this excerpt, Miriam first assumes that “polishing” means editing, or checking capitals, but then changes her thinking and suggests a day to revise, or focus on making the story “clearer or more interesting” before focusing on editing. It is unknown if Miriam would have made this distinction and separated the process of polishing into two days had she not been discussing the plans with Emeline, but it is evident that through their CLP work Miriam and Emeline can develop new understandings of what they teach because they talk about content.

Celia and Anna also engage in talk about content and work to jointly make meaning of what they teach students, although they pull from a variety of resources, not always as concrete as teachers’ manuals. For example, in the following excerpt, the teachers are discussing the “Step Up to Writing” format the school expects teachers and students to use. In this format, students are taught to write with greens (a topic sentence), yellows (reasons, details, or facts), and reds (explains, evidence, and examples). This was the content, or what, students at the school were expected to learn. Celia and Anna had the following conversation in the midst of rehearsing an upcoming lesson:

Anna: So would you have conclusions at the end of all their paragraphs?

Celia: That's what they're supposed to do.

Anna: Really?

Celia: The step up to

Anna: I haven't been doing that...

Celia: But that's supposed to be the format, it's tell the reader what they're going to learn,

Anna: Every paragraph?

Celia: Yeah.

Here Anna is afforded an opportunity to develop a better understanding of a school wide academic expectation of students.

Through their conversations, Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna all talk about what they are going to teach, in each content area they teach in common. By doing so, they are offered opportunities to come to new understandings about a variety of content. Increasing their understanding of content has the potential to increase their ability to effectively meet the needs of their students, as deep content knowledge has been identified as an element of effective teaching (Sigrun & Shulman, 1987; Wilson, Floden, & Ferrini-Mundy, 2001).

Teaching

The third category of learning opportunities that arise for the teachers in this study is opportunities to learn about teaching. The teachers talk about how they will teach their students. In doing so, they deprivatize practice for one another and offer concrete ideas and advice.

Deprivatizing practice. Deprivatized practice, or opportunities for teachers to observe each other's practice, is one of the criteria some researchers use to identify a professional learning community (Copland & Knapp, 2006; Bryk et al., 1999; Louis et al., 1996).

Deprivatized practice includes watching a colleague teach in "real" time or through technology such as video recording. It also includes rendering of classroom events through replays and

rehearsals. This was the way in which the teachers in this study deprivatized practice for one another. Researchers theorize that by deprivatizing practice, teachers are able to learn from one another (Levine & Marcus, 2010). The teachers in both teams deprivatized practice, thereby offering learning opportunities to one another.

This deprivatization of practice sometimes involved talking about the past. For example, Celia gave an example of something she and Anna did often:

So then I could run over to her and say, ‘Oh my god, we did this written response today and it was awesome. Here’s how I structured it. You gotta do it tomorrow.’...Conversely, there were other days where she’d come in and say, ‘Oh, the question... This one was a blowout. But the conversation that was good for my class was X. Try X tomorrow.’

Here Celia described how she and Anna tell one another about the past.

In addition, as discussed in Chapters Five and Six, the teachers talk about the future. This sometimes involved a statement of a plan, such as when Miriam told Emeline, “and then tomorrow I’m really going to have them share and then maybe we’ll talk about which stories seem more interesting and why.” But, sometimes, the teachers engage in more back and forth conversation about how they plan on teaching such as in the following excerpt, where Celia and Anna fully rehearse what they will say to students:

Celia: So, how do you lead in that? How do you say, ‘You guys, we’re going to practice’ I don’t want to call it a commercial.

Anna: Nononono. It’s, ‘So, we everybody, we’ve just talked about the different ways that bandwagon is used. How we can see it in commercials, how it even worked with Ms.

Anna, because she heard this and then she bought herself a Snuggie, how, um, it’s used to

make people buy things, or used to convince people of thinking a certain way. We're going to try this technique with a topic that we all know about....

Celia: So, we, I just want to make sure I get it. Because I'm

Anna: right. So, it's all the bandwagon stuff.

Celia: My turn. My turn to say it now. Cause I like what you said and I want to make sure I got ya.

This is an example of how the Cedar Forest team deprivatizes practice through rehearsals.

Both teams talked about teaching that occurred previously and teaching that would occur in the future. By doing so, they offered themselves and each other opportunities to learn about teaching practice.

Offering concrete advice and ideas. In addition, the talk about teaching in this study sometimes involved offering concrete advice or ideas. These concrete ideas were based on teachers' individual experiences and expertise, as socio-cultural learning theory suggests, the past experiences and history of the teachers influence their behaviors. For example, during one observation, Emeline explained to Miriam how she should use technology to support an upcoming mathematics lesson on geometry. In another observation, she shared how she had students take their writing folders out before going to recess in order to increase the time spent writing after recess. Similarly, Celia often provided advice about classroom management to Anna; whereas Anna told Celia about routines she used to hold students accountable for homework.

In sum, the teachers in this study talk about teaching. By doing so, teachers deprivatize practice and provide one another concrete ideas and advice. Prior research suggests that teachers have opportunities to learn through the deprivatization of practice (Levine & Marcus, 2010),

although the role of concrete advice has not been explored by those investigating the act of collaboration. By talking about teaching, the teachers in this study offered one another opportunities to learn about this aspect of the instructional core which could lead to new teaching strategies.

Summary

The teachers in both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams engage in talk about students, content, and teaching. Although the particulars of their talk differed across teams, it appears that the task of planning lessons together leads to conversations addressing each aspect. These conversations offer opportunities to learn about the key elements of instruction. In a literature review, Wilson and Berne (1999) categorized the professional development research into three categories—opportunities to talk about subject matter, opportunities to talk about students and learning, and opportunities to talk about teaching; yet, little subsequent research has highlighted these categories as imperative to comprehensive professional development. This dissertation picks up the conversation begun by Wilson and Berne by suggesting that certain forms of collaboration may offer opportunities to talk about each category. While more research is necessary to explore the benefits and drawbacks of breadth of talk versus depth of talk, it is possible that forms of collaboration offering opportunities to talk and learn about each aspect of the instructional core may be desirable as forms of effective professional development.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I explored the answers to the second and third research questions guiding this study: What enables learning opportunities to arise when teachers engage in CLP? What kinds of learning opportunities are afforded by engaging in CLP? In doing so, I brought into focus how the teams of teachers in this study engaged in the negotiation of meaning of upcoming

lessons, and what opportunities to talk arose as they did so. Findings suggest that the work of CLP involves using and creating resources for both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams. The process of using and creating resources focuses and gives purpose to the CLP meetings. It is this process that deprivatizes practice and enables learning opportunities to arise. In addition, this study finds that teachers not only have opportunities to talk, but opportunities to talk about the instructional core of teaching. While the teachers engaged in replays, rehearsals, and episodes of pedagogical reasoning, what appears most relevant to this study of CLP and the learning opportunities that arise as teachers engage in it is that teachers had opportunities to learn about each aspect of the instructional core through their talk.

These findings corroborate prior research that suggests the act of collaboration offers teachers opportunities to learn through talk (Horn, 2005, 2007, 2010; Levine & Marcus, 2010), as well as broader research that suggests a relationship between opportunities to talk and teacher learning (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., & Yoon, 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). The teachers in this study collaborated, talked, and had opportunities to learn.

This study adds to prior research by suggesting that resources may affect learning opportunities and that collaboration has the potential to not only engage teachers in talk, but talk about each aspect of the instructional core. Talk about students, content, and teaching each offer learning opportunities, including opportunities to learn about individual students, develop more extensive content knowledge, and learn new teaching strategies.

In addition, the findings of this study offer credence to Wenger's perspective that a CoP engages in the negotiation of meaning through a process of participation and reification. In this case of collaborating teachers, this process appears to involve taking district mandates and other resources and jointly making meaning of those resources. Also offering opportunities for

teachers to change the ways in which they participate in the work of teaching is the process of creating a reified planbook. This study not only supports Wenger's perspective but has implications for future research on teacher collaboration, as is discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Eight: On-going, Long-term Collaboration: Lessons from CLP

The purpose of this dissertation is to explore a particular act of collaboration in order to expand current understandings of the learning opportunities afforded to teachers as they engage in collaborative tasks. Drawing upon research on effective professional development, teacher communities, and teacher collaboration, this descriptive study investigates elementary school teachers involved in Collaborative Lesson Planning (CLP) using Wenger's (1998) Communities of Practice (CoP) perspective. CLP is defined as teachers of the same grade level or content area planning future lessons together across curriculum their school day on an ongoing, often weekly basis, and then implementing the lessons in their own classrooms. It is an example of collaboration with a particular intended focus. Teams selected for this study met criteria designed to identify teams that not only embody the definition of CLP but also demonstrate specific signs of being a highly functional teacher community (Bryk et al., 1999; Kardos & Johnson, 2007; Lee & Smith, 1996).

Findings from this study suggest that teachers who engage in CLP have locally defined practices that guide their work. By conceptualizing teams of teachers engaged in CLP as a Community of Practice (CoP) (Wenger, 1998) that negotiate the meaning of upcoming lessons as they plan together, this study illuminates how using and creating resources enable learning opportunities to arise. Although learning opportunities often occurred as replays, rehearsals, or episodes of pedagogical reasoning (Horn, 2005, 2007), categorizing the opportunities into talk about students, content, and teaching encompasses more of the data. In fact, this study finds that CLP can offer teachers opportunities to learn about each aspect of the instructional core, or the

“essence of the schooling enterprise” (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001, p. 18). These are the key findings of this dissertation.

However, the findings of this study illuminate not only what may happen when teachers engage in CLP, but can also provide insights into teacher collaboration more broadly.

The teachers in this study continually engage in collaboration. They collaborate weekly, and plan to do so for the entirety of their teaching careers. Their collaboration, therefore, is on-going and long-term. Looking across findings, characteristics of on-going, long-term collaboration begin to emerge. In this chapter, I discuss characteristics that apply to both focal teams in this study and add to discussions already begun in the literature on the act of collaboration, teacher communities, and/or professional development. This is followed by a discussion of the limitations and implications of this study.

Characteristics of On-going, Long-Term Collaboration

In Chapter Seven, I discussed the practices common to both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams, while unpacking the learning opportunities created by the teachers as they engaged in their CLP work. Taken together, the common practices and presence of learning opportunities highlight five characteristics of the teams’ on-going, long-term collaboration: self-designed formalization, joint positioning, cultural and structural deprivatization, utilization and creation of resources, and attention to the instructional core. These characteristics were present in both focal teams, connect to prior research, and may be indicative of elements of collaboration more broadly.

Self-designed Formalization

Prior research on teacher communities indicates a need for teachers to feel as if they have chosen to engage in collaboration, rather than as if they have been told to do so (Hargreaves,

1994). Hargreaves’s research also suggests that collaboration is most effective when it is spontaneous, voluntary, and not necessarily distinct in time and space. However, this dissertation suggests a hybridization of Hargreaves’s collaborative culture and contrived collegiality (See Table 4). This study finds that teachers who engage in CLP have a self-designed formalization that supports their engagement in collaboration. The teachers formalize their work together and create their own protocols and structures that allow them to maintain their mutual engagement over time. Just as Hargreaves describes both collaborative cultures and contrived collegiality, below I articulate the features of the self-designed formalization illuminated in this study.

Table 4. *Comparison of Hargreaves’s research and this dissertation*

Collaborative Culture (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 192-193)	Self-Designed Formalization (this dissertation)	Contrived Collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994, p. 195-196)
Spontaneous	Intentional	Administratively regulated
Voluntary	Self-imposed	Compulsory
Development-oriented (developing something together)	Instruction-oriented	Implementation-oriented (implementing a mandate from above)
Pervasive across time and space	Pervasive and distinct	Fixed in time and space
Unpredictable	Set outcomes	Predictable

Intentional. Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna all intentionally chose to engage in collaborative work. CLP was a part of the job when both Emeline and Anna joined their respective schools. Miriam and Celia previously experienced collaboration and wanted to

continue to engage in such work. In terms of administration, the teachers all reported that their principal was supportive, but that not everyone in the school collaborated in the way they did. Hence, their collaborative work was not regulated by the administration, but was experienced as supported and valued. The work was neither spontaneous, nor administratively regulated. It was something the teachers intentionally decided to engage in.

Self-imposed. The teachers did not feel as if their work together was mandated from above. The Pilkhurst teachers reported that they “don’t have a lot of top down decisions.” Likewise, although the Cedar Forest team described their principal as “really demanding and rigorous,” she did not require them to meet on Saturdays.

However, both teams viewed their CLP work as a regular part of their job, which they felt required to engage in. “We make a commitment,” Miriam and Emeline said. Celia also used this verb, saying that they “commit to these multi-hour sessions every Saturday.” For both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams, the work of CLP was neither compulsory nor purely voluntary—it was a self-imposed commitment.

Instruction-oriented. Hargreaves created a distinction between “development-oriented” and “implementation-oriented” but this research suggests a different orientation. The teachers in this study engaged in collaborative work that was instruction-oriented and by doing so, they offered one another opportunities to learn. As described in Chapters Five and Six, the teams each position themselves in a particular manner, but the manner differs between the teams. The Pilkhurst teachers position themselves as mediators and behave as if their job is to determine how to implement the curriculum materials provided by their district. The Cedar Forest teachers position themselves as the experts and behave as if their job is to develop meaningful and

engaging lessons. The commonality between the teams is that they are both focused on the instruction that will occur in their classrooms.

Pervasive and distinct. For both focal teams in this study, the work of CLP takes place during CLP meetings and across the teachers' school day. Both teams reported frequent interactions; these interactions outside of CLP meetings were observed before and after interviews, as well. For both teams, the classrooms were adjacent and teachers were in and out of one another's classrooms multiple times a day. Stephanie and Flinker, student teachers from each team recognized this, saying respectively, "They dialogue—honestly—all day. Like, it's pretty constant. I mean in the morning the door is always open," and "I mean they were always talking. They talked before school, they talked after school." Yet, the teams also establish a distinct time to sit and meet, in a particular place (Miriam's classroom/Celia's home). Here, the teachers fulfill Hargreaves's (1994) descriptions of both collaborative cultures and contrived collegiality. They have a pervasive collaborative culture but also have distinct time and space set aside for their collaborative work.

Set outcomes. Based on this study, one outcome of CLP is a fully planned week, indicated by a plan book that has been filled out. The way in which the teachers go about reaching this outcome involves choosing a subject, talking about what will happen during the upcoming week in that subject, writing down what is talked about, and then moving onto another subject, although the specifics of what was talked about differed during each meeting. The extent to which teachers talk about details, engage in tangents, and rely on resources as they work toward this outcome differed between the teams in this study, but both teams had predictable norms and protocols through which they worked. For both teams, the outcome of

CLP was predictable, but there is no sense of being controlled as is the case in Hargreaves' contrived collegiality.

Summary. The work of the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams indicate that there may be a hybrid between the collaborative culture and contrived collegiality prevalent in current research on teacher communities. The teachers in this study engage in a culture that involves aspects of each. They have a self-designed formalization. Their work is neither purely formal nor purely informal. A focus on how teachers formalize their own collaborative efforts, as Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna did may support those interested in teacher professional development in coming to a deeper understanding of how teacher collaboration can be developed and maintained in a manner that results in teacher learning.

Joint Positioning

An unexpected finding of this study is that the teachers in both teams had particular ways in which they positioned themselves, as a collective, in relation to the work of teaching. The Pilkhurst teachers positioned themselves as mediators, while the Cedar Forest teachers positioned themselves as experts. This positioning extends current thinking about the cultural norms needed within teacher communities by suggesting a norm not previously explored. Joint positioning could be seen a “human and social resource” (Louis et al., 1996) that may be necessary for a teacher community that offers opportunities to learn.

However, the theoretical framework underlying this research highlights that this feature of the community may or may not be features of each individual teacher. It is unknown whether the teachers entered their collaborative efforts with similar positioning or whether they would maintain the same positioning if working in a different community. It seems plausible that this positioning was an outgrowth of the CoP, rather than a quality possessed individually. For

example, as a novice teacher, it is unlikely that Anna would have held herself as an expert and been as willing to deviate from the district frameworks without her collaborative work. In addition, when speaking of her work with her former teaching partner, Celia gave the impression that they tied their work to the data much more explicitly than she and Anna do—possibly positioning themselves as interpreters and responders to data. While this study cannot make such a claim, the impression Celia provided during interviews supports the idea that joint positioning is a result of the dynamic interplay between individuals and the community and should be understood as such, rather than something each teacher must individually possess in order for collaboration to be functional.

In addition to extending the cultural norms previously explored in teacher community research, this finding of joint positioning within a team adds nuance to the conception that teachers need to engage in conflict in order to meaningfully collaborate. The teachers in both Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest did not act as if they agreed (Grossman et al., 2001) nor did they suppress conflict (Achinstein, 2002). They were willing to agree to disagree on issues such as what art project to do for an upcoming fund raiser or what passage to use to discuss strategies for reading non-fiction, but generally agreed on the big ideas of what to teach and how to teach it. It is likely that this agreement is not indication of an immature teacher community, but rather an outcome of the joint positioning created by their work together. This calls into question what is considered conflict within a teacher community and is worth further investigation.

Overall, the work of the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams suggests that teachers engaged in well-functioning collaborative activity position themselves in particular ways that affect how they collectively interact with one another and their resources. This may be a cultural norm necessary, either as a precursor or an outcome of collaborative work.

Cultural and Structural Deprivatization

Another practice that was common across focal teams was an engagement in talk about what has and will happen in their classrooms. In other words, the teachers deprivatized their practice for one another, often, although not always, through replays and rehearsals. Replays and rehearsals are thought to provide teachers opportunities to learn.

However, replays and rehearsals were not found evenly across the data. Cedar Forest engaged in significantly more renderings of classroom events that offered opportunities to learn compared to Pilkhurst. In addition, the extent to which Miriam and Emeline's conversations during CLP meetings included replays and rehearsals varied depending on timing of the meeting as well as the perceived complexities within the content being discussed. This finding suggests that just as there are cultural and structural norms necessary for teacher communities to serve as a form of professional development (Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002), there are cultural and structural needs for collaboration that deprivatizes practice through replays and rehearsals.

Teachers must believe that replays and rehearsals are integral to their work, rather than "sidelines." Miriam and Emeline did not possess this cultural norm as a team; thus, rendering of classrooms events were not consistently present during their meetings. In contrast, Celia and Anna engaged in replays and rehearsals throughout their meetings. In particular, the Cedar Forest team appeared to be truly visualizing the future, including what they would say, how students would respond, and how they would respond to students, as described in Chapter Six of this dissertation. Collaboration offers space for replays and rehearsals, but without valuing this talk, a team may resist engaging in it, just as Miriam and Emeline did during some of the CLP meetings observed.

Time is a structural factor that appears to be necessary for collaboration that involves replays and rehearsals. Once again, when Miriam and Emeline held CLP meetings in the morning and tried to condense their work into thirty or forty minutes, there were significantly less rendering of classroom events. It is likely that the reduced number of replays and rehearsals for the Pilkhurst team is a result of both not valuing such talk, as well as not having the time to engage in it. In other words, the Pilkhurst team lacked both cultural and structural factors that appear to be necessary for deprivatization of practice during collaboration.

Prior research on the act of collaboration found that discourse differs across teams of teachers (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2002, 2003). This dissertation corroborates this research and suggests a new potential rationale for these differences. In the case of two teams of teachers engaged in CLP, it appears that the cultural norm of valuing deprivatization of practice as well as the structural resource of time influences the extent to which collaboration provides opportunities to learn. Valuing deprivatization and having time to engage in talk may be necessary for on-going, long-term collaboration.

Utilization and Creation of Resources

As described in depth in Chapter Seven, this study finds that the process of using and creating resources enables learning opportunities to arise. For both teams of teachers, it was this process that focused and anchored their work. Concrete objects, or tools, facilitated the deprivatization of practice that took place in both teams. The conceptual framework guiding this study highlights reifications, or concrete “things” and the teachers themselves frequently discussed the importance of resources, such as teacher’s manuals or resources and their planbook. This finding suggests that using and creating resources may be an additional element of collaborative activity that can be sustained over time and offer opportunities to learn.

Prior research on the act of collaboration found differences in learning opportunities through collaboration based on discourse, structure, and intended focus (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2002, 2003). This dissertation adds to that research the possibility that resources, or tools, also influence the extent to which collaboration offers learning opportunities. For example, the Pilkhurst team talks differently depending on the resources they use, as Stephanie observed:

Math is an area of the curriculum that's so well planned out, and rarely are we having to adjust things in math, and so math is one that just [*finger snap*]. We usually do math first. 'Let's write down 13-1, 13-2, 13-3. Done with math.' Writing is one that we will adjust more. We usually go to writing after math. And that's when there's a little bit more like, 'Oh yeah, I remember that from last year. Here's what I heard (another teacher) tried. (That teacher) taught second grade last year.' Sometimes we'll even get out (that teacher's) plans, to look at what she did. And so then there's kind of the dialogue around writing....And then usually, if there's time, they'll jump to science. And science is probably the most unorganized—a little bit chaotic—of the ones, because it's the one that I think they know the least well. They're the least knowledgeable about that curriculum.

In other words, the extent to which they talk about a subject area is related to the resources available to them.

In addition to the utilization of resources, this study found that the creation of resources was an important element in the work of CLP for the focal teams. Filling out planbooks was an intended focus of the meeting. Opening or closing planbooks indicated the beginning or ending

of a meeting, and completing the grid for the following week was often a marker that the CLP meeting was successful.

Prior research has found that teachers cannot simply be told to go collaborate (Supovitz, 2002). Supovitz's research concluded that teachers need, "organizational structures, cultures of instructional exploration, and ongoing professional learning opportunities to support sustained inquiries into improving teaching and learning" (p. 1591). While this dissertation does not refute this finding, it also suggests a much simpler additional need—concrete objects to ground the work. Findings from this dissertation suggest that teachers may need tools to engage with and/or create in order to participate in and maintain collaborative activity that offers opportunities to learn.

Attention to the Instructional Core

Another characteristic of the work of CLP for both the Pilkhurst and Cedar Forest teams that contributes to prior research on teacher learning and offers insight into what may be an element of effective collaboration is the finding that the teachers talked about each aspect of the instructional core. As described in Chapter Seven, for both teams, talk about students, content, and teaching was prevalent and offered opportunities to learn. Teachers had opportunities to learn about their individual students; possibly allowing them to "see" their students better, as Ayers (1993) suggests teacher ought to do. The teachers also had opportunities to learn about the content of what they would be teaching, possibly allowing them to develop their own content knowledge, an element found to be important factor in effective teaching (Sigrun & Shulman, 1987; Wilson et al., 2001). Finally, the teachers had opportunities to learn about the teaching strategies utilized or imagined by their teammate, as well as the rationale or beliefs underlying pedagogical decisions. This aligns with research suggesting the act of collaboration offers

teachers opportunities to deprivatize practice (Levine & Marcus, 2010) and engage in rendering of classrooms events and episodes of pedagogical reasoning (Horn, 2005, 2007).

An important aspect of this finding is that teachers talked about students, content, *and* teaching. Prior research suggests that effective professional development addresses one of these aspects, but research to date has not focused attention on the existence of talk about *each* aspect. This study suggests that such attention may be warranted because some acts of collaboration and some forms of professional development may offer more of a balance of these three aspects than others.

Summary

These five characteristics (self-designed formalization, joint positioning, cultural and structural deprivatization, utilization and creation of resources, and attention to the instructional core) were present in both focal teams. They connect to prior research, either corroborating or extending previous findings. For those interested in giving teachers meaningful opportunities to learn through collaboration, these characteristics are worth further investigation, as they were apparent in the work of two teams of teachers engaged in on-going, long-term collaboration and are likely factors that affect the extent to which collaboration can serve as a form of professional development for teachers.

Limitations of the Study

As is the case with all research, this study has limitations which impact the ways in which the claims and findings of this study can be understood. These limitations relate to the size, context, focus, and scope of the study. Five teams were included in the study, only two of which were investigated in depth. While the goal of this research is to generalize to theory about

teacher collaboration and not the entire population of collaborating teachers, some claims based on only two teams may be idiosyncratic.

In addition, all of the teams in this study consisted of two teachers. This may be due to CLP occurring more frequently in small schools or among teams of only two teachers, and therefore may be a finding of the study; but this may be a coincidence. It is possible that collaboration between larger numbers of people follows completely different patterns and practices than collaboration between two people. However, the small nature of this study allows for in-depth understanding of the individuals and the practices that can be a part of collaborative activity.

This study investigates two teams of teachers working in different schools, districts, and grade levels. The context within which each team functioned varied significantly. While teachers were asked about their context and information about context was gathered during observations and analysis, the role of context is primarily based on self-reports during one particular school year. The two focal teams represent how teachers in different contexts engage in CLP, but the lack of ability to compare teams within the same context is a limitation of the study.

This study focuses on the nature of the work of CLP and the learning opportunities that arise as teachers engage in it. Being a descriptive study, there was a strong reliance on interview data, although steps were taken to corroborate interview data with observations and documents. In addition, this study does not investigate what was learned or how the learning affects teaching practice or student outcomes. Although anecdotes from the participants suggest that participating in CLP impacts their teaching and student learning, this was not the focus of the study and therefore claims about this cannot be made. By looking at one connection within the

theory of action underlying professional development, the study seeks to add new knowledge to the understanding of how collaboration serves as a form of professional development but on its own it does not demonstrate the connection.

Finally, this study involved observations spread out over the course of a school year, but the teachers engaged in the study collaborated daily and participated in CLP meetings weekly. This resulted in a significant amount of shared repertoire and common understandings to which I was not always privy. While I worked to identify each team's shared repertoire and the moments where there was a common understanding amongst team members, the extensive communications and collaboration I did not witness limited my ability to interpret all of the learning opportunities that arose for the team members.

Continuing the Work

There are several ways this research study can be continued, by both researchers and practitioners. In this section, I discuss the implications of this dissertation for various constituents concerned with issues of teacher learning.

Implications for Research

This study grew out of a need to better understand the relationship between teacher collaboration and professional development, defined as activities offering teachers opportunities to improve their performance. As described in Chapter Two, prior to this study, research found that when teachers engage in the act of collaboration, the extent to which this activity offered opportunities to learn differed in relation to the discourse the collaborating teachers participated in, the structure of the collaborative meetings, and the intended focus of those meetings (Horn & Little, 2010; Horn, 2005, 2007; Levine & Marcus, 2010; Little, 2002, 2003). In addition, research on teacher communities more generally found connections between working in a

community and increased motivation to learn, greater willingness to change teaching practice, and improved student outcomes (Bryk et al., 1999; DuFour & Eaker, 1998; Johnson, 2003; Lee & Smith, 1996; Louis et al., 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2001; Rosenholtz, 1989; Shachar & Shmuelevitz, 1997; Vescio et al., 2008; Warren & Payne, 1997). This body of research also found that structures and cultural norms are necessary for teacher communities to function well (Achinstein, 2002; Grossman et al., 2001; Louis et al., 1996; Supovitz, 2002). This focus on teachers working together as a potential form of professional development grew out of research suggesting that effective professional development is ongoing, job embedded, and gives teachers opportunities to talk (Desimone, 2009; Garet et al., 2001; Hawley & Valli, 1999; Wilson & Berne, 1999). The study presented in this dissertation contributes to this literature in several ways and offers implications for future research.

First, this dissertation suggests that CLP is a real phenomenon worth further exploration. Although collaborative planning is a part of teacher communities, lesson study (Lewis, Perry, & Murata, 2006; Lewis, Perry, Hurd & O'Connell, 2006; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Wiburg & Brown, 2007), and other forms of collaboration, CLP is a term I developed and explored in this dissertation. I found it to be neither rare nor common in elementary schools. The teams of teachers who participated in this study, the two focal teams in particular, demonstrate that CLP is a phenomenon worth researching. It appears that there are teachers who teach the same grade level or content area that plan future lessons together across curricular areas on an on-going basis, and then implement the collaboratively planned lessons in their own classrooms, and in doing so not only offer one another opportunities to learn but experience emotional outcomes likely to ward off feelings of burn-out and increase motivation to learn. The teachers in this study expressed great passion for the work of CLP and its benefits. In addition, CLP offers

insights into the act of collaboration, participating in a teacher community, and experiencing professional development. CLP ought to be studied further.

Second, this study corroborates research that teachers in different teams talk differently, offering varying opportunities to learn and suggests contributing factors such as the way in which the teachers position themselves, the resources provided to them by their school district, and the extent to which they believe deprivatization is integral to their work. Each of these factors is worth further exploration. Possible future research questions are: What are the various ways teachers in well-functioning communities position themselves? What supports and/or constrains a teacher's or teacher community's positioning? How do teachers utilize resources to support their collaborative work? Can student work be incorporated into the work of CLP, as another resource teachers use as a part of their planning? This study suggests resources influence the talk of collaborating teaching, offering different opportunities to learn based on resources used. However, because the two focal teams were provided vastly different resources by their school districts, this finding deserves greater attention.

Questions around the value teachers place on deprivatizing practice through the rendering of classroom events could be particularly valuable to the field of teacher learning. Miriam and Emeline believed replays and rehearsals to be somewhat superfluous to the act of planning, whereas Celia and Anna believed them to be integral. This study did not explore change over time, nor did it attempt to instruct the teachers about the benefits of replays and rehearsals. But, what would happen if Miriam and Emeline participated in a professional development opportunity that explained to them ways in which they could benefit even more from one another. While this dissertation suggests that teachers value renderings of classroom events in different ways, research exploring how teachers come to value such an activity would increase

knowledge of the relationship between collaboration and teacher learning. In other words, this study suggests a future line of research around how teachers understand the role of replays and rehearsals.

Another contribution of this study is the way in which it connects research suggesting the need for structural and cultural norms within teacher communities with the research suggesting the need for teachers to feel empowered to engage in collaboration on their own. This study found that CLP results in a self-designed formalization where teachers create their own structures, protocols, and routines that support their learning. Their work is neither happenstance nor something to circumvent. This construct of self-designed formalization is worth further research. What supports teachers to create their own structures that enable learning opportunities to arise? How do larger contextual factors influence how teachers create their own formalized collaborative settings? These are questions illuminated by this study that may offer additional insights into how collaboration can be collaborative but not contrived.

Finally, this study found that CLP offers teachers opportunities to learn about each aspect of the instructional core. While the conceptual framework guiding this study suggested that teachers would engage in talk that offers opportunities to learn, findings highlight how the talk involved students, contents, and teaching. If all three aspects are central to what happens in a classroom, then opportunities to learn about each can be assumed to be desirable. Perhaps this is a way to frame research on teacher collaboration—to what extent and how does a particular collaborative act offer opportunities to learn about each aspect of the instructional core? It is worth examining various acts of collaboration in regards to the instructional core to learn more about the relationships between collaboration, the instructional core, and professional development.

In addition to corroborating or expanding prior research on teacher collaboration, teacher communities, and professional development, this study also has implications for theoretical and conceptual frameworks used in future research on collaboration. This study was grounded in socio-cultural learning theory and drew on particular constructs from Wenger's CoP perspective. Both were appropriate and useful. In particular, Wenger's construct of reification surfaced as a key element in the work of collaboration for the teams in this study. The teachers in the teams engaged in the process of reification and participated in a combination of using and creating reified items. This finding suggests theories or perspectives that foreground tools and offer a way to understand how they are utilized by those engaged in collaboration may be particularly beneficial.

One last implication for research that arises out of this study is the need to further investigate the role of anticipating student response as a part of teachers' collaborative work. Investigating the rendering of classroom events and episodes of pedagogical reasoning are common among those looking within teacher communities. However, this study surfaced another category of talk that appears to offer opportunities to learn—anticipating student response. This category of talk is worth further exploration.

Implications for Practitioners

While this study is not meant to generalize to the population of teachers, there are ways in which teachers and administrators can utilize the findings of this study to support collaboration within schools.

First, being a qualitative study, this dissertation offers "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of teachers engaged in collaborative work. It is commonly accepted that stories of "real" teachers often resonate with teachers. The stories of Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna can be

shared with teachers and schools considering or working to improve their engagement in CLP, collaboration, or teachers communities more broadly.

In addition, the common practices illuminated by this study offer a framework for what the work of CLP can entail. Frameworks often assist individuals in explaining a phenomenon to others and/or developing metacognition around one's own work. The common practices, while requiring more research to ensure it is not a result of coincidental data, may be helpful to practitioners.

Finally, the finding that learning opportunities arose as a result of using and creating resources has implications for those supporting or engaging in the act of collaboration. It appears that collaborative activity is enhanced, and may even require, a process of using and/or creating concrete objects, or tools. During the course of the study, a colleague shared a story of an administrator who did not allow teachers to bring their planbooks to collaborative meetings, for the meetings were not intended to plan, but rather to talk. Results from this study suggest that not only can both occur at the same time, but having something to physically collaborate around and co-construct may be what anchors conversation and allows meaningful learning opportunities to arise through discussion.

The teachers in this study all believed themselves to be a part of a collaborative school where they collaborated in a more intense way than many of their colleagues. They all set aside time to plan together with their grade level partner. They brought their planbook and discussed what would happen in their classroom during the upcoming week. Their work together afforded them ample opportunities to learn and they believed this work supported them as teachers. This dissertation demonstrates that CLP is a phenomenon teachers can and do engage in and offers

ways to think about the what, how, and why of the phenomenon. This is information teachers and administrators interested in collaboration can utilize in a variety of ways.

Final Thoughts

CLP is a particular act of collaboration that some teachers engage in. This study examined teams of teachers engaged in this specific act and found practices that inform current knowledge of teacher learning. This study also found not only opportunities to talk, but more specifically, opportunities to talk about each aspect of the instructional core. Finally, the study found that it was the process of using and creating resources that enabled the teachers to engage in conversations that offered opportunities to learn.

Over the past twenty years, researchers and practitioners have been seeking to understand how teachers continue to learn as they participate in the work of teaching. Many have looked towards teacher communities, where teachers collaborate with one another, as a way to support teacher learning. However, many have not been satisfied with the current understanding of how collaboration leads to teacher learning and improved student outcomes.

I hope this study can aid in the development of teachers and schools where collaboration is a normative part of teaching, as well as a body of research that offers explanations as to how and why collaboration can support school improvement. This study offers a glimpse of what collaboration where teachers learn from one another can look like. I hope others can learn from the insights, dedication, and enthusiasm of Miriam, Emeline, Celia, and Anna.

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Appendix A

Initial Interview Codes

Revised 10/29/2012

*=a code of importance, based on my conceptual framework

Code Name	Definition	May include:	Examples
*mutual engagement	Discussion of what the team does or does not do (or has or has not done, in the past) as a part of their collaborative work (both during CLP meetings and at other times)	how they <i>maintain</i> their relationships with one another what they each <i>contribute practices</i> they engage in	“I feel like when we plan together its I’m able to erase all of the clutter in my head. And if she doesn’t get what I’m talking about she says, “Well I don’t, what do you mean?”
personal info	Personal information about a participant	how long they’ve been teaching age race	“So, I’ve been here for 13 years.”
other collaboration	Talk about other collaborative efforts, involving people other than those in the current team	former partners other teams broader collaborative groups (RTI, etc.) other collaborative groups, not including participants	“With my other partner, like I was telling you earlier, we planned after school. So we never did a weekend thing. And I would say, on average, we were here four days a week after school ‘til about 6:30, on average.”
*joint enterprise	Discussion of how the team carries out the practices that they are currently engaged in	<i>routines</i> , structures, protocols <i>norms</i> things participants feel <i>accountable</i> to things that are <i>influenced</i> by forces outside of the team	“So I’m like I think that’s a part of the job description is you’ve got to be able to say, “Okay, bring it to me. What can you say? What can I add? And nobody pushes on us more than our principal this year.”

<i>student teacher</i>	Any mention of student teachers or mentoring student teachers	what has been done with student teachers how student teachers influence meetings	“Celia last year had a student teacher and the first thing Celia did was get her in a small group and have her reteach something.”
<i>my influence</i>	Places where my presence has effected something	times when I am mentioned by participants evidence that they are thinking about something I said (other than interview questions)	“Well, I was just telling her how we’re doing that read aloud book and showing them the Audubon pictures. And she was saying, you could have the kids look at one of the pictures and write a prompt because they are finding all this symbolism in the birds like Oh, I think that represents such and such.”
<i>*shared repertoire</i>	Discussion of ways of doing things or ways of talking that has become part of the team’s practice	<i>replays</i> of things they have said to one another as part of their collaborative work <i>replays</i> of things they have done as part of their collaborative work <i>examples</i> of the types of things they say to one another	“It’s being able to say, ‘So we get that they have to do all this stuff. What are they going to do with it? How are we going to synthesize it? We get that they’re learning all this math. What’s the end game going to look like? How are they going to be assessed?’”
<i>non-collaboration experiences</i>	Discussion of professional experiences, not directly related to the team’s collaborative work	past experiences as teachers <i>things happening in the school</i> not related to the work of collaboration discussion of <i>school culture</i> discussion of educational issues	“We’re asked to do so much. And I’m sure you hear that from every teacher. But it’s like here’s one more thing. Can you go to this meeting? Can you be the lead teacher?”
<i>fun quotes</i>	Things said that make me laugh 😊	unusual comments funny statements	“I think it’s a foofier version of myself! It creates a foofier version of myself.”

Appendix B

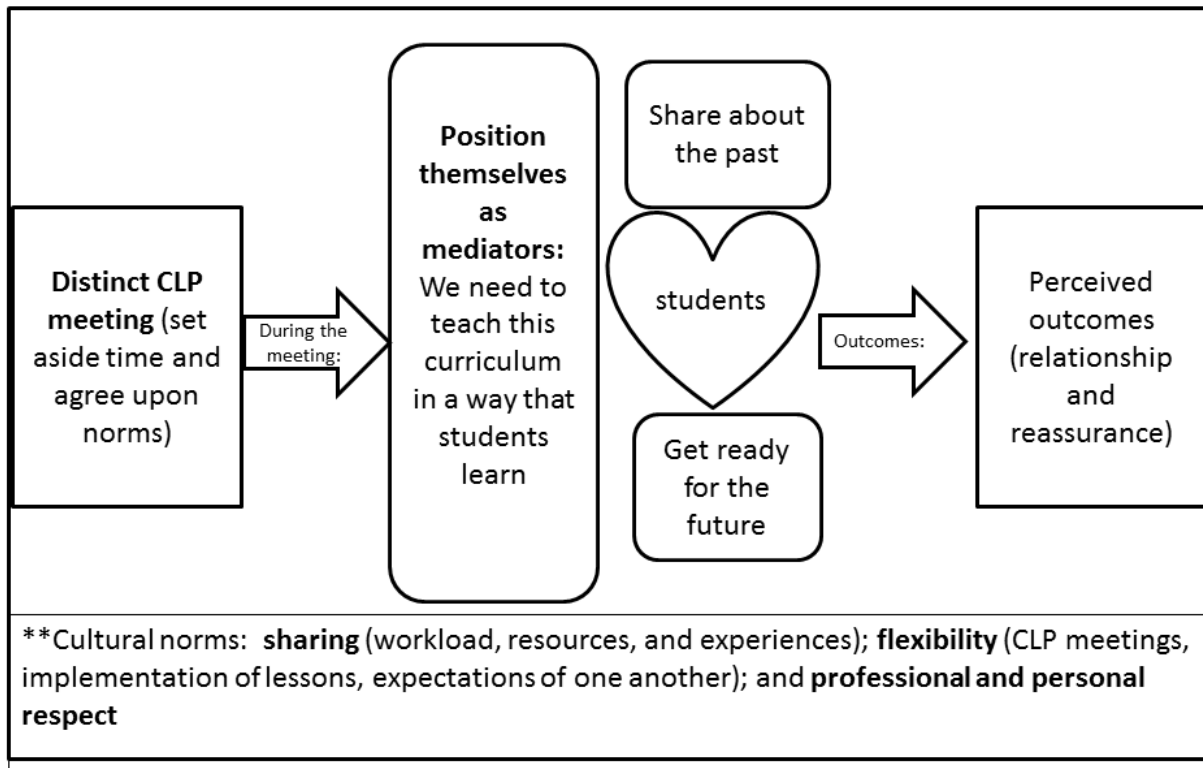
Initial Observation Codes

Code Name	Definition	May include:
<i>reified meeting</i>	Instances where a distinction is made between meeting time and non-meeting time	Comments made in field notes about this Comments made about being done meeting
<i>outside interactions</i>	Comments indicating that interactions will take place outside of the meeting	Discussion of touching base later Moments where stories are referenced or retold
<i>mandated curriculum</i>	Instances where they are interacting with mandated curriculum, assessments, etc.	Looking at teachers' manuals Talking about frameworks Moments where tests influence their work <i>Large chunks of conversations</i>
<i>co-construction of ideas</i>	Instances where teachers are discussing their ideas about an upcoming lesson with one another	<i>Most of transcripts</i> (Does not include moments where teachers are merely "plugging in" or stating what they will teach) Rehearsals/role plays that are discussed Back and forth conversation on the same topic
<i>talk about students</i>	Instances where teachers are discussing individual students OR their students, this year in general	Talk about student behavior Talk about students struggling Talk about how to meet their students' needs Anticipating their students responses Talking about students' histories
<i>reflections</i>	Instances where teachers are discussing things that have already happened in their classrooms (replays)	Things happened in recent past Things happened last year Discussion of how lessons went
<i>different implementation</i>	Instances where it is clear that a lesson was done or will be done different in each classroom	Agreeing to disagree Sharing how a lesson went that the other teacher will soon teach Discussion of how a lesson was implemented differently than planned
<i>professional relationship</i>	Instances where the team's relationship is discussed or made apparent	Comments about liking to work together Comments about liking one another Comments about emotions or perceived benefits of collaboration Commentary about their relationship

<i>positive attitude</i>	Comments about school, principal, or teaching in general that indicate an attitude or emotion towards these things	Talk about the principal Talk about the school as a whole Talk about teaching or education (in general) Talk about politics related to field Commentary about their work
<i>feeling prepared</i>	Comments about feeling prepared, ready to teach, etc.	Comments about being good with something Commentary about feelings Places where discussion is driven by an explicit need to be more prepared
<i>vision of good teaching</i>	Comments made indicating that teachers value particular ways of doing things	Comments about what we are “supposed” to do Pushing one another to try new practice

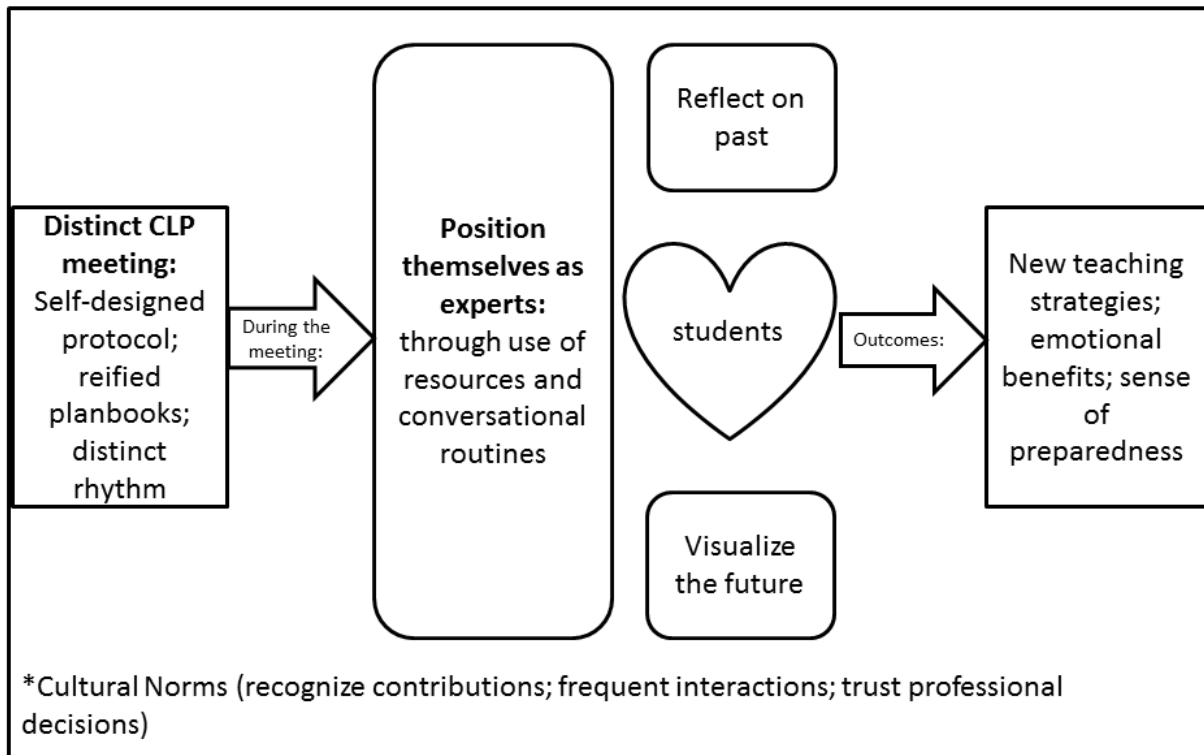
Appendix C

Work of CLP for Pilkhurst team



Appendix D

Work of CLP for Cedar Forest team



Appendix E

Common Practices Between Cedar Forest and Pilkhurst Teams

