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Peer Observation and Feedback as a Professional Development Structure

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Peer Observation and Feedback as a Professional Development Structure

by

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Dedication

In dedication to my husband Scott. Thank you for your constantly helping me balance the life we've created together to include the time necessary for writing. You make it all doable with your love and support. And to our children, Emily, Elsie, and Eli, thank you for your encouragement and love.

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Abstract

In American schools, teachers seldomly have time to see each other teach resulting in missed opportunities to learn and grow from one another. Participants engaged in peer observation and feedback in order to determine the effectiveness of this professional development structure on practitioner growth, teacher efficacy, and overall teacher satisfaction. Data was collected from multiple sources that indicated several themes of growth resulting from the peer observation and feedback cycles including an increase in flexibility and willingness to have others in classrooms, new practitioner thinking and application to classroom practice, and the expansion of influence on highly effective teachers on colleagues in other grade levels. The conclusion of the study indicates that continued professional development that includes peer observation and feedback will expand these results and grow practitioners throughout the school setting.

Table of Contents

Dedication.....	iii
Acknowledgements.....	iv
Abstract.....	v
List of Tables	ix
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Rationale.....	2
Problem of Practice.....	4
Theoretical Framework	7
Research Questions.....	9
Positionality	11
Research Design.....	12
Significance of the Study.....	14
Limitations of the Study.....	16
Glossary of Terms.....	17
Chapter 2: Review of Literature	19
Literature Review Methodology	21
Theoretical Framework	21
Sociocultural Learning Theory.....	21
Systems Thinking.....	25
Growth Mindset.....	28

Lesson Study	31
Practitioner Inquiry	32
Historical Perspective.....	33
Social Justice	37
Teacher Self-efficacy	37
Teacher Recruitment and Retainment	38
Related Research	40
Summary.....	43
Chapter 3: Overview of the Study	45
Action Research.....	47
Intervention	49
Participants	52
Data Collection.....	55
Data Analysis	58
Summary.....	59
Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data	61
Data Collection.....	61
Analysis by Research Question	76
Summary.....	78
Chapter 5: Findings.....	79
Overview of the Study	79
Explanations of Surveys and Unstructured Interviews	80
Results Related to Existing Literature	87

Practice Recommendations	93
Limitations and Suggestions	96
Recommendations for Future Research	97
Summary.....	100
References	101

List of Tables

Table 3.1 Timeframe and Activity of Cycles	52
Table 4.1 Teacher Responses to Collective Belief Survey Items	64
Table 4.2 Growth Analysis Table of Collective Belief Survey	65
Table 4.3 Attitude and Perception Survey Items.....	67
Table 4.4 Growth Analysis Table of Attitudes and Perceptions Survey	69

Chapter 1: Introduction

Teaching is not a static profession. Teachers grow and change as beliefs strengthen and practice follows. Teachers adapt to new policies and initiatives by working to align mandated actions to belief systems. When teachers have time to talk to one another about their craft, actions better align to these beliefs (Mills & Jennings, 2001). It is within these conversations around planning and lessons that teachers grow their craft. When teachers have time to watch each other teach and have conversations to give valuable feedback, practices shift, instruction improves, and learning deepens.

Planning periods are often not common and seldom align with those of other teachers in the building, and even when they do, planning periods are taken up with parent meetings, Individual Education Plan (IEPs) meetings, 504 meetings, data team cycle meetings, team planning meetings, Response to Intervention meetings, and the list goes on. This takes more time away from teachers talking with one another about practice. In addition to the lack of time to plan or discuss ideas with each other, teachers seldom can observe one another which continues what has been referred to as the “egg-crate” nature in schools, in that teachers exist in silos in the United States (Johnson, 2006).

Teachers exist in isolation in American schools because of many complex facets, and there are many potential barriers that keep peer observations and

feedback from being a part of a school's professional development norm. The logistics alone make it nearly impossible. The duties that extend beyond the classroom leave little to no time for teachers to engage in curricular and collegial conversations with one another. There are very few teachers who have time to engage in the high-quality conversations that result in alignment of belief and practice. These conversations have the potential to emerge through teachers spending time observing each other teach and engaging in reflective feedback processes. Sometimes teachers go years without ever being observed and getting quality feedback from peers. However, Asib & Marmanto (2018) cite Zacharias (2012), Caker (2010), Rose (2007), and Weston (2005) to show the importance of peer observation and feedback as a powerful component of healthy professional development, and that peer observation and feedback lends itself to teacher reflection.

Rationale

Because of this research, it is of great interest to better understand how the implementation of peer observation and feedback within a professional community may address these concerns. Herr and Anderson (2015) state that action research “generates knowledge that can be fed back into the setting” (p. 4). The setting for this problem of practice is in an elementary school whose professional development plan does not currently include practitioner inquiry or structures that support peer observation and feedback. The information drawn from this study directly impacts not only teachers and school leaders within my building, but potentially teachers and school leaders in other buildings like mine.

The potential to enhance a professional development system could greatly affect the very teachers in the study, and the outcome could affect the instruction children receive.

Action research is an appropriate approach for this research because of the position of the learner in the center of the research (Herr & Anderson, 2015). The results from the data will be used to enhance the experience and growth of the researcher by showing ways to grow professional development strategies that include teacher observation and feedback structures and practitioner inquiry in effort to provide necessary space for teachers to engage in curricular conversations. The context from which this study is conducted is not content or grade specific; rather, can be transferred to other school levels and is appropriate for all content areas. Therefore, the resulting impact on professional development has the potential to be far-reaching in scope.

Others benefitting from this research include those concerned with teacher retention. Teachers are no longer entering into the workforce wanting to fit into “egg-crate” schools. Teachers want to collaborate with each other, and creating the space to do so supports all teachers, but especially beginning teachers as they navigate their way through the entry point of their teaching career (Johnson, 2006). Research that promotes peer observation and feedback structures that support practitioner inquiry and looks for legitimate ways for it to fit into a school context can potentially have an impact on teacher efficacy and retention (Asib & Marmanto, 2018).

The problem of practice comes from the researcher, and the researcher can collaborate with others in the center of the problem. Because this action research looks to increase teachers' opening their doors to one another, and because this is a sensitive area for teachers, it was important to include narrative research that communicates the emotion and sensitivity of the subject. This was done through the inclusion of interviews. Action research makes space for this research, and unlike traditional research, is able to describe and analyze the school setting appropriately (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Problem of Practice

In my school, trying to find time to watch each other teach is very difficult. The schedule of the school day does not allow for planning periods to be used for this craft. If planning periods were not scheduled with other meetings, they might be used for teachers to engage in collegial and curricular conversations, peer observations, and peer feedback. There isn't time available for teachers to engage in high yield conversations within the current structure and design of the school day and the duties that fall within the teacher's role. While this makes it very difficult, the time that teachers have found to engage in conversations centered around teaching and learning and watching each other teach to provide feedback to one another has become invaluable to our growth and has huge implications on students' learning. For example, last year another teacher and I watched a colleague teach to provide her suggestions for a particular student struggling with behavior. After a brief 20-minute observation, we were able to offer feedback and potential suggestions. Because she came to us with a lens in

which to view her teaching, we knew how to provide her with feedback that was timely, specific, and purposeful. A couple weeks later, the teacher reported that this specific problem had been rectified using several suggestions she received from peer feedback.

Another time, a kindergarten teacher was struggling to get her kids to ask deeper questions about what they were learning. A group of teachers sat together and brainstormed some potential ideas including a series of picture books offering perspectives from around the world that would relate to a wants-and-needs study in kindergarten. The teacher took those suggestions and developed a unit around those ideas. Weeks later she invited us back to her classroom to observe her teach. She asked if we could look for missed opportunities in her questioning. The feedback helped her better anticipate student responses and deepen her own questioning to students.

In both examples, teachers went above and beyond to find available time to not only briefly meet before the observation to communicate the lens in which to provide feedback, but also to make the time to observe in the classroom and have a follow up conversation with feedback. The constraints of the calendar alone made one teacher back out and not participate, and among those who did participate, they found the time constraints challenging.

The benefits of a professional development model that includes peer observation and feedback structures that support practitioner inquiry extends to many facets of a school site. Peer observation and feedback gives teachers space to inquire into their own practice and to learn from their colleagues while

simultaneously building agency and promoting teacher efficacy in a time when teacher retention is a national issue (Wynn, 2007). Using a professional development model that puts teachers at the center of their own learning and development as practitioners communicates the professional respect that teachers in this nation seek. Current professional development models result in needs being placed on teachers and give teachers little power to negotiate the expectations placed on them, resulting in mandates from a top-down system. The result is the deterioration in teachers' job satisfaction and mental health (Amzat & Valdez, 2017).

This study aims to explore the impact that a professional development model based on peer observation and feedback has on school culture, practitioner growth, and teacher satisfaction. With so much research in support of peer observation and feedback, it is baffling that we do not have a structure to support such growth. In countries like Japan, teachers spend less than 20 hours a week teaching, so the remainder of the time can be spent watching teachers teach (Doig & Groves, 2011). Overhauling the entire structure of a teacher's school day is not the goal here; rather, it is to consider a way to generate potential solutions to address the lack of time and emphasis on teacher peer observation in schools that are appropriate to the context of elementary school classrooms. This is a need that arose through personal experience but attempts to move beyond the current context (Belzer & Ryan, 2013). Because observing other teachers is such a key part in development of practices, it is important that we learn how to find creative ways to allow time and structures for teachers to

observe each other and provide feedback. It is also important that teachers find time to communicate their own personal growth areas so that when their colleagues observe them teaching, the feedback is appropriate and meaningful so that craft can grow (Garret, 2001).

Teachers having time to observe each other's teaching and to elicit feedback from one another to facilitate collegial conversation highlights the different goals of a good professional development program. According to Darling-Hammond and McLaughlin (2011), teachers need to enter the profession in conversation with one another because it is within these conversations that teachers examine their own beliefs and practices. This sometimes may look like a peer-coaching model as teachers investigate their own beliefs and provide a lens for their peers to use in order to provide feedback.

Theoretical Framework

Understanding teachers' beliefs and thoughts about peer observation and feedback was critical to this study. Many teachers have opposing feelings tied to opening their doors and engaging in conversation with other practitioners. Understanding the reasoning behind this reluctance is important to enable it to be addressed.

Vygotsky's situated sociohistorical perspective theory places heavy importance in understanding the history and context in which learning takes place. This theory helps understand the connections between what is learned and the cultural, historical, and instructional settings (Aguz, 2007). Connecting this theory to data collection methods yielded data to help better understand the

events in each teachers' careers that contributed to perceptions of peer observation and practitioner conversation. Understanding the deep-rooted beliefs and views helped me to identify where shifts are possible while bringing awareness to the background behind these beliefs and views. Focusing on constructs like unstructured interviews placed value on experience and the journey taken by the practitioner. It is this value of understanding and connecting events and beliefs that helped me draw conclusions.

Understanding the perspectives that influence teachers' beliefs about peer observations and collegial conversations around practitioner inquiry was important in order to understand and address the reluctance that teachers in my building have voiced in the past. Vygotsky's sociohistorical perspective theory enabled the backgrounds of these beliefs to be analyzed and understood in order to be addressed.

Another of Vygotsky's theories to consider is sociocultural theory. This theory views learning as a social process that involves the interactions between individuals in our society and culture (Aubrey, Jasper, & Vergas, 2009). This is a theory built on the belief that learning is a social process, and considers the beliefs and attitudes that a culture holds and the impacts of those beliefs and attitudes on learning. This theory illuminates culture as an important influence on how learning is constructed, and relates to this study because of the importance placed on understanding how culture in public education has shifted historically, and impacted professional development models.

The third theory embedded within this research is Senge's systems theory. One belief is a complex set of dynamics that relate and affect one another to influence the development of a learning organization (Senge, 2012). Systems theory looks at five different dimensions including communication, motivation, personal mastery, and lifelong learning (Senge, 2012). Systems theory was important to the study as I considered the organizational structure of both the school and the school district while simultaneously seeking a shift in the professional development model.

Finally, the last theory comes from Carol Dweck's work on mindset. This theory helps us better understand how learners who see their own ability as not fixed, but see how abilities, talents, and understandings can be developed through effort and persistence (Dweck, 2016). This gives control to the learner to take their own agency in regard to their learning. While this theory has been widely utilized in education to address student's mindsets, it also appropriate to utilize in promoting growth and development as educators who are life-long learners. Assessing the current mindset of teachers allowed the utilization of this theory in determining the conditions necessary for teachers to take risks to try out new actions in response to new approaches to teaching and learning (Gernstien, 2015).

Research Questions

The research questions I have are the following:

1. What impact does a professional development model based on peer observation and feedback have on practitioner growth and teacher perceptions?
2. How does a professional development model that includes peer observation and feedback as a structure for practitioner inquiry strengthen connections between belief and practice?
3. How can the culture and community of a school grow the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions and invite colleagues to watch their teaching and teacher agency?

The first question aims to examine what impacts are made on school culture, practitioner growth, and teacher satisfaction when professional development structures are put in place that promote collegial conversations and collaboration.

The second is a relevant question as it examines the tenants necessary for teachers to engage in practitioner inquiry to analyze their own belief and practice. This question aims to uncover facets of professional development that prompt shifts in practitioner willingness, participation, and overall shifts in practice resulting from models that provide the teachers with time for reflection and time for collegiality that lead to the alignment of beliefs and practice. The second question aims to determine how beliefs and practice are better aligned as a result of professional development, and to draw connections between that professional development to the shifting in practice. This question determines the impact, if

any, or this structure on individual practitioners as well as the overall school culture.

Finally, the last research question embodies the sensitivity that comes with asking teachers to be open to others' watching them teach. There are many assumptions, fears, and anxieties that come for many in the teaching profession when asked to be observed by colleagues. This is primarily because of the isolation teachers experience in the classroom when year after year they close their doors and work independently (Tichenor & Tichenor, 2019). This question serves to unpack the multi-faceted emotional response that many teachers have when told their teaching will be observed by another teacher and to evaluate the efforts of the professional development plan to create shifts in confidence and willingness of the participants.

Positionality

Positionality refers to the researcher's complex relationship within the setting of the research (Herr & Anderson, 2005). Understanding the setting and the position I take within the study helped me better solve issues based on the context of my research.

My positionality is that of an insider-outsider. The insider-outsider positionality is unique because the common experiences shared with the group allow for insider status. According to Holmes (2020), having same experiences, the knowing of the environment, and being of the same or similar position places the researcher as an insider. I've worked with many of the teachers in the research on professional development meetings and curriculum writing in the

past. Their view of me was of a classroom teacher for years prior to this school year. However, my role as a newly placed assistant principal, who is also newly out of the classroom simultaneously places me as an outsider. Being aware of this positionality during data collection not only of the way I see myself but also how the teachers in this study see me will be important in order to collect and analyze reliable data (Holmes, 2020).

For the purpose of this problem of practice, being in this position would help the research because of the trust and vulnerability I have built with my teacher colleagues. Asking about barriers to watching each other teach and hearing their reluctance is important to truly understanding the problem. Also, it is important to hear those perspectives in order to truly grasp all facets of the issue, which I believe include teachers' being uncomfortable with having other teachers watching them teach.

When a problem of practice involves teachers' beliefs and asks them to be willing to open up their classrooms and put themselves in a position of vulnerability, considering this unique positionality is very important.

Research Design

This study is an action research study using a mixed methods methodology. According to Ivankova (2015), mixed methods research combines both quantitative and qualitative data to analyze a study's research questions that are both quantitative and qualitative. The methods of data included are semi-structured interviews, surveys, and data coded for use of indicators of collegiality (Little, 1992).

This study was intended to target eight participants throughout a school year. However, due to COVID, the data collection period was shortened to three cycles of peer observation over the course of eight weeks. When the school year began, teachers were not in a place to add anything new to their plates. The added responsibilities placed on teachers to keep up with quarantined students, make-up assignments for sick children, and virtual assignments for a revolving door of quarantined classmates made the idea of asking teachers for one more thing irresponsible. Therefore, the intended yearlong study was shortened in order to adapt to the needs of teachers in the building. Also, because this study is linked to overall school culture, it was imperative that the participants not enter into the experience with frustration that could impact the results of the study.

The participants were selected based on their willingness and ability to provide information to guide the study. This is increasingly important to ensure the overall attitudes and willingness don't impact the results. The valuable information the teachers provide through their actions, behaviors, and perceptions will guide to potential answers to the research questions (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

Teachers will be given surveys to determine their overall attitudes and perceptions regarding collegial conversations and peer observation and coaching. The surveys will be given three times during the data collection window and compared to show potential shifts in attitudes and perceptions. The surveys will contain an attitude scale to measure the strength of an attitude or opinion in order to understand the participant's underlying beliefs (Holly, 2005).

Data will also be collected from unstructured group interviews. This structure will be utilized to gather data surrounding initial responses to peer observation and feedback and practitioner inquiry in order to better understand anticipated negative attitudes toward this professional development model. Because I do not have enough understanding to ask specific questions, and because I want to ensure the responses I get are not limited by my lack of understanding of the problem, an unstructured group interview will allow the participants to build off one another and to uncover potential understanding to the underlying problem (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Teachers will also take a survey 2-3 times during the duration of the study. This collective belief survey will serve to determine the baseline data in regards to teachers' current beliefs about ability to make individual impacts on the school learning culture and also perceptions regarding abilities to impact student learning within the school. The survey will be issued again in order to make comparisons to the baseline data survey to determine growth in efficacy in the building.

Significance of the Study

This study produced data that can be applied to many different contexts. Administrators and school leaders who are looking to grow teacher leaders will benefit from this study, as well as any teachers who want to embrace a professional development model that includes practitioner inquiry. Ultimately, students will benefit from this study as results may increase the practitioner shift on instruction with better outcomes for student learning.

This study includes the participation of stakeholders in the study. The participants benefited from the research and engaged in ways to benefit the culture of the school to broaden teacher efficacy and retention, as well as to grow teacher leadership. This makes action research a benefit because of the involvement of members of the group, each of whom will benefit from an improvement to the situation (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

According to Herr and Anderson (2015), action research has many components. These components are the research being a reflective process, the research being an inquiry with the researcher as an insider to the community, the research requiring evidence, and the research being oriented to a cycle of actions addressing a practice or a problem. Action research is also best done with others who have a stake in the outcome (Herr & Anderson, 2015). Utilizing these tenants of action research allowed the study to be responsive to data and move through the resulting cyclical process to arrive at results. This was important because shifts in the study need to take place to acknowledge the data, especially as it results in teachers' emotional responses to peer observation and feedback, as the history and underlying concerns are not yet known. Uncovering these ideas determined the direction to result from the data (Efron & Ravid, 2013).

The audience for this study includes teachers, administrators, and any stakeholders interested in bettering a professional development program by increasing teacher efficacy through increased collegial conversations. The study

may be most impactful for individuals planning for professional development that places teachers at the center of their own learning and growth in practice.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation of this study is that this study is only being conducted in one elementary school. The dynamics represented between administrators and teachers in this survey only serve as one specific situation. While this situation can be compared and indicative of other experiences, it is in no way representative of all contexts. This study takes place to represent one area of the country and does not broaden to other areas of the country, or in various contexts other than the individual elementary school.

This study is not a case study, which is important to note because it does not tell the full background and history of each participant. Efforts will be made to better understand the events and experiences of the participants, and how they connect to current attitudes and beliefs of peer observation, but this in no way gives a comprehensive background.

An additional limitation of the study is the timeframe in which data collection took place. The initial desire was to collect data within the professional development structure for an entire school year. However, due to COVID-19 and the resulting impact on education and teachers it became necessary to shorten the data collection timeframe to three cycles within the school year instead of the entire school year. This was necessary to increase teacher willingness to participate, as well as a necessary response to the very real increases in demands on educators resulting from the pandemic. Failure to recognize and

respond to these pressures could have resulted in a negative impact on the data due to increase demands.

Glossary of Terms

504 - According to the U.S. Department of Education, a “504” is an education plan that is outlined under the Americans with Disabilities act that ensures no child with a disability is prohibited from access to any educational experience or activity that is funded by the federal government.

Collegiality - the degree to which practitioners induce mutual obligation, expose the work of each person to the scrutiny of others, and call for, tolerate or reward initiative in matters of curriculum and instruction (Little, 1992).

Culture - Culture is the underground stream of norms, values, beliefs, traditions, and rituals that have built up over time as people work together to solve problems and confront challenges. Culture is the informal expectations that shape how people feel and act within a school building (Peterson & Deal, 1994).

Data Team Meetings - Learning teams that empower all educators to improve teaching, learning, and leadership to increase learning for all students through the use of data analysis and collaboration (Reeves, 2009).

Individualized Education Plans - A written statement for each child with a disability that is developed, reviewed, and revised in a meeting in accordance to law that must include measurable goals, a plan to monitor the progress towards those goals, and services required.

The Learning Organization - an organized group of people where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where

new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together (Senge, 2012).

Lesson Study - The form of professional development in Japan wherein teachers observe colleague's classrooms with a goal of continual improvement of teaching so that children learn more, with a primary focus on student thinking and learning.

PDS Network - A partnership between the University of South Carolina and twenty-three schools that leverages the expertise of all members to engage in impactful work on education.

Preservice Teachers - Undergraduates or Masters in Teaching students in their final semesters before becoming licensed teachers.

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

The purpose of this study is to examine teacher perceptions and growth based on a professional development model that provides intentional time for teachers to talk and provide one another with observational feedback. This study aims to find ways for educators to utilize high quality professional development to improve the collegiality and collaboration of teachers to better the learning environment and instructional program offered to students. In our nation, teachers are often not involved in the development and implementation of high-quality professional development (Pigge & Marzo, 1994). The professional development that is received rarely offers time and space for teachers to engage in rich professional dialogue with one another (Mills, et.al., 2001). Teacher collective efficacy has been shown to be one of the largest factors in determining the success of our children's education, yet teachers are rarely included in considering professional development (Hattie, 2015). Providing time and space for teachers to engage in this professional talk and to watch each other teach and discuss their teaching together provides space for teachers to work and grow effectively (Mills et. al, 2001).

There are several reasons why teachers are not a part of the professional development creating process. First, teachers have long been inactive

participants in professional development as it has been “done *to them*,” not “*with them*.” Many professional development models fail to recognize teachers at the center of knowledge and experience (Darling-Hammond & McLaughlin, 1995). Teachers are in the middle of an organizational structure that can often suppress voices of those doing the teaching. Also, teachers often don’t have the time or the extra energy in spite of other responsibilities to devote more time to creating high quality professional development. Finally, teachers are unwilling to place themselves in the vulnerable position of opening their own teaching practices to scrutiny.

The literature review seeks to determine what impact a professional development model based on peer observation and feedback can have on school culture, practitioner growth and teacher satisfaction. How can the culture and community of a school grow the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions? And finally, how can the culture and community of a school grow the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions and invite colleagues to watch their teaching?

This literature includes core research from several constructs that support current understanding of both high-quality professional development, as well as the current status of professional development in American schools. The theories connect to these constructs and are included to provide an understanding of current research. The inclusion of these studies and research provides important background information regarding the problem of practice in this action research study.

Literature Review Methodology

The research studies, journal articles, and texts included in this literature review were accessed through many mediums. Some were the result of searching databases including EBSCO, ERIC, and PSYCHINFO using search engines. Then, the results were narrowed with keywords. Sometimes specific articles were referenced that resulted in further searches for that specific journal article or research journal.

Theoretical Framework

Based on the broad nature of a professional development model that focuses on peer observation and feedback, multiple theories are identified to better understand the problem utilizing the lenses of the included theories. These theories are Sociocultural Learning Theory, Systems Thinking, and Growth Mindset. It is within these lenses that teacher lead peer observation and feedback as a professional development structure be studied and the impacts better understood.

Sociocultural Learning Theory

Peer observation and feedback heavily lean on the importance of a group of individuals engaging in teaching, learning, and growing together. This context relies heavily on the social construction of learning. The most important developer of the sociocultural learning theory is Lev Vygotsky (1978). Vygotsky argued that engaging in community is what shapes all human development including how one acts, feels, responds, thinks, and shows value (Wells, 1990). The value that one places on himself and others is situated on the culture and

community of the group from which he belongs. This social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of cognition (Aubrey, 2009).

Community

There are three main themes to Vygotsky's sociocultural theory. The first is that Vygotsky believed that everything we learn is learned on two levels: First through interaction with others, and then internalized and integrated into one's mental structure (as cited in Aubrey, 2009). This requires the community to develop the space that is necessary for learners to be involved and find a place in the community that is secure. Learning first takes place through the dialogue an individual has as a part of a learning community, and only then can the learner take that new knowledge and internalize it for personal application (Wells, 1990).

This concept demonstrates the importance of communities of practice. Wells (1990) describes the carrying out of this inquiry as the "spiral of inquiry," meaning that collaborating with others through reflection on the knowledge that is being constructed with the tools and the necessary practices involved is what allows the learning to occur. It is within these communities that this process happens, and it is within community that learners generate new understandings that they can then apply for their individual use (Wells, 1990).

Zone of Proximal Development

Another aspect within Vygotsky's sociocultural theory is a zone of proximal development. This aspect of sociocultural theory argues that cognitive development is limited to a learner's "zone." It is this zone where new learning is

possible, but for this to happen it takes interaction and help from the community before it can develop (Vygotsky, 1978, as cited in Aubrey, 2009). Within this zone, a peer or another knower can assist through interaction as members of the same community to grow the learner's understanding within the area. The inclusion of a more experienced "knower" can assist in this process (Aubrey, 2009). However, it is important to note that this "knowing" doesn't necessarily have to be from a single individual. Rather, the pooling of knowledge from the group to arrive at understandings and solutions to problems is developed by contributing all the tools and practices of the community and using them in concert in order to deepen common knowledge. Therefore, it is not one single person that holds more information than the others, but what is required from the participants in the community is the willingness to participate in inquiry together and learn from each other (Vygotsky, 1978).

Gordon Wells (1990) expanded upon this idea to apply the same concepts to not only children, but to adults as well. Wells believes that when individuals participate in an activity or discussion within a community, each person within that community assists each other and contributes to the construction of knowledge for the individual members of the group. Teachers construct their knowledge of their own teaching through reflective practice by learning alongside other teachers. It is as practitioners of inquiry that teachers lean in together and mold their understanding first through dialogue within the community, and then through their application of practice as an individual who has constructed understanding through learning experiences with the community (Wells, 1990).

It is within these communities of inquiry that teachers participate in learning within their zone of proximal development. Through collaborative inquiry, teachers reflect on beliefs from their understanding of learning and how those are reflected in their practice (Mills, 2014). Teachers grow their actions that connect through these beliefs as a part of their zone of proximal development that allows them to determine what beliefs underpin their responsive actions they take in their classroom (Mills, 2014).

Therefore, according to sociocultural theory teaching, learning is an ongoing process of inquiry where the knowledge of the teachers is constructed as certain situations are encountered by the members of the community. The teachers' ways of teaching are transformed through the process of building knowledge and understanding, and growing beliefs as part of a community of practitioners who have on-going conversations about their practice (Wells, 1990).

Analyzing Beliefs and Practices

One necessary component of teacher development within the sociocultural theory is the idea of analyzing beliefs and practices. Teaching staff benefit from structures that allow them to analyze their own practices and look for misalignments. Some structures that allow this process to happen are frequent collaboration, conducting observations of peers, and developing curriculum with other members of the learning community (Dodge & Kendall 2004).

A principle of analyzing beliefs and practice within a sociocultural context is dialogic practice. Dialogic practice involves participants being able to have meaningful conversations that then leads to the appropriations of these ideas

and considerations being enacted in practice (Martin et. al., 2014). These new ideas are enacted independently as a result of the dialogic practice within a conversational group (Martin et al., 2014).

When Teachers Have Time to Talk

Learning in sociocultural theory within the lens of modern day American public schools necessitates the examination of structures that allow communities to meet and talk. Supports that logistically provide this space include peer-to-peer collaboration and development of ideas through posing and investigating questions that are supported by creative collaborating and development of knowledge construction as a part of professional development (Kuusisaari, 2014).

One such support is predictable and protected use of time that allows conversations within the community to occur. Conversations must have the space to occur if knowledge is to be constructed through sociocultural theory. Another structure is the development of questions that are posed to the community for exploration through an inquiry lens (Mills et.al., 2001). This critical investigation into teaching and learning provides space for the analysis of beliefs and practices. The identification of misalignment between the two promotes actionable shifts within individuals, (Mills et.al., 2001).

Systems Thinking

Systems theory is an approach to looking at the learning organization through different dimensions. Systems thinking is a critical tool that addresses the environmental, political, social and economic challenges of the world today

(Briscoe, 2015). According to Senge (2012), there are five disciplines of the learning organization. Systems thinking is the fifth dimension that utilizes the integration of the other four.

Establishing the context for the learning organization is an important first step in systems thinking. Because change can be hard to initiate, constructing a shared environment that is purposeful in allowing these changes to occur is necessary to help the changes happen more naturally. Establishing a set of organizational practices impacts the behavior of those in the organization (Senge, 2012).

The first discipline in Senge's (2012) systems theory is personal mastery. Personal mastery is the discipline of continually developing an image of what is possible, and of what one wants to be. This cultivated thought process of current reality versus vision develops a tension in a learner that prompts action to move closer to that vision of what is possible (Senge, 2012).

The second discipline is shared vision. This discipline is of utmost importance in schools because this is the discipline that establishes mutual purpose and outlines the commitments a community has in the organization that evokes change. The facets are important to have in place if a school wants to grow the faculty towards a common vision (Senge, 2012).

Two of the disciplines involve reflecting thinking through conversation. The first of which is developing mental models of how learners see the world and how they develop action that results from pictures. These pictures represent the perspectives learners have that are used to develop a response to a stimulus or

problem. Because human beings are creatures of interpretation, our mental models are shaped by our pictures of the world through images, assumptions, and stories that we carry inside of ourselves about topics such as people, institutions, ideas, and organizations (Senge, 2012).

Within a community of teaching learners, it is important to uncover these assumptions and attitudes so they can be discussed. It is within this discussion about understandings of each other and our mental models that teachers can understand each other, their school, and their vision for change more clearly and results in moving forward more cohesively. When mental models are not examined, it limits the capacity for the learning organization to grow and change. (Senge, 2012).

The next discipline that involves reflecting and thinking through conversation is team learning. Team learning involves thinking through assumptions together. This process allows for the collective thinking to be transformed. Those in the community can then move with actions that result from this new thinking in order to effect change (Senge, 2012). This type of team learning can exist throughout professional development cycles, grade level meetings, and even pairs of colleagues meeting to discuss their craft together.

The final dimension is systems thinking itself. It is in this dimension that individuals in the learning community understand how the change will affect the best for all, and can then begin to respond effectively to the change. Systems thinking involves all the other disciplines together to leverage what is needed for change (Senge, 2012).

Growth Mindset

Growth mindset theory comes as a result of brain science research. Recent discoveries about the brain have helped us understand that the brain is far more flexible and malleable than we ever thought. Neuroscience and research about brain plasticity have proven that neurons can make connections dependent on experience. Growth mindset theory takes all of this research and draws connections between mindset and attitude (Dweck, 2006).

Growth mindset is the theory that a person's mindset can change from a fixed mindset to a growth mindset, and when it does, the learner is capable of increased achievement and motivation to continue that achievement (Dweck, 2006). According to Dweck, there are certain properties and conditions that can be implemented to promote a growth mindset. These properties and conditions aren't only relevant to students, but also to educators and school buildings. This has drastic positive consequences for educators, and this same theory can be applied to teaching and learning (Dweck, 2006). When teachers adopt a growth mindset, the effects on their learning community are positive. There are many facets to a positive growth mindset that lend themselves to productive outcomes in a professional development setting.

1. The first facet is the center of it all. This is the idea that the teacher himself starts with a growth mindset about his own teaching. It is not fixed. The identity of a teacher is not something one is born with but is transformed through learning opportunities and capabilities of which all possess.

2. Creating an atmosphere of high expectations for teachers, while simultaneously providing the support and motivation is another facet that creates positive effects in a learning culture and community.
3. Growth-Minded teachers critically assess themselves to determine when they don't know how to do something, and others do. Then, they learn. This shows a love of learning, as a practitioner, that affects the learning community for all involved.

Growth mindset theory is the theory that the learner behavior is strongly connected to beliefs. One's belief in the ability to promote change, or self-efficacy, immediately impacts one's behavior. In the classroom and school building this means that teachers must believe that the invested effort in learning and changing will result in a positive outcome (Dweck et al., 2014). This important part of growth mindset theory can be cultivated in school staffs by including interventions that lend themselves to connecting beliefs with actionable practice (Gerstein, 2004).

Goal setting is another important component in a growth mindset. According to Dweck, positive goal setting comes from focusing on performance, not the learning achievement itself. This idea means focusing on the ability to evoke change and growth. Being able to specifically articulate goals with other staff members and focusing on these goals during professional development allows teachers to make positive progress in their own practitioner growth (Sharplin et al., 2016).

Dweck (2006) also clarifies goal setting in the community versus goal setting that is competitive. This can be applied to individual teacher goals in a competitive environment versus a goal setting for the entire professional community. Sharplin et al. (2016) suggest that goals that are established for the entire community instead of setting individual goals that are conducive to competition are beneficial to all participants instead of just one. Groups of learners that work together toward a goal feel not only a larger connection to that group, but also work to contribute to the group's outcomes in relationship to those goals.

Understanding of other members in the community is also important in creating a culture with a positive mindset. Having a growth mindset means each teacher values himself or herself and each of the others in the learning community (Gerstein, 2004). Social belonging, according to Dweck (2006), means one's connectedness to a group and the sense of belonging one has to that group. In the school building this connects to how individual learners, as teachers, grow more when they are in connected groups of other teachers.

Self-regulation and control is the ability to rise above the distractions and temptations of the moment in order to pursue tasks that are important to their success (Dweck, 2006). This is an important component in positive mindset theory because control is defined as the ability to turn off distractions and focus on a difficult academic task that will become more and more important in realizing the goal that will lead to future success (Dweck et al., 2014).

A final component focuses on identity. According to Dweck et al. (2014), pursuing personal relevance in the learning and connecting that to a larger social good targets belief of evoking change that affects the larger community. This not only empowers the learner to effect change, but connects that change to a benefit to society (Dweck et al., 2014).

Lesson Study

Lesson study is a research lesson process in which teachers observe one another and participate in observation while the lesson is unfolding. Participants are given opportunities to reflect and discuss the teaching they saw, and then give feedback to the teacher. While participant observers are observing the teaching, they collect data based on what they see which serves to provide artifacts for reflective discussion after the lesson has been completed. The study they are observing has been previously developed collaboratively with the teaching team beforehand. After each teacher completes the lesson, and observers observe, feedback is then given that sometimes results in revisions to the lesson before the next practitioner presents the lesson in his or her class (Takahashi & Makoto, 2004).

Lesson study is a powerful professional development structure because it positions teachers as learners of their own craft. It also is one of the only professional development models that allows teachers to actually open their doors to one another and watch each other teach. This professional development model has gained attention in the United States because it addresses many of the frustrations teachers note with current professional development.

It is within the observation that teachers develop the conversations around specific teaching and learning that allow this community to come together and discuss the lesson. It gives teachers the opportunity to all see what instruction could be, and implement it in such a way that all participants reciprocally learn from one another (Takahashi & Makoto, 2004).

Practitioner Inquiry

Practitioner inquiry is a process where the teacher, or practitioner, takes on the role of a researcher to conduct research into their own teaching within their current professional context, such as their classroom, and their students become the subject of their inquiry (Nordstrum, 2019). From this stance, the teacher-researcher continually reflects on the performance of their work and asks questions that are then investigated to improve outcomes (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

This process continues to be important because of the potential to transform current professional development cycles in American public schools. Practitioner inquiry is linked to teacher efficacy, in part because of the professionalism granted to teachers to make decisions and collaborate with one another to determine the best moves to make to benefit students, while simultaneously connecting their practice to beliefs (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

According to Linda Darling-Hammond (2011), professional development roles and functions are shifting dynamically in order to make way to what she refers to as “knowledge sharing” (p. 598). Darling-Hammond refers to this knowledge sharing in three main components. The first is the sharing of what one

knows which a community of practice within an inquiry lens. When knowledge is shared it also leave space for teachers to investigate what it is they want to learn and discuss these ideas within their community. The group can then connect these ideas to new concepts or strategies that will enhance the understanding of the group (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

Historical Perspectives

Since the 1980s there have been several attacks on teacher quality and teacher education in the United States. Two waves of school reform in the 1980s led to over 1000 pieces of legislation written on teacher quality and qualifications. The results have been directly felt by teachers across the country and reform efforts directly impact professional development both at the national, state, and local levels (Darling-Hammond, 1993).

The reform efforts from this time period can be described as two different waves of reform. However, both waves of reform are centered around a belief of the learner with a model that fits a behavioral view of learning. This view sees the learner as a “blank slate” that accumulate information. Teachers serve as the “fillers of empty vessels” in this approach (Darling-Hammond, 1993, p. 752).

The models for school reform can trace their lineage back to reports like the Nation at Risk, the Carnegie task force, and the 2000 and 2002 annual report of teaching quality. Finally, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 encompassed these views that directly impacted the view of teacher quality, training, and effectiveness (Darling-Hammond, 2010).

The results of this model directly impacted teacher professional development and teacher training. This model sees no investigations of problems of practice, but rather, emphasizes implementation. Regulatory offices were created as audit managers that ensured the practices and programs were implemented faithfully as they were prescribed (Darling-Hammond, 1993). This model impacted professional development models in which teachers were required to be trained and follow through with fidelity programs and procedures that were prescribed regardless of the noticings of actual students and classrooms (Hill and Barth, 2004).

The waves of reform that began in the 1980s have two competing theories of professional development that are quite different from one another. The first theory is about tightening controls. This theory centers around more standards, more reports, more data, more testing, and more directive curriculum in order to receive rewards or result in enforcing sanctions. The results are that teacher decision making, self-efficacy, and empowerment were stripped away as these rewards and punishments were doled out to American public schools. A heavy emphasis on testing and teacher evaluation through testing data is at the center of this approach. This approach views a lack of focus, effort, and direction on the part of those involved in schooling children (Darling-Hammond, 1993). It is this approach that was continued and strengthened through the No Child Left Behind act of 2001 that left schools in turmoil. This act was designed to force conformity and achievement with impossible goals that resulted in a system of punishments for administrators, teachers, and students. It was this act that mandated to states

and individual districts what curriculum could be used in the classroom and what tests could be purchased to assess the learning as a result of this curriculum. This approach marginalized the years of research-based best practices that were replaced by highly prescriptive curriculum (Goodman et. al., 2004).

The competing theory involves an emphasis on the capacities of teaching and collaborative organizations. These are theories that strengthen the educator through responding to the needs of individual and collective groups of learners. This theory takes into account all of the facets of a constantly changing environment in classrooms that consider the real knowledge of the learners, their individual customs and cultures, societal issues, and current living conditions in order to be responsive to learners in the classroom (Darling-Hammond, 1993). This second theory is in direct opposition to prior school reform efforts.

According to Darling-Hammond (1993 and 2011), policies that develop quality teachers and promote advancement in public education are those that consider the second theory and develop the teacher as a professional. This is done by what Darling-Hammond calls “political development.” This means that a group of educators and policy makers develop a consensus for what they want for children in America's public schools, and then develop shared goals and understanding that allow for discussion around the most fundamentally important issues and ideas in teaching and learning. This includes involving teachers as both learners and teachers through providing space for teachers to consider their practice and consider ways to teach that may be different from anything they've ever tried before (Darling-Hammond, 2011). What Darling-Hammond imagines

from this second theory of professional development is placing high importance on professional development that provides space for teachers to reflect, think through their practice, engage in conversations with colleagues, and make resulting shifts to their practice out of true practitioner inquiry. The result of time provided for this type of professional development according to Darling-Hammond, will provide success only if teachers are able to learn new ways of teaching and unlearn their ways they've done things in the past. This process involves shifting belief systems and analyzing practices that result in actional change to classroom instruction (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

A result of this secondary theory of professional development is the development of the Professional Development Schools, or PDS. This design began in the late 1980s and was designed to promote novice teachers with experienced teachers in an effort to collaborative workspaces in which all teachers work together. PDS schools also incorporate the involvement of a university member and liaisons who serve as facilitators of professional development. In PDS schools, practitioners are able to inquire both about teaching and learning in spaces that promote a learner-centered environment (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

The future of professional development that places a heavy emphasis on the teacher as practitioner needs to have several components in order to be successful. First of all, space and time needs to be set aside to allow teachers, university faculty members, and administrators to join together in collaborative discussion about teaching and learning. Teacher evaluation needs to include

space or honest reflection on teaching. Finally, support from policy makers needs to redistribute funds that allow for rethinking the ways schools are staffed (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

Social Justice

Teacher Self-efficacy

Teacher efficacy is derived from Bandura's social-cognitive theory of behavioral change (Bandura, 1977). Teacher efficacy is an important and necessary component to consider when determining teachers' roles in professional development. Providing space for teachers to observe each other teach and to talk collegially with one another puts teachers in the center of their own professional development. Teacher efficacy is built within teachers when they have opportunities to take control of their own professional development and facilitate conversations with one another about teaching and learning (Garret et al, 2001).

According to Bandura (1986), teacher self-efficacy is "beliefs in one's capability to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments" (p. 3). This is to say that the impact that teachers make is not so much about the knowledge they currently have, but the realized ability to make change due to the actionable steps they might take to influence student understanding and academic growth.

Teachers often find themselves in situations in which they are forced to reconcile their beliefs against mandates that are imposed on them. "Alienated teaching," a term derived by sociological labor, describes instructional practices

that stem from core beliefs teachers feel they must neglect in order to adhere to mandates imposed on them by external authorities (MacDonald & Shirley, 2006).

Bandura (1997) proposes that teachers' beliefs in their ability to effect change is a direct predictor of behavior. If teachers have the power to affect the outcomes for their students, then their beliefs will match, and behaviors will result (Bandura, 1997). According to Bandura (1997), task analysis is one of the most important sources in building teacher efficacy. This directly correlates to collaborative planning through professional development that provides space for teachers to carefully consider content before building instruction around that content. It is within these contexts that beliefs and grown and predicted behavior of actions are present (Barniet al., 2019). Therefore, professional development that contains these components of collaborative planning, analysis of tasks, and peer observation and feedback potentially cultivate teachers' beliefs and confidence in their ability to effect change.

Teacher Recruitment and Retainment

Our nation is currently in the middle of a nation-wide teacher shortage. There are many contributing factors that lead to this shortage. Many factors are related to the economy. When the economy was in a brief recession during the early 1990s, the number of teachers who entered into the profession actually grew as a result of consumer confidence and job creativity waning. This actually helped the teacher population across the nation. However, when the economy improved, those who may have considered teaching actually pursued much more lucrative careers (Wiggen, 2020). The result has been a teaching shortage that is

heavily influenced by the inadequate wage earnings of teachers. There is a direct correlation to the way the economy is doing and the number of students entering into teacher preparation programs across the country. Enrollment in teacher-education programs decreased by 35% from 2006 to 2014 (Sutcher et al., 2016).

Darling-Hammond (2011) noted that the de-professionalization of teaching resulted from the inability to allow teachers the professional freedoms to make curricular decisions in classrooms. This certainly affected the teaching population as teaching is now what Darling-Hammond says is seen as a “semi-profession.” In 2012, Obama introduced the Race to the Top legislation that rewarded school district successes related to student achievement. However, the legislation did little to address the growing teacher shortage problem (Wiggen, 2020).

Of the many issues in education that disallow the retainment of teachers, mentoring and poor professional development are some of the biggest factors. Teachers leaving the classroom after just one year has recently hit an all-time high (Morrison, 2019). The window of three to five years is when young teachers are still in a place in their career where a change has little impact in developing themselves professionally elsewhere. In 2012, only 13% of teachers leaving the classroom said it was due to retirement (Sutcher et al, 2016). Therefore, the remaining teachers who left the classroom did so because of other reasons.

Well-designed mentoring programs increase the retention of teachers through programs that involve a trained mentor providing support to first year teachers. In addition, a positive work environment that includes high quality

professional development and time for teachers to have joint planning time increases the retention of teachers (Sutcher et. al., 2016).

Related Research

Research related to my constructs helped me understand the connectivity to the research methodology and connect to the theoretical framework.

Understanding the components listed below includes backgrounds from each area to connect and grow upon within the study.

Models of Peer Observation and Feedback

One model that utilizes peer observation and feedback is the peer observation technique. This model is used primarily in secondary and academic settings but has recently being been utilized for professionals to give feedback to peers at the elementary level. One research project examined the use of peer observation techniques, or POT, to evaluate the effectiveness of POT on evaluating and providing feedback to peers. This evaluation included the analysis of teachers' ability to develop an awareness of their teaching to define areas of strength and also areas for professional development. This study contained 27 participants from the university teaching level. This was a case study that utilized methods involving four cycles of peer observation which included the development of lesson plans and sharing those plans with colleagues before classes were observed. Then, each participant received written feedback after the observation. The researcher collected and analyzed data that came from a structured interview (Bell, 2001).

Five themes emerged from this research as the findings. The first is the high effectiveness of developing the practitioner through the POT process. The second theme is the resulting shifts made to teaching practice as a result of this process. The third theme was the practitioners' development of both confidence and congruence. Congruence refers to the analysis of beliefs and practice to identify incongruity, and the resulting actions taken to better align beliefs and practice in congruence with one another. The fourth theme was the development of collegiality. Collegiality refers to the willingness of the participants to act as a support person to one another which not only supported the colleague, but also presented a learning experience to the individual practitioner proving the support. Finally, the fourth theme was the necessity of ongoing professional development. This referred to the long-term change process that was carried out through the inclusion of reflective practices embedded within the POT process (Bell, 2001).

High Quality Professional Development and Job Satisfaction

The Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) study was published in 2017 from data that was collected in 2013. This research study from the Department of Education sought to better link teacher job satisfaction and teacher retention. This study contained 50,000 participants from over 34 countries. In order to cut costs, and to respond to the comprehensiveness of this study, the participants were each given a two-scale sample and consists of three different studies. The third study in particular aimed to measure the level of job satisfaction experienced by teachers as well as satisfaction for the current work environment. The TALIS survey was administered to a random sample of

teachers from the participating schools. This study used both qualitative and quantitative data measures to analyze collected data (Sims, 2017).

The findings from the TALIS study showed a strong correlation between teacher self-efficacy and strong professional development and teacher retention. One of the conclusions and next steps indicated that in order to increase job satisfaction and decrease teacher turnover, schools need high quality leadership that provides space for teachers and administrators to grow through quality feedback and effective professional development (Sims, 2017).

Instructional Leadership and Teacher Retention

A study conducted in 1,700 Jewish and Arabic Elementary schools identified the administrative support and work-related factors that resulted in low teacher turn-over. The researchers randomly selected principal and teacher participants. This was a mixed methods study that gathered data from discussions and collected surveys around teacher efficacy using the Tschannen-Morran and Barr teacher efficacy survey. The finding showed that collective teacher efficacy and shared vision played a mediating role in retention of teachers. The recommendation for school sites is that administrators take steps to increase teacher participation in shared vision and nurture collective efficacy within school buildings in an effort to maintain retention. In addition, actively seeking out and assessing teachers' intent to leave was found as a productive strategy to take the necessary steps listed above (Qadach et al., 2019).

Summary

The lineage of professional development in the United States has long been on the end of string held by policy, and not on what is best for classroom teachers to analyze and grow their own craft. The work of many researchers, including Linda Darling-Hammond, has made it evident that the professionalization of teaching through space that allows for reflection and growth of practice will not only develop high quality teacher in our country, but will also provide spaces for teachers to capitalize on the collective knowledge of a school staff and grow together in a learning community (Darling-Hammond, 2011).

It is within this structure that space must be provided for teachers to observe one another and provide feedback to one another. This places teacher leadership in the middle of professional development methods and detracts from professional development that is curriculum centered and places an emphasis on professional development that is learner centered (Barni, Danioni, & Benevene, 2019).

The implications of this type of professional development is far reaching, and includes answering current issues with recruitment and retention of teachers. School site and district leaders must be intentional about protecting time for teachers to engage in talk with one another, and be willing to reorganize the school structure to provide space for observational feedback that results in collegial conversations about teaching and learning. It is the process of development that will allow teachers time to analyze current practice as it relates

to belief, and make actionable change resulting from this reflective process. Site administrators should provide this space and then engage in the talk about teaching and learning in an attempt to better understand his or her own process while simultaneously supporting the learning process of other teachers around the table.

District and state officials need to adapt their approach to professional development to professionalize educators once again. This means releasing teachers from low-effect professional development and policies that take time away from these treasured conversations about teaching and learning. By leaning in to the experts in the field of education and utilizing the understanding and concepts from their research, educators can be provided with the opportunities to learn and grow from each other and to build their craft that will positively impact student learning.

Chapter 3: Overview of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the impacts of a professional development plan that is structured around peer observation and feedback on learning and growth of practitioners as made evident by alignment to beliefs and practice, improved teacher efficacy, and overall school culture. More specifically, the questions in this study aimed to better understand the impact of growing collegial conversations that result from peer observation and feedback in order to enhance practitioner growth. The questions also acknowledged the emotional response and reluctance many teachers have in participating in peer observation and feedback, and aimed to determine how that reluctance can be approached to enhance this professional development model in the future.

The importance of this study came from my personal belief about teaching and learning. Connecting the research questions to the constructs of culture, community, social learning and efficacy came from a desire for participants and myself to grow within our understanding of ourselves as practitioners. It is within this belief system that a shift in professional development in order to capture the expertise and experience of teachers and to communicate value to them in process is dreamt.

Current stumbling blocks that make this model difficult to execute were also explored. Determining the constraints on scheduling and planning

provided space for creative problem solving to move forward to address these constraints. Ultimately, this study aimed to provide structures and routines embedded within a professional development model that places teachers at the center of their own inquiry through situational learning that includes peer observation and post observation feedback conversations.

This study is framed under three research questions:

1. What impact does a professional development model based on peer observation and feedback have on school culture, practitioner growth and teacher satisfaction?
2. How does a professional development model that includes peer observation and feedback as a structure for practitioner inquiry strengthen connections between belief and practice?
3. How can the culture and community of a school grow the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions and invite colleagues to watch their teaching?

Each of these questions is aimed at better understanding the relationship between peer observation and feedback and determining how to improve collective teacher growth through experiences that not only grow the overall school community, but simultaneously improve teacher efficacy. This study aimed to explore the impact that professional development model based on peer observation and feedback has on school culture, practitioner growth, and teacher satisfaction.

Action Research

This is a mixed-methods action research study that used both qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the identified problem of practice. This method of study best aligns to this research because the data collected complemented each other and allowed for elaboration and further development of ideas (Ivankova, 2015). Using a triangulation design within the mixed methods approach allowed me to simultaneously analyze qualitative and quantitative data to better understand the underlying problems. In addition, this study used an embedded design, as the qualitative data is the primary collection method, and the quantitative is secondary (Cresswell, 2005).

A mixed methods approach also allowed for a variety of perspectives to be considered, which aligns with the data collection methods and analysis through an action research process to include non-linear procedures (Efron & Ravid, 2013). This cyclical approach increased my understanding and knowledge surrounding the original problem and allowed the research to be responsive to the knowledge constructed through each cycle (Herr & Anderson, 2005).

Another reason why the mixed methods approach is appropriate for this study is because of the ways in which the data addressed both confirmations in verifying knowledge, but also to explore and generate new knowledge about the context. Both of these areas of answers exist within the single study (Ivankova, 2015).

Core constructs of focus in this study included an emphasis on culture and community. Understanding how identity of participants plays into the role of the

community, and how that identity is affected by the culture of teaching and learning in my school setting better determined potential actions to increase participation and willingness to engage in collegial conversation around peer observation and feedback. Utilizing Frank Smith's (2006) work on identity, culture, and community, helped provide a lens in analyzing data from interviews. This helped focus on language of labeling, or the attachment of perceivable attributes when talking about oneself in order to understand the way participants see themselves as current members of the community of learners in the building (Smith, 2006).

Another construct relevant to the research is Carol Dweck's (2016) work on Mindset. Using Dweck's research helped make determinations about how teacher participants view themselves as capable learners, and what actions they can take to grow themselves and their abilities as classroom practitioners (Dweck 2016).

A third construct is Systems Thinking. Systems thinking is an appropriate construct to include because of the ways in which it dovetails into constructs of culture and community. Systems thinking acknowledges how elements in a system affect each other over time, and impact individuals within the system. Systems thinking also identifies leverage where seemingly small actions can produce relatively large changes (Senge, 2012).

Systems thinking is an important construct to the study because it allowed usage of mental models and causal loops to better understand the problem in order to make change towards an intervention. This construct also aligned with

the construct of identify to examine how historical experiences and individual interpretations of past events have led to current responses to peer observation and feedback and collegial conversations. Understanding the relevant events of participants' backgrounds that helped shape their view of professional development structures provided data that can be analyzed for potential shifts toward more participation and willingness to engage (Senge, 2012).

Intervention

In this study, participants engaged in professional development models that provide space for practitioners to inquire into their own beliefs and practices to identify an area of misalignment. This area of misalignment was then connected to actionable steps that the practitioner can take in order to align those beliefs and practices. Because the practitioner identified the area of personal growth, the lens for the peer observation and feedback was provided by the individual being observed. This is important because it necessitated communication with other practitioners about what actions are being taken in the classroom to grow the instruction. All feedback came from this identified area.

The professional development administrative calendar contained space for collegial conversations between teachers resulting from these observations where participants in the study were given time to engage in conversations with each other to inquire into their own teaching and learning and then, through this structure, provide time for additional observations and joint feedback.

Throughout this process, data was collected to determine what if any effect does this model have on practitioner growth, school culture, and teacher

satisfaction. It was important to include data that acknowledged the fear of vulnerability that some teachers have, and to look for where that fear comes from that make peer observation and collegial conversation uncomfortable for some participants. It was also be important to analyze data relating to these ideas to gauge the school's general readiness for a shift in such a structure (Evans, 1996).

Intervention Plan

Before the participants engaged in peer observation and feedback, they attended two professional development sessions regarding math instruction. Each professional development session contained two parts. The first was the math session through a virtual math conference. The sessions were selected based on teacher interest. The session was one hour long and was attended by all the teachers in the same grade level. After the session, the second part contained time for planning a lesson to be used across the two or three participants in each grade level. This was the lesson the teachers in the same grade level observed. Teachers designed this lesson in conjunction with the session content.

After each math session and planning session, teachers engaged in two cycles of peer observation and feedback using the lesson they created together. Teachers used an observation protocol that calls for two areas of feedback. The first is a specific area of feedback the observed teacher selected. This allowed teachers to discuss both the lesson plan that was observed, but also an area that the teachers determined to want to get feedback about that is specific to their

own practice. This could have been any area of feedback the teacher chooses to span from content related feedback to overall classroom environment. The purpose of this feedback was to meet the specific needs selected by the observed teacher. The second area of feedback was determined by the observer. This can be of anything the observer chooses to highlight. The purpose of this feedback is for the observer to be able to communicate noticings the teacher may not see.

Both areas of feedback were through the lens of student actions, not teacher actions. The feedback will use a protocol to focus on these actions of students. The purpose of specifying student actions and not teacher actions is to lessen the vulnerability required from the participating teachers, and to lessen the anxiety many teachers report as the rationale for non-participation in peer observation and feedback.

Each teacher in the pair/group observed one right after the other, with 15 minutes of feedback about the lesson in between. This allowed subtle changes to be made to the lesson after each participant is observed. After each teacher has been observed, there was a thirty-minute debrief time where feedback will be shared and lead to discussion about the overall experience. Teachers will then share out about the feedback and next steps for shifts in instruction or thoughts to consider as a result of the received feedback.

After each pair/group has been observed during the first cycle, participants will join in an unstructured group interview with all participants. This interview will be audio recorded to be coded later for themes. An outline of questions will be

predetermined, however, the purpose of the unstructured interview is to allow space for the participants to share their own thinking not limited to the questions asked. In this way, the responses of the participants will determine the direction of the group interview to allow space for perceptions and attitudes to be developed into themes.

After the completion of one cycle as outlined above, the same participants will begin a second cycle with the same components as before as shown in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1

Timeframe and Activity of Cycles

Cycle	Timeframe	Activity
1	Weeks 1-2	Participants designed lesson, observed one another, and had feedback sessions. An unstructured interview followed at the end of the timeframe.
1	Week 3-4	Participants designed lesson, observed one another, and had feedback sessions. An unstructured interview followed at the end of the timeframe.
2	Week 5-6	Participants designed lesson, observed one another, and had feedback sessions. An unstructured interview followed at the end of the timeframe.

Participants

All of the participants of the study will come from the same elementary school with the same administrative staff and teacher leaders who plan for and implement professional development. But even though the situational environment is the same, the vast backgrounds, experiences, and diverse areas

of expertise by teachers in the building necessitate the importance of a wide variety of participants.

For this reason, purposeful sampling was used with a set of criteria that allowed for participation from multiple perspectives. It was important to include participants who are current teacher leaders in the building. This included teachers who previously have shown the desire to grow the school culture and collegiality in the past, as evidenced by their participation in leadership teams and professional development involvement. These were teachers who see the importance of engaging in the process of generating knowledge and promoting social change, and therefore will show an interest in the purpose of the study as a way to grow professional development structures within our current system (Ivankova, 2015).

In addition, the study also included teachers who have a different mindset of professional development and who are not currently serving in leadership capacity within the school. Understanding the range of current attitudes and beliefs about professional development and peer observation and feedback was imperative in understanding the concepts surrounding shifts. Inclusion of reluctant participants allowed this research to include the necessary facets and time for all teachers to reflect and interact with this new model, and to determine the outcomes of such an experience as it results to individual teachers (Evans, 1996).

Within the purposeful sampling process, a criteria-based sample based on attributes that provide variance to the sample of participants was employed. For

the purpose of this sample, participants also met criteria such as working within the school to account for the availability of the teachers. They also were all self-contained classroom teachers, meaning they did not switch classes with a partner teacher. Maximum variation sampling provided a wide variety of perspectives that relate to the current beliefs and attitudes about professional development, and beliefs and attitudes as peer observation and collegial conversations are integrated into the current professional development plan (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

The teachers were selected because they responded to an invitation to participate. From the list of teachers who responded, the roster of teachers was narrowed to provide representation from different grade levels across the school. The eight teachers who were selected for the study were from the list who responded to the invitation and who were self-contained teachers in a grade level with at least one another volunteer participant.

Maximum variation sampling was appropriate to the study because it allowed for a wide range of characteristics from those involved in the study. For this study's purpose, including those with a wide range of experiences as educators, including the length of time as professional educators, allowed data that ranges from different perspectives and may lend to patterns in the data that show connections between beliefs and attitudes about peer observation and feedback as it relates to those personal experiences. Intentionally selecting participants that provide variation allowed for data that is wide spread in its representation (Ivankova, 2015). Drawing from this data led to outcomes that

effect practitioner growth, strengthen school culture, and increase teacher efficacy.

There are eight participants in the study. Two participants were kindergarten teachers, three were second grade teachers, and three were fourth grade teachers. The experience of the teacher participants varies from 3 years to 26 years. Only two of the teachers included in this study have only taught in this single elementary school site. The other six teachers have experience in other school sites before joining the staff at the elementary school.

Data Collection

Four sources of data were used to collect data in this study: two Likert-scale surveys and a collection of unstructured interviews. The surveys were collected three times, and the unstructured interviews were conducted three times throughout the study.

Surveys

Two surveys were used to collect data three times during the study. Each survey was taken three times by each teacher in the study. The Attitudes and Perceptions Survey included items that gathered data around teachers' beliefs about professional development with questions that indicate their perceptions on the usefulness of professional development, agency, and overall satisfaction in with school culture. Teachers completed the survey after each of the three cycles of peer observation and feedback. This data collection allowed the researcher to see shifts in attitudes and perceptions about professional development in

general, as well as potential shifts in building teacher agency as a result of the professional development experience.

The second survey was the Collective Beliefs Survey and it explored collective beliefs of teachers. This survey included items to collect data to indicate potential impacts the peer observation and feedback cycles had on teacher held beliefs, and the resulting impact on classroom practice. This survey also allowed teachers to demonstrate shifts in classroom application as a result of the experience. In addition, the survey also included questions that measure the teachers' belief in their ability to affect overall school culture.

Collecting the two surveys three times over the course of the data collection cycle allowed comparison data to note shifts in all of the areas outlined above. The three cycles occurred in two-week cycles over the course of six weeks. Using data this way, quantitative data collection allows the researcher to demonstrate these shifts numerically. These areas of data collection were important because they identified the current professional culture of the school, and as collegial conversations continued to be evaluated with this observational protocol, shifts and growth in school culture were detected.

Unstructured Interviews

At three points during the data collection period, unstructured interviews were used to ask questions about the emotional response teachers have to peer observation and feedback. An unstructured group interview protocol was used that includes the following inquiry areas: perceptions about peer observations, usefulness of peer feedback, usefulness of collegial conversation,

changes/growth based on peer observations and feedback, perceptions about school culture. An unstructured interview protocol was selected because it allows the teachers in the discussion to drive the interview with honest responses, which allows the researcher the ability to better understand teacher perspectives on peer observation and feedback, as well as the overall value of professional development from the teachers' perspective.

Unstructured group interviews three times during the study also allowed a better understanding of the historical context that leads to feelings of apprehension and competition, amongst other areas yet to be identified in order to initiate change. Better understanding the negative responses to peer observation and feedback allowed space for change utilizing Senge's organizational change theory, and change can be initiated through this intervention (Senge, 2012). Data from the group interviews were used to identify shifts in individual and group responses as indicators of practitioner growth and potential changes in view regarding peer observations and collegial conversations.

This is important data to collect in the study because it addresses the research question about growing the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions through peer observation and feedback when they value the process and see the connection to practitioner growth. This data helped determine the emotional response of teachers that relates to the research question about increasing teachers' willingness to enter into vulnerability as potential growth is made a practitioner.

Data Analysis

Surveys

Surveys were used to gather data about teacher's collective beliefs and their attitudes and perceptions about the professional development model. The surveys were given three times during the study and be used to quantitatively measure the change in teacher beliefs over time. The survey used conveyed data regarding teacher efficacy to determine how teachers feel about the current culture and climate of the school, and their ability to effect change within the school where they work. This data was collected at the end of the data collection cycle and analyzed by determining the both the summative total number difference by survey item number as well as the difference in the individual teacher responses. This analysis determined if any shifts were made that can be connected to the professional development structure of peer observation and feedback. This survey data was also used in conjunction with other data sets to determine if teacher efficacy is improved from increased and enhanced collegial conversations resulting from peer observation and feedback.

Unstructured Group Interviews

Observational data were analyzed using an open coding process to identify any pieces of data that may lead to categorization, or potential findings. Open coding was appropriate in this phase of data analysis because there was too much potentially unknown findings to consider without being open to potential ideas teased out of the data. After coding notes were used to analyze the first data set, categories were developed. Some anticipated categories had to do with

the constructs mentioned before, specifically about community, identity, and mindset. However, the potential for additional categories meant constructing and cycling through the data in order to be responsive to the findings, representing a cyclical process typical of action research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

As additional data were collected, themes emerged from patterns in the data to confirm themes developed earlier in the process. These themes were developed looking at patterns of the responses from the participants related to each other, and also in relation to the unstructured group interviews all together over time. These concepts were connected directly to the purpose of the study, as well as the research questions of the study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016).

Ethnographic analysis will be used specifically to capture the focus of culture and community as it pertains to the ways individuals respond to the environment. The use of ethnographic dialogue notes and characterization was used to capture the essence of conversations within the unstructured group interviews. This is so that the nuances of language as well as interactions could be captured and compared to other data sets to arrive at understandings about school culture as it relates to practitioner growth (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995).

Summary

The methods utilized in this study were aimed at determining the potential impact of a professional development model that includes peer observation and feedback on teachers. More specifically, the impact relates to how peer

observation and feedback can improve the overall teacher experience through growing practitioners and overall teacher efficacy.

Chapter 4: Presentation and Analysis of Data

This study sought to better understand the impact of peer observation and feedback in empowering teachers through growth of practitioners and overall teacher efficacy. Eight teachers participated in the study including two kindergarten teachers, three second grade teachers, and three fourth grade teachers. The teachers had between 3 and 26 years of teaching experience. Three teachers have only taught in the one school setting, and the other five have experience teaching in different school setting prior to their current school site. During a six-week process, these teachers participated in professional development that included peer observation and feedback within their elementary school.

Data Collection

Three different points of data that were collected in this study. The first was a collective belief survey. This survey was given at the beginning of the study, and again at several points throughout the study. This survey aims to identify potential shifts in teacher agency and overall teacher collective efficacy resulting from the professional development experienced by individual practitioners. This survey is in the form of a Likert scale to allow space for teachers to self-reflect and determine their own ability to impact teaching and learning within their classrooms. This survey was administered throughout the

study to notice changes, and the results of this study were monitored to make decisions about responsive questions to be used later in the unstructured interviews. The second survey was an attitudes and perceptions survey. This survey was designed as a Likert scale, and its aim was to determine potential shifts in attitudes and perceptions teachers have related to professional development. This survey provided data about teachers' perceptions of the professional development experience, as well as the impact of that professional development on their classroom instruction. This survey captured potential shifts in teachers' overall attitudes about professional development, as well as the embedded conversations with colleagues and the potential results of those conversations.

Finally, the data collection included three unstructured interview sessions. These interview sessions occurred after the three cycles of professional development that included peer observation and feedback cycles. The intent of these unstructured interviews was to capture the potential impact on peer observation and feedback on the overall culture and community of the school through the lens of the participating teachers. Unstructured interviews were selected as a data collection method because of the intent to determine overall perceptions.

Collective Beliefs Survey

The first data collection tool was a Collective Beliefs survey. This survey was administered three times during the data collection process. This survey asked teachers four different questions, and they were to respond using a scale

of one through five, with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree.

The purpose of these questions was to gauge how the experience of peer observation and feedback impacted teacher agency, as well as connections to belief and practice, and overall teachers' perceptions. Eight teachers completed surveys at each administration. In order to unpack these results, the responses were analyzed by statement. Each of the eight participants responded with a one through five on each statement. Each of the eight responses were added together for a total response to each question to give an overview. Therefore, the number of combined responses has the potential to range between eight and forty per question.

Results are shown on the next page in Table 4.1 with S1 through S3 indicating the three survey dates. Each survey occurred at the completion of a peer observation and feedback cycle. The summed totals of the eight teachers allow for a possible range of 8-40 for total summed responses.

The results from the survey show an increase in several areas. The first statement said, "I believe that I can make an impact on the lives of my students." The purpose of this question was to indicate the overall belief of teacher efficacy the individual teacher had at that point in time, and how the experience of peer observation and feedback affected that teacher efficacy. The initial response on the first survey had an overall high response, which indicates teacher efficacy was already quite high for the group. However, the gain throughout the data

Table 4.1

Teacher Responses to Collective Belief Survey Items

Survey Statements	S1	S2	S3
1. I believe that I can make an impact on the lives of my students.	32	35	40
2. I believe my teaching practices continue to grow and develop as a result of the professional development I've received.	35	36	38
3. I find professional development to be useful and applicable.	29	31	39
4. I believe I have the ability to make changes to improve the overall culture and community at my school.	30	33	39

collection was 8 points, or an increase of 15%. The responses to this question indicate an increase in teacher self-efficacy.

The second statement said, "I believe my teaching practices continue to grow and develop as a result of the professional development I've received." The initial response to the first survey was highest with this question, with a combined result of 35. By the final survey, the statement results grew to 38, which while an increase is only a small increase. This is the smallest increase of the four survey statements. The increase on this statement was 7.5%.

The third statement said, "I find professional development to be useful and applicable." The initial response to this statement tied another for the lowest

initial response with a combined total of 29. Throughout the survey, this statement continued to increase in responses from 29 to 33 to 39. The responses increased by 25% from the initial survey to the final survey.

The final statement said, “I believe I have the ability to make changes to improve the overall culture and community at my school.” This statement was another with responses on the lower side of the data with an initial combined response of 30. This response increased to 33 for the second survey and 39 for the final survey. The total response increase for this statement was 22.5%.

Growth by teacher is shown in Table 4.2. These growth areas are also identified by item number.

Table 4.2

Growth Analysis Table of Collective Belief Survey

Teacher	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Overall Growth
Brittany	+1	+/- 0	+2	+2	5
Lisa	+2	+/-0	+1	+2	4
Alicia	+1	+1	+1	+1	4
Julie	+1	+1	+1	+2	5
Sandy	+1	+/- 0	+2	+/-0	3
Janet	+/- 0	+/- 0	+1	+/- 0	1
Samantha	+1	+1	+1	+1	4
Carol	+1	+/- 0	+1	+2	4
Total Growth by Item	8	4	10	10	

There are several areas to note by individual teacher. Six of the teachers had a growth of four to five points. Among these teachers the teachers who

tended to be the youngest teachers or the teachers who have less experience teaching. Of the two teachers with less growth (one to three points), both are seasoned veteran teachers. This data seems to suggest this professional development model had the most impact on teachers who have been in the classroom for under 10 years as opposed to those who have been in the classroom for over 15 years.

An alternative explanation is that the teachers with the lowest growth began the study with high ratings which allowed less space to indicate growth. This could indicate a belief system about teaching and learning that is already significantly developed, and lends itself to strong teacher identity, confidence, and agency.

The two survey items that showed the most overall growth by participants were items 3, “I find professional development to be useful and applicable,” and item 4, “I believe I have the ability to make changes to improve the overall culture and community at my school.” This shows growth in teachers’ overall agency as well as the usefulness of professional development, suggesting that teachers found more value in the professional development model than past professional development experiences.

Attitudes and Perceptions Survey Items

The next data collection tool was the attitudes and perceptions survey. This survey was administered after each of the three cycles of peer observation and feedback. The intent of this data collection tool was to capture the teachers’ attitudes and perceptions about the professional development opportunity that

incorporated peer observation and feedback, and the usefulness of those constructs to their overall growth as a practitioner. This survey gave teachers four different statements, and they were to respond using a scale of one through five, with one meaning strongly disagree and five meaning strongly agree. The data is presented with the summed totals of the eight respondents, with a potential range of summed responses from 8-40.

Table 4.3

Attitude and Perception Survey Items

Survey Questions	S1	S2	S3
The conversations I had with my colleagues stretched my thinking.	36	39	40
The feedback I received from my colleagues was purposeful and relevant.	33	38	39
The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback grew my beliefs.	32	35	40
The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback resulted in shifts in my classroom instructional practices.	31	34	38

In the first statement, “The conversations I had with my colleagues stretched my thinking,” the S1 responses (administered after the first cycle) were the highest in comparison to any other statement. The responses for this statement continued to increase to increase in the next two cycles, and by the

third cycle, teacher responses were the highest for a combined response of 40. This response was calculated using the five-point response option, and multiplying it by the eight respondents. In this way, 40 was the highest combined response possible.

The second statement, “The feedback I received from my colleagues was purposeful and relevant,” grew from a combined response of 33 to 38, and then 39. The responses over the three cycles increased by 15% during the duration of the study. This shows an increase in the quality of the feedback during the time of implementation for all teachers.

The third statement, “The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback grew my beliefs,” began with a combined response of 32 and grew to 35 and then 40. This is an increase of 20% during the duration of the study, the highest growth among the items.

The final statement, “The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback resulted in shifts in my classroom instructional practices,” grew the most. The initial combined response for this statement was the lowest at 31. This response grew to 34 during the second cycle, and then 38 for the final cycle. The increase for this statement during the duration of the study was 17.5%.

The table on the following page (Table 4.4) shows growth by teacher, demonstrated by individual survey item. Teachers who gave the lowest scores on the survey upon completion of cycle 1 were the teachers that had the largest area for potential growth. These teachers are Janet, Sandy, and Alicia. Of the

total group, these teachers have a large amount of classroom experience. This could suggest that the initial responses were teachers with the most experience with past professional development models, and therefore scored the lowest with items asking about the impact of professional development on beliefs and overall classroom instruction. However, as the cycles continued, the scores grew in all areas indicating that this professional development model was useful not only for those with less teaching experience, but also teachers who have been in the classroom for a long time.

Table 4.4

Growth Analysis Table of Attitudes and Perceptions Survey

Teacher	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	Item 4	Overall Growth
Brittany	+/-0	+1	+/-0	+1	2
Lisa	+1	+1	+/-0	+1	3
Alicia	+1	+1	+1	+1	4
Julie	+/-0	+1	+1	+1	3
Sandy	+1	+1	+2	+1	5
Janet	+1	+1	+2	+/-0	4
Samantha	+/-0	+/-0	+1	+1	2
Carol	+/-0	+/-0	+1	+1	2
Total Growth by Item	4	6	8	7	

The second largest area of growth was with item four which states, “The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback resulted in shifts in my classroom instructional practices.” Growth in with this item is significant because it indicates an overall impact on classroom instructional

practice as a result of conversations with peers. It is this culminating of the experience that ultimately impacts student learning through an impact on instructional practices that meets the goals of professional development.

The area with the largest area of growth is statement three which reads, “The professional development cycle with peer observation and feedback grew my beliefs.” The growth shown in this statement indicates that the duration of the cycles contributed to the participants noticing their own growth in beliefs. As the cycles continued, this survey statement showed a high level of increase.

The survey item with the least amount of growth is item one which states, “The conversations I had with my colleagues stretched my thinking.” After the first cycle was completed and the survey collected, this item was already high. This indicates that even from the onset of the process, teachers valued the conversations with their peers and noted the impact that those conversations have on their thinking.

Interview Analysis

The final data collection was the unstructured group interviews that took place upon the completion of each of the three cycles of peer observation and feedback. All eight teachers from the peer observation and feedback cycles participated in the group interviews. There were three major themes that emerged from the unstructured group interviews. The first theme was an increased comfort in being observed as the cycles progressed. The second theme was teacher confidence in making curricular decisions for students. The third theme was the influence of colleagues expanded beyond their grade levels.

The first theme was an increased comfort in being observed as the cycles progressed. Many teachers in the group interview discussed how nervous they were during the initial cycle. One teacher, Lisa, said that she could feel herself sweating, even though the colleagues coming to watch her were the same colleagues she has planned with for years. She mentioned that the first few minutes of them in her classroom were nerve-wracking; however, eventually her heart rate slowed and she fell into her teaching, really not paying too much attention that they remained in the back of the room. When Lisa said this, just about all teachers in the group interview agreed with her.

Later, at the group interview after the second cycle, Lisa made a comment about how an administrator came into her classroom for a different purpose, as this time it was for an observation. This teacher shared that for the first time in her teaching career an administrator walked in and it didn't cause her to get nervous at all. She felt like she valued the teachers who came to observe her so much, and so having an administrator who she also respects come in was really no different.

In another interview, one of the fourth-grade teachers, Julie, mentioned no longer being intimidated by another teammate. She honestly explained in the interview that she had the utmost respect for another teacher, Janet, who was in the interview and the same grade level. She admitted that when she agreed to participate in the study, she had secretly hoped Janet would not be participating. Julia explained that this was not because she didn't like Janet, or that she didn't want to be around Janet. Rather, as she explained, she felt as though Janet

knew so much and was such a phenomenal teacher that she would be embarrassed as to what this teacher may find in her classroom during a peer observation and feedback cycle. Janet has previously been an instructional coach before being placed back in the classroom the year prior. As Julia explained, this caused some real feelings of inadequacy when she learned Janet would be observing her in the classroom.

However, Julia went on to explain that Janet was not only kind and gracious when observing her, but also, when she observed Janet in her classroom, she noticed that she has the same types of students and the same structures in her classroom as well. Julia explained that seeing Janet in her classroom, "...made her human too." It allowed her to remove the elevated status that she had given her that kept her from having real conversations about teaching and learning.

In response, Janet explained that she had no idea Julia felt this way and light-heartedly explained that she thought Julia was aloof to her, as if she had no desire to form a working relationship. Janet explained that she never imagined Julia felt intimidated and that was the cause of her not engaging more.

The second theme that emerged from the unstructured interview was confidence in making curricular decisions for students. This came up in all three unstructured interviews as well. In the first interview, Lisa told a story from their first cycle of peer observation and feedback about how the group of three of them each interpreted a math question from the district curriculum differently. They explained that if it was confusing to them, it most certainly wasn't a well-written

question, and wasn't a great question for their second graders. This developed into a conversation about the quality of the curriculum and making curricular decisions.

Eventually, Julie and Janet engaged in the conversation. They explained that they often supplement the curriculum with well-written math problems to start off their math instructional block. Janet said

We often go to several different resources and pull a great problem, and use that problem to start off our lesson when we are learning about a new concept. The questions from the book are often basic, or they don't have any type of contextual problems until the end of the lesson. We want those problems at the beginning, to see how kids think, so we just go get them somewhere else. Sometimes, the conversation and strategies kids do with those problems outside of the book are so great, we never even get back to the book's lesson. Because this is just so much better.

This part of the conversation led to the second-grade teachers talking about how next time they might not use the book's lesson at all. Instead, they talked about using some of the resources Julie and Janet used. Then, during the second group interview, the second-grade team came back thrilled to discuss the difference in the lesson they watched each other teach. Brittney, one of the three second-grade teachers, said

This lesson went so much better. I think the kids would think it was a better lesson too. And because I went second, after Lisa, I saw some of

the things she found with her students, and then looked for kids who solved kind of in the same way.

Brittney went on to explain that seeing Lisa teach the lesson with the problem they'd developed together allowed her to structure her students' share time better. She went on to say

I don't know if I would have noticed some of the things Lisa noticed, but after I saw her highlight kids, like the student who used the area model, I realized I had a student doing that too. Our responses from kids were great. They're never like that when we just stick to the book.

The team went on to talk about how they wanted to continue using well-written problems and asked about if they would get any pushback from not using the district curriculum. The pair of kindergarten teachers also added in and talked about not wanting to get "in trouble" for not using the kindergarten math book. Julie, a fourth-grade teacher, encouraged them by saying that if they had data showing how their kids were learning, and if they could verbalize how students were growing as mathematicians better than by using the book alone, then that was all that mattered. Janet joined in and said that the district math coordinator would welcome anything that was good instruction for students, and had data that showed it.

During the third interview, teachers came in and began the time wanting to discuss what they were using in their classrooms, and the instruction that occurred in between the observed lessons. Much of this session was spent with teachers talking about what happened in the days after the lesson in which they

were observed, as if they were catching the others up on what their students were noticing and learning about math. Teachers talked about specific children, and shared the contextual problems they were using with one another, and talked about where they would go next. They also shared where they found great problems, and resources that some introduced and encouraged others to use as well. This interview literally contained no mention of the math textbook. Rather, teachers were visibly excited to talk about their math classrooms and what their students were doing in class and their next steps to plan for instruction using supplemental materials.

The last theme was the influence of colleagues expanded beyond their grade levels. This encompassed several ideas to include vertical conversations across grade levels, and the impact of influential teachers being made beyond their grade levels. This theme was most notable when the teachers referenced going to one another in between the cycles and discussing with other teachers outside of their grade level. Most notably, Lisa, a second-grade teacher, referenced a conversation she had with Julie a week prior. This prior conversation occurred while both teachers were waiting for carpool duty to end so the staff meeting could begin. During this time, Lisa asked Julie about how she engages students who are struggling to participate, and explained that she was concerned she wasn't engaging all of her students. In our interview time, Lisa summarized the conversation she had with Julie and noted the importance of Julie's advice that Lisa applied the next day in class. Lisa said

I wasn't sure how I was going to make sure I got Aiden and Raven's engagement up. They struggle in math, and I think they check out a lot during instruction. But Julie worked on my contextual problem for the day so that there were ways Aiden and Raven could try it out. Then, I made sure to call on them to share first, just like Julie suggested. I felt better because they were able to talk about their strategy and I knew they were engaged, but I think they felt better too because they contributed. It's almost like it meant more to them than just math.

This type of conversation is an example of the influence of a strong teacher that can expand her influence beyond the colleagues in her current grade level.

Analysis by Research Question

This research study was designed around three research questions. The first question is, "What impact does a professional development model based on peer observation and feedback have on practitioner growth and teacher perceptions?" The research that addresses this question comes from quantitative data from the Attitudes and Perception Survey. This survey measured the degree to which the peer observation and feedback cycles impacted teacher perceptions about the professional development, and the impact that professional development had on classroom practice as well as communication between teachers. Questions from this survey showed how teacher perceptions shifted and grew in response to the quality of feedback and the purposeful professional development.

The second research question is, “How does a professional development model that includes peer observation and feedback as a structure for practitioner inquiry strengthen connections between belief and practice?” This question is addressed in the Attitudes and Perceptions Survey with question about the growth of beliefs through participating in the professional development, and a question about application to classroom practice. This question was also addressed in the Collective Belief Survey with a statement item asking about the impact made on students, as well as a statement measuring the continual growth of the educator as a result of the professional development. The results from that data show an increase in responses for both statements.

Finally, the third research question is, “How can the culture and community of a school grow the willingness of teachers to place themselves in vulnerable positions and invite colleagues to watch their teaching and teacher agency?” This question was addressed through both surveys. The Collective Beliefs Survey included questions about the feedback being purposeful, and agency was addressed with the question about making an overall impact on the culture and community of the school. The Attitudes and Perceptions Survey asked about the purposeful and relevant feedback from colleagues. The results from survey showed that the longer the cycles continued, the higher the teachers’ responses on the survey. These responses indicate that teachers seeing more ability to affect change in the classroom resulting from their own practitioner growth. The data from unstructured interviews indicated that teachers saw a growth in their willingness to invite others into their classrooms.

Finally, the unstructured interviews allowed for the development of themes that connected with the three research questions with the guiding questions. These questions, along with the format for the unstructured interviews, gave space for teachers to talk openly about their experiences and for the teacher voice to guide the conversation in order to arrive at data that was intentionally teacher-centered. This allowed for a better understanding of the teachers' experience and an accurate description of both their perceptions and thoughts, and also input for future planning of professional development later.

Summary

This study explored a professional development model with peer observation and feedback and how that model of professional development impacted teacher development of agency, instructional practices, and overall relevant practices that grow classroom instruction. The findings indicated that from the very beginning with cycle one, teachers found benefit to time engaged in conversations about each other's teaching, and noted the impact that had on their overall classroom instruction. The findings also indicated a growth in teachers' overall belief in their ability to make change and grow for the sake of all students in their classroom, as well as shifts in classroom practices.

Finally, findings from this study show the relevancy of a professional development structure based on peer observation and feedback to teachers who show value for this model. The findings also show an increased impact teachers can have on one another when they are given the time and structures to engage in conversations about their own classroom practices.

Chapter 5: Findings

Overview of the Study

This study explored how a professional development model that included peer observation and feedback impacted teacher's growth and overall satisfaction and also the impact on overall school culture.

The significance to the study comes from the need for teachers to find time to engage in high quality conversations with one another and the lack of current professional development models that place teachers at the center of their own learning. This study is relevant in particular to the current time in education when teachers were forced to shift instructional models on a dime, and are coming out of a global pandemic. Being able to enter one another's space and learn from one another while providing feedback to one another gives teachers the opportunity to engage in their own learning with their colleagues. This study is also relevant in today's educational climate because of the potential impact of this professional development model on overall teacher satisfaction. At a time when teachers are leaving the profession at a high rate, and not enough are entering in to take their place, examining how to increase teacher satisfaction through learning is a relevant study.

Explanations of Surveys and Unstructured Interviews

The first finding from the study was regarding teacher agency. This study aimed to see the impact of peer observation and feedback on overall teacher agency. Several pieces of data connected to teacher agency during the unstructured interviews. During the interviews teachers commented on their willingness to try out new things and move away from the district curriculum with supplemental materials. This was because the teachers debriefed and discussed the ways in which some teachers were already adding in the supplemental materials, and the impact this had on student learning. Samantha said

When I saw how Carol used a different opening question, I wondered where it came from. I was able to talk with her about it during the debrief, and it wasn't from the book. I'm totally trying that next time because while our lesson was the same, the question she used was much better than anything in the curriculum so I'm going to try it. I guess I never knew that was an option, but the more I thought about it the more I wondered 'why not?'.

During the next unstructured interview, Samantha brought this up again, letting us all know how it went. She said

I was nervous at first because I felt like I was doing something wrong. But then I thought, 'it's not like we are totally following the book lock-step anyway, so who cares? And it's not like somebody is going to come in and know that book so well that they know right away that this question didn't come from the book.' And then it went really well. Sometimes the book's

questions aren't written very well for kindergarteners. It's like the people who wrote it have not spent a lot of time with a kindergartener lately.

The conversation continued with teachers talking about their willingness to move away from the math curriculum with supplemental resources. Teachers from other grade levels who were more willing and have already shifted away from the mandated curriculum encouraged the teachers from the other grade levels to do the same. During the second unstructured interview, Julie said

You really need to remember that you are making decisions for kids. Your kids. Your kids that you are accountable for. Nobody knows them better than you, and nobody can make decisions for their learning better than their teacher. Don't forget that. As long as you can talk about why you are doing what you are doing, nobody is going to be upset with you.

It was this type of interaction that highlighted the value of conversations between seasoned, veteran teachers and teachers who are either newer to the teaching profession, or teachers who lack the confidence to make curricular decisions for their students that aren't 100% aligned to district pacing guides and curricular materials. Expanding the voice and influence of teachers to one another grew the overall agency of the whole.

This was also found in the survey data. One of the items from this survey not only grew the most during the three times the survey was given, but also this statement had the highest allowable summed response of 40 on the final survey. The statement was, "I believe that I can make an impact on the lives of my students." Each of the eight teachers scored themselves a 5 out of a possible 5

indicating that they strongly agree with that statement. When teachers responded to this survey item during the first survey, the overall summed response was only 32. This item had the largest growth on the survey with a total summed response of 40 during the final survey. This shows an increase in teacher agency during the length of the study.

Another survey item asked teachers to respond to the statement, “I believe I have the ability to make changes to improve the overall culture and community at my school.” This item was included in the Collective Beliefs Survey, and during the first survey administration, the summative response from all the teachers was only a 30 out of the possible 40. Comparatively, this was a much lower score than most of the other responses from that survey or the Attitudes and Perceptions Survey. As the professional development cycles continued however, this summative score rose from 30 to 33, and then to 39. The overall summative score increase of 9 points shows a significant increase in teachers seeing themselves as able to impact the culture and community of the school. This indicates that the professional development they were receiving with paper observation and feedback affected the ways in which they saw themselves and their school-wide impact.

Four teachers, Carol, Julie, Lisa, and Brittany all increased their response in this area on the survey from a 3 to a 5 between the first and the third survey administration. Of the group of eight, these three of the four are the youngest in the group, and the other is newer to the school. The findings indicate that the professional development that they received impacted the way they saw

themselves and the role they play in the school to positively impact the overall culture and community of the school as shown in their responses to the survey.

The next finding was an increase in the willingness of teachers to engage in peer observation and feedback. This was measured both by the attitudes and perceptions survey, and also evident in the unstructured group interviews. Two items on the attitudes and perceptions survey were of particular interest in this area. The first item stated, "The conversations I had with my colleagues stretched my thinking." This question showed the level to which the participants valued the conversation as evident by their response to the impact of conversations on their thinking. The overall summed responses for this question grew from 36 to 40, or an increase of four over the course of the three cycles. The maximum in this area was 40, which shows participants responded the highest possible for this area. The increase in willingness to engage in the process involving conversations with colleagues about classroom instruction indicates that participants grew in their value of the experience the longer they were involved.

The second item from the Attitudes and Perceptions Survey stated, "The feedback I received from my colleagues was purposeful and relevant." This question was aimed at participants view of the relevancy and purpose of the feedback. This question grew from an initial summed response of 33 to an overall summed response of 39, or a six-point increase. This shows that the longer the participants were involved in the process, the more they engaged with relevancy of feedback. This indicates an increased value found in the process of

professional development with peer observation and feedback, which could result in an increased willingness to participate.

This idea was also found in the unstructured group interviews. During the final interview, Samantha spoke about the awareness of areas she noticed during the third cycle that she didn't notice in the first cycle. She said

I always found it powerful to watch each other teach. I learn so much from hearing my colleagues talk to children, the questions they pose, and how their students respond. But now I'm noticing things and paying attention to things that weren't even on my radar before, like, this last time when Carol prompted a child. The child seemed to be unsure of herself and really just didn't seem to have confidence, but Carol knew she had great thinking. She prompted her, and it was just like all of the sudden the child felt better about sharing when her teacher reminded her of the thinking she had done. I don't know if I would have picked up on some of those things the first time, but I am certainly going to prompt like that now that I've seen it! I wonder what other things I missed before, or what I may pick up on later. It's like every time I go in there is more to learn about what to look for and what I can learn from others.

Lisa shared something similar when she said, "It was like we got more comfortable with each other and the lesson we were doing when we were observed, and the observing we were doing with each other became even more authentic." This increased value that the participants saw in the professional

development cycles indicates a willingness to participate and learn from each other with every new opportunity for peer observation and feedback.

Another teacher, Sandy, made the statement, “It’s one thing to hear about it in a meeting, but it is totally another to see it in person.” The entire group agreed with nodding heads and comments to agree. The group went on to talk about how much they wished others would be willing to engage in peer observation and feedback. Julie made the comment

I feel like if we could just get some of our colleagues to do it just one time, they would be hooked. They would realize that there’s nothing to be afraid of, and the benefit far outweighs that feeling of being vulnerable and scared that we all had in the beginning. I feel like we need to do more to share our experience so that others will be more willing.

This conversation showed how much the teacher valued the experience, but this conversation took place during the last unstructured interview. This indicates that these feelings of value for the process grew throughout the three cycles. This matches the numeric data from the Attitudes and Perceptions Survey, indicating that teachers benefit from peer observation and feedback that is consistent over time and allows space for them to grow in their willingness to participate.

Another finding from the study showed an increase in practitioner growth as a result of the peer observation and feedback cycles. One way this was shown was with a statement from the Collective Beliefs Survey that stated, “The professional development cycle that included peer observation and feedback

resulted in shifts to my classroom instructional practices.” The initial response after the first cycle was a summed response of 31, which was the lowest of scores for either of the two surveys. However, after the completion of cycle 3, the summed response for this area was 38, which is an increase of seven points. This suggests that as the process of peer observation and feedback continued, the growth in practitioners as noted by the shifts to classroom practice increased the most. This is hugely important because ultimately professional development is aimed at impacting changes to classroom instruction, and this professional development model resulted in practitioners noting and reporting their own shifts in classroom practice.

An increase in practitioner growth was also evident during the unstructured interviews. Brittany talked a lot about this. She said that often when she reflects on a lesson, it will be another year before she teaches that same lesson. But watching her colleagues teach it twice and reflecting on that lesson each time kept the thinking current, and had more applications to when she taught the lesson. Brittany also talked about the conversations afterward, and how she made shifts to the lessons in the days to come as a result of the conversations with her colleagues. She said

We plan together all the time, and throughout my entire time as a teacher we are always required to plan together. But it was mostly ‘what lesson are we doing’ and ‘what materials will you use to teach this or that.’ But with this, it was different. We began asking ourselves question about how the students may respond, or how we could prompt students who get

stuck. Our planning never went that in depth, and my lessons never thought that critically. Now I think about all sorts of things. I observed in Julie's class last time, and there were things she had thought through that weren't even on my radar before. It certainly has changed the way that I both plan for and present lessons to my second graders.

This conversation was met with many agreeing with Brittany and a few giving their own experiences with the way that their lesson planning and teaching changed as a result of the peer observation and feedback. Samantha spoke of the impact on the reflection time. She agreed with Brittany and added

Normally our planning time is before the lesson. We create the lesson, talk about what we need to teach and how we will teach it. But with this we came back and talked AFTER the lesson. I've never really done that before. It was like before we planned for it, taught it, and moved on to plan the next thing. This way, I feel like we reflect on what went well, where our kids are at, and what we may plan as a result of the kids. And not just with exit slips and things like that, but with things I would have missed before that is specific to children.

Results Related to Existing Literature

There are several connections to the literature made within the findings related to teacher agency and even teacher job satisfaction. The communication between teachers within the team and teachers across the building connects well with Vygotsky's social learning theory. An important construct to this theory is the idea of community and safety within that community of learners. Finding a place

within the community of teachers to discuss their experiences and thinking around peer observation and feedback demonstrates how knowledge is constructed within a community of learners engaged in an inquiry process of learning (Wells, 1990). As the study went on, the conversations and vulnerability increased as evident by the overall tone of the unstructured interviews, while the self-ratings around perceptions and attitudes also increased. This demonstrates the importance of communities of learners who are comfortable in their willingness to open up and share with their peers.

Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory is well embedded in the construction of knowledge of both individual teachers, which connects to the community of teachers in the study (Wells, 1990). The deepening of the knowledge of the whole was possible when the teachers were willing to participate in the learning process together. This allowed the growth of ideas and understanding by the whole. Simultaneously, like outlined in Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development in sociocultural learning theory the group of teachers were able to influence one another (Aubrey, 2009). The strengths and knowledge of the "knowers" was able to influence and assist those with less experience and understanding. This happened several times within the study after trust was established. The teachers like Janet and Sandy who have more experience were able to confirm or grow ideas. At other times, the teachers with experience were also able to encourage the younger teachers to take risks. This deepened the influence of successful and experienced teachers to others.

Gordon Wells (1990) expanded on Vygotsky's sociocultural learning theory to apply the concepts to adult learners. Wells determined that each person's contribution to the whole developed the construction of knowledge not only for that individual, but also deepened the knowledge of the whole group. Wells also explained that dialogue creates the learning that is then personally applied. This was evident throughout the study as teachers talked during the unstructured interviews about new learning through their experience. Then, during unstructured interviews following each cycle, teachers would discuss some of the applications to classroom practice they had tried out as a result of the conversations and experiences related to the peer observation and feedback cycle.

Another component of sociocultural theory is the analysis of beliefs and practice (Dodge & Kendall 2004). Professional development that gives space for teacher to engage in conversations with one another results in the appropriation of ideas. Then, after these ideas are appropriated as a result of conversations with peers, the ideas are then considered and enacted into practice, (Martin et al., 2004). This was evident in the study when teachers took the ideas that were discussed both in the reflection and the unstructured interview times and developed those idea into practice later.

Structures that allow time for teachers to talk also allow teacher time to identify misalignments between belief and practice (Mills, 2001). This can occur when teachers realize there is an action or a component of their teaching that doesn't align with their beliefs. Reflective conversations between peers can result

in this identification of misalignment because of the social construction of knowledge. This was evident in the study when, for example, teachers spoke of the dislike for the district math curriculum and gave reasons why it didn't connect with their beliefs about teaching and learning, and then from the resulting conversation, took steps to shift away from the curriculum because it did not align with their beliefs about teaching and learning. This took place in a conversation between teachers. It is these conversations between teachers that are necessary in a professional development structure.

The connection to Systems Thinking is best organized into the five dimensions of Systems Thinking that were evident and connect to the study (Senge, 2012). First is personal mastery which is developing an idea of what is possible and what one wants to be. This was evident in the conversations about what could happen with instruction and how teachers can grow and develop. The second is a shared vision, or a mutual purpose which was evident with the group making decisions to change the structure of their math lessons during the second and third cycles of peer observation and feedback. The third is developing mental models. This one is very important to the study and well-connected. Changing the ideas and pictures teachers have of instruction happens when engaging in conversations about that instruction with each other. This allows the teachers to change their assumptions about teaching and learning (Senge, 2012).

The next dimension is team learning, which takes place with reflecting and discussion with a group of people. This is another important dimension because of how well it connects with the study. The discussion and reflection of teachers

was evident in the two survey pieces of data, as well as all three of the unstructured interviews and shows how examining mental models allows for change.

Finally, the last dimension is systems thinking which shows how change is best for all. This dimension also allows for transformative teaching through determining what is best needed for a change, and relying on the group to make those decisions. The connection here is most illustrated with teacher agency and the beliefs that they can not only grow and change themselves, but also, they can grow and change their school with an impact.

The next component of current literature is the Growth Mindset Theory (Dweck, 2006). This theory heavily connects the mindset of a teacher and the attitude toward the work. When teachers develop a growth mindset, the resulting effects to the learning environment, which in this case is the group of teachers in the study, is positive. With this idea, teachers are transformed through the learning opportunities and are capable of change. This was evident with the conversations that evolved between teachers as a result of the peer observation and feedback, and the growth of the group to discuss with one another. This sharing of ideas, and the shifts made to the classroom represent what happens when teachers believe they are capable of learning and growing. This is also connected to another component of the Growth Mindset Theory which explains that when a practitioner has a growth mindset, they notice when they don't know something and then actively seek out how to do it and learn. This was evident when teachers would notice something a colleague did, and then actively seek to

implement that in their own classroom. This is important because it affects the learning community for all involved and grows the already high set of expectations that is necessary to make positive impacts on the culture and community of a school (Dweck et al., 2014).

The findings from this study pull together many theories and grow them with practical application. This is due to the nature of the professional development structure of peer observation and feedback which places teachers not only at the center of their own learning, but also at the center of important decisions about the instructional practices in place connected to the needs of the students. Focusing on these theories allows for the understanding of the environment necessary for teachers to learn and grow together. The confirmations of this study show the importance of social learning in professional development and how when teachers have time to talk, they have a positive influence on one another and can even elevate the learning of the group.

Another confirmation of the study is the value that teachers place on professional development when they can have choice and a voice in what is learned together. This is true because of the mindset the teachers had that grew throughout the study regarding their own agency and impact they can make on the students and school as a whole. Empowering teachers in this way through professional development confirms current literature about both mindset and growth of teaching and learning.

Finally, another confirmation the study has to current literature is the growth of knowledge in a group consistent with sociocultural learning theory.

Allowing space for teachers to engage in dialogue and structures that support the logistics for these types of interaction to discuss teaching and learning allow for the development of ideas and the important construction of knowledge between seasoned teachers and new teachers. While everybody in the group had important contributions to make, the widening influence of highly effective teachers was important to note in the study.

Practice Recommendations

There are several recommendations resulting from the outcomes of the study. The first is an analysis of current professional development models and components. Like many other schools, this school has a professional development calendar that includes many district professional development components, as well as school-based professional development components. In order to include professional development that provides space for peer observation and feedback with quality conversations it will be necessary to evaluate the current yearly professional development components for both the district and the school. Evaluation with teacher voice will also be important in the future. This could include teachers evaluating the current professional development components to show what has the largest impact on the teachers' development of classroom instructional practices, making way for structures like peer observation and feedback that will allow this growth.

Another recommendation is for participation of peer observation and feedback to be school-wide. While this study took place only with teacher volunteers, broadening the impact of peer observation and feedback to the whole

school will only be effective if there is a component of professional development replaced by peer observation and feedback, not in addition to the existing model. This may require a restructuring of professional development, but is necessary in order for teachers to participate without another additional component added to their already full schedules.

Utilizing a structure to capture conversations or to document the topics of lesson construction, observations, or conversation content is another recommendation. This would allow the professional development structure of peer observation and feedback to not only be monitored by administration, but would allow areas that are working well and new ideas within a team to be shared across the school. For example, if one team finds a structure that works well, having this in notation would allow that information to be shared out to the whole. In addition, having school-wide conversations with leaders from each grade level to discuss what is going well, and what improvements need to be made to the professional development structure would also allow teacher voice, and any improvements to be made and issues to be addressed to increase the likelihood of peer observation and feedback to be beneficial to all teachers who are involved.

Finding a predictable structure to allow space for peer observations and feedback as a regular occurring professional development structure is another large recommendation. This can occur only if this structure is then used regularly by teachers. This would increase the number of teachers who participate and the resulting impact on classroom application. This will also allow the influence of

highly effective teachers to be widespread on teachers throughout the school, instead of only their current grade levels.

Another recommendation is the logistics and scheduling of the peer observation. Making this happen in a school setting is no small feat, and requires thinking through details of logistics. This means that administrator will need to consider how classroom coverage for both the peer observation and feedback conversations can be provided, but will need to do so in a way that does not take away from instructional time. The suggestion is the inclusion of teacher voice in order to make these decisions and provide coverage that finds a balance between meeting the need of the coverage, without taking teachers out of their own instructional setting for too much time.

Another recommendation to extend on the research is to provide space for vertical observations of teachers. Because many teachers reported a desire to observe in other grade levels and the impact this could make on their own understanding of the learning continuum, organizing a structure that allows for peer observations to occur beyond a single team is recommended. This again would allow the influence of highly effective teachers to be experienced throughout the building, while also growing a common vision and shared desire of outcomes for teaching and learning at the school. Thus, growing the culture and community of the school and teacher agency to affect change at their own school. Vertical observations throughout the school widens the lens in which individual teachers see instruction at their own school.

There are additional recommendations to be made for improvement after a school-wide structure for peer observation and feedback is implemented. This may include a specific lens for observers to look for when providing feedback, such as the popular #observeme movement across schools. This movement posts desired area for feedback, determined by the teacher being observed, outside of the classroom so that anybody who observes that teacher can give feedback that is relevant to that teacher. This could also be included in the conversation afterward with reflection.

Limitations and Suggestions

One limitation to this study is that all the participants were volunteers. While the recommendations for further research include implementing this structure school-wide, there are limitations to the current research to note because the participants in the study were volunteers. First of all, the nature of volunteers lends to the attitude and mindset of those who volunteered. By nature, these individuals are already the teachers in the building who are eager and ready to learn and grow. They are the leaders who engage in almost all professional development, with a desire to impact their own classroom instructional practices in order to provide the best learning environment and content for their students. It is important to note that should this professional development structure be implemented school-wide, it is unlikely that all participants will approach the professional development with the same level of commitment and the same attitude towards development as did these volunteer participants.

In addition, because this study was limited to eight participants, not every grade level had a participant in the study. The only grade levels represented were kindergarten, second, and fourth grade. Also, the two fourth grade teachers were both self-contained, meaning that they teach all the subjects to one class of students. There were not any teachers in the study who are departmentalized, or who share students between a pair of teaching partners.

Another limitation to the study is that the content for the peer observation and feedback was limited to only math. Should a school-wide implementation of this professional development model be adopted, there would need to be support given for teachers who only teach ELA so that they can participate in peer observation cycles with other teachers in the school who also do not teach math.

One of the biggest challenges with adopting this professional development model school-wide would be the monitoring by administration in order to capture conversations. Including the principal in the conversation could potentially limit the responses that the teachers have because of the evaluative nature of the principal even in a non-evaluative observation like a peer observation and feedback cycle.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are three main areas to focus on for future research as it relates to this study. The first is continued professional development with peer observation and feedback. In order to provide continued cycles for peer observation and feedback, professional development that includes these structures can be implemented over the entire school year. Many schools submit a professional

development plan for the year to their district or central office. Revising or reviewing this plan when it is developed before the beginning of the school year, and intentionally planning professional development that includes peer observation throughout the school year would allow teachers to engage in this growth opportunity regularly and have the potential to learn and grow from colleagues. In this way, collecting data for research for an entire school year would allow future research to show the impacts on teacher growth and development, as well as the potential growth of teacher agency.

This research would also be beneficial to gather whole year data on peer observation and feedback that is directly tied to school growth initiatives. For example, if a school's focus for a school year is on writers' workshop, then the peer observation and feedback cycle could be tied to observations specifically in writer's workshop. It would be important to see how cycles of peer observation and feedback could strengthen the overall focus on school-wide initiatives through the structure of peer observation and feedback, and how the application of those initiatives may be better applied more regularly through the peer observation and feedback processes.

Another recommendation for future research is vertical peer observation and feedback. While there are certainly many ways in which peer observation and feedback can grow teacher capacity, providing space for teachers to observe others in different grade levels would be an excellent use of peer observation and feedback. Research related to this could include the growth of understanding the connections between content in related grade levels. This could take place when

teachers observe other classrooms in grade levels either one grade higher or lower than their own, and use a specific lens for observation to connect the content. Research that used peer observation and feedback to broaden understanding of how conceptual ideas in specific content areas, like math, are grown through time could develop resulting shifts made to classroom practice. One way this might be done is with a content standard that connects from two to even three grade levels. Then, with three teachers from those three different grade levels, providing space for peer observation and feedback in order for the three teachers to see the content taught in the youngest to the oldest grade levels and then engaging in reflection with one another. Research using peer observation and feedback in this way could show the development of how these concepts grow before and after the grade levels of specific teachers.

Finally, the last area for recommended research is a cohort study. Further research is needed to determine if the relationships developed within a cohort of study that engages in regular cycles of peer observation and feedback would allow for further depth of understanding and application of practices. Because each participant in this study was apprehensive about participation, and because of the known vulnerability required of teachers, more research is needed within a cohort model. Research in this area would help determine if a cohort model is more conducive to trusting relationships and more of a willingness of teachers to determine areas of focus for their own growth, and to provide areas of specific feedback to their peers. This further research could focus on the emotional support and growth of teachers, especially as we move toward a post-pandemic

era in education when teacher recruitment and overall job satisfaction are more important than ever.

Summary

This study aimed at determining the impact of peer observation and feedback on school culture, practitioner growth, and overall teacher satisfaction. Throughout the three cycles there continued to be an increase in teacher responses on the surveys, indicating a growth rating in agency and also practitioner growth. There were also many points of data from the unstructured interview that showed increases in teacher willingness, as well as growth in attitudes and perceptions about the peer observation and feedback that increased with each cycle. Participants indicated increased value in the process as well as learning from one another. Data also indicated the influence of highly effective teachers on others, which expanded their influence beyond their current grade level.

Further research would be beneficial that includes an expanded timeline of professional development that includes peer observation and feedback. Further research would also be beneficial to include yearly professional development planning to see the increased impact in connection to school-wide initiatives.

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