Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Initiating a Professional Learning
Community at Carney Hill Community School

Liza Arnold

B.Ed., University of Victoria, 1998

Project Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of

the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Education

In

Counselling

The University of Northern British Columbia

April 2009

© Liza Arnold, 2009

Abstract

Working at Carney Hill Community School is emotionally draining and as a result the school struggles with the retention of its staff members. Recognizing this problem, a small group of teachers introduced a new structure that would provide a place for staff to work differently. This different way of working is defined as a professional learning community (PLC). It is a move from working in isolation to working collaboratively in an effort to achieve a shared vision and goals (DuFour, 1999). This new structure would become the vehicle from which the work would be done. As part of that initiative, this research project was designed: "To assess whether or not being an active participant of the professional learning community at Carney Hill Community School increased job satisfaction." In order to determine whether or not the PLC increased job satisfaction, a mixed methods approach was used which included focus groups, individual interviews, and a before-and-after survey. The intent of the survey was to corroborate the focus group and interview findings. The final analysis suggests that although there was a significant amount of frustration and stress experienced during the initiation of the PLC, it has improved job satisfaction and increased the retention of those staff members and administrators who were active PLC participants.

Acknowledgement

To the PLC Girls (Ann, Kim & Leah):

Your enthusiasm and willingness to continue to work at initiating a professional learning community at Carney Hill even when things got tough was key.

To Craig:

Your "stretch and catch" metaphor, and your comfort and confidence in embracing shared leadership was crucial.

To the PLC Participants:

Thank you for being a part of the "reculturing" of Carney Hill. You are a high performing team.

To the Review Team (Helen, Ellen, Craig):

Thank you for ensuring "the story" was captured as accurately as possible. Your knowledge and experience is held in high regard.

To My Committee (Karin and Linda):

Your input has helped me clarify the outcome of this project. I am thankful for having the opportunity to work with both of you. You have inspired me.

To Bryan:

Thank you for all the time and energy you have put in to helping me complete this project. I have learned a lot from you and will always remember this experience.

To My Family:

Ryan, you have been so supportive – thank you. Kate and Max, learning really is life-long. Mom, you are the best "listener" I know. Dad, you work harder than anyone I know.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

Chapter One: Introduction

Working at Carney Hill Community School is not easy. The environment is emotionally draining and can easily take its toll on those who work there. Students attending the school have social, emotional, and behaviour needs not typical of the average public school student. Students struggle with issues related to grief and loss, low self-esteem, abuse, and the inability to deal with anger. Complicating these issues is the fact that many students are living in poverty, get an inadequate amount of sleep, lack proper nutrition, and do not have adequate strategies for coping. These are the realities of teaching the student population at Carney Hill. Ensuring the staff are satisfied in their roles and feel supported in the work that they do is a crucial factor that relates directly to teacher retention, student achievement, and the future success of Carney Hill.

The motivation for this research project began on October 11 at the 2007 Summit: "Learning by doing – Bringing professional learning communities to life in our schools and districts." My first impressions of the conference were captured in a journal entry dated October 18, 2007. Upon arriving at the conference center, we were greeted by literally thousands of chairs lined row upon row which filled a room so big that large projection

screens were required in order for the speakers to be seen by all participants. I sat down, sunk in my chair, and thought, "this is going to be a long three days: how impersonal and uninspiring." How wrong I was! Within minutes I was captured by each and every word spoken. For the next three days I was drained emotionally, physically, and cognitively out of sheer anticipation for what such a new way of thinking and working could mean for Carney Hill -- there was hope! It was this very weekend that I made the conscious decision to focus my research project on professional learning communities (PLC).[1] I did not know which aspect of PLC but I knew it would be a PLC, and I knew it would involve Carney Hill.

I was fortunate to have attended the conference with three amazing colleagues. It was the collective enthusiasm of our group that stood out to me the most. As a group, we decided that we would become the PLC "steering committee" and do our best to return to school and attempt to inspire our colleagues to "buy-in" to the movement. In fact, there was one point during the conference that we were ready to begin the implementation process in the middle of the night. We even went as far as to share with Becky DuFour our intent to raise Carney Hill from the bottom of the barrel when it comes to the results of the Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA).[2] We would do this within three years.

The week following the conference, the four of us met and began to put into place a plan for sharing our newly acquired passion for implementing a PLC at Carney Hill. The work, as promised by the DuFours, did not go on without its share of ups and downs. It was definitely persistence that was needed throughout the year, and I believe it was this persistence that paid off in the end.

---

[1] A glossary of the project's terminology is located on page 85.
[2] Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) – a snapshot of students progress in reading, writing, comprehension, and numeracy.

It is important to note that the teachers at Carney Hill had attempted to establish a PLC model the previous year. This model looked significantly different. It involved small groups of teachers working in similar grades (i.e., two or three teachers) getting together with administrators. It was described as being administrator driven and lacking a sense of unity. Professionals often felt pressured to attend and did not feel valued. Although it did not appear to be well received, the administration was aware of the potential of a PLC. A more detailed knowledge about PLC was the missing piece. Throughout this paper, the term PLC will be used when referring to the new way of working, not the structure.

The intent of this project was to assist in the creation of a PLC and: "To assess whether or not being an active participant of the professional learning community at Carney Hill Community School increases job satisfaction." This project is the result of what unfolded throughout the 2007/08 school year at Carney Hill. It is the story of staff members who are dedicated to improving the learning of students who need it the most. It is information for others to learn from when considering a model of change. In the end, the professional learning community contributed significantly to improving job satisfaction at a school where satisfaction was hard to find.

Chapter Two: Significance of Issue

Necessity for and Importance of Study

Carney Hill is a challenging school to work at and has historically had trouble retaining teachers. In an attempt to improve job satisfaction and improve the retention rate of teachers, a PLC was created. When asked, "Why a PLC at Carney?" some of the responses from staff included: to assist with behavioral issues, to share ideas and responsibilities, to increase communication, and to develop stronger support for each other (Appendix A).

Assessing the impact that the PLC has on job satisfaction at Carney Hill is imperative. It gives insight into critical issues with which the school struggles. These issues include: job satisfaction, retention, capacity building, and student achievement. The findings suggest that being an active participant in a PLC at Carney Hill increases job satisfaction, suggesting we have obtained information about a "model" for contributing to improved morale, increased motivation, retention of staff, and most importantly, an increase in student achievement. This is just the information the school needs. In addition, the findings will be used to justify and strengthen the rationale for ongoing support (i.e., time and resources) of the PLC model.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this project is built on the two theories or systems of thought put forth by Bandura (1997) and DuFour (2004). Bandura (1997) speaks of the importance of self-efficacy: "...self-efficacy beliefs determine the goals people set for themselves, how much effort they expend, how long they persevere, and how resilient they are in the face of failures and setbacks" (p. 4). DuFour (2004) speaks of the importance of ensuring that teachers belong to a team that focuses on student learning: "Teams must focus their efforts on crucial questions related to learning and generate products that reflect that focus, such as lists of essential outcomes, different kinds of assessment, analyses of student achievement, and strategies for improving results" (p. 9).

The staff working at Carney Hill must feel that they are capable of making a difference in the lives of the students with whom they are working. It is a difficult environment and much energy is necessary to be able to persevere when the going gets tough. In order to do this, the staff via the PLC model have given themselves permission to identify those learning outcomes that are deemed essential to their students. In addition, they are aligning assessment tools and teaching strategies. Therefore, it is these two theories I feel are especially fitting.

Statement of the problem

During the first year and a half that I spent at Carney Hill, it became apparent that morale could use a boost. Student achievement remained low, student behaviour was less than desirable, and job satisfaction was not stellar. It is of no surprise that attracting and retaining teachers has historically been and still remains a difficult task. The intent of this project is to answer the research question: Does participating in the PLC at Carney Hill

Community School increase job satisfaction? It is anticipated that the findings will suggest there is a link -- participating in the PLC does increase job satisfaction.

Limitations and Delimitations

Limitations of the study are those things that cannot be controlled by the researcher (Mauch & Park, 2003). There are a number of limitations that may affect this study. These include:

1. Lack of staff member willingness to participate in the survey (i.e., few respondents)

2. Lack of staff member willingness to complete the survey (i.e., few respondents)

3. Lack of staff member willingness to participate in focus groups (i.e., few respondents)

4. Participant attrition (i.e., illness or relocation)

5. Willingness of participants to speak truthfully.

Delimitations of the study are those things that can be controlled by the researcher (Mauch & Park, 2003). There are also a number of delimitations that may affect this study. These include:

1. Interview scheduling (i.e., to best meet the needs of participants)

2. Group being studied (i.e., those who participated in PLC)

3. Researcher effects (i.e., involvement in process).

Definitions of Key Concepts

1. Professional Learning Community: a group of individuals working together to enhance their ability to achieve their shared vision and goals (DuFour, 1999).

2. Self – efficacy: an impression that one is capable of performing in a certain manner or attaining certain goals. It is the belief that one has the capabilities and/or the

courses of actions required to execute and manage prospective situations

(http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Self-efficacy).

3. Collective Efficacy: efficacy beliefs at the collective level refer to judgments that

    people make about a social system (family, team, organization, or community) and

    about its level of competence and effectiveness in specific domains of action

    (Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni & Steca, 2003).

Chapter Three: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review is focused on themes that were identified in sources that speak to the improvement of teaching and learning. Key words such as "professional learning communities," "teacher," "job satisfaction," "self-efficacy," and "student learning" were used. These key words were chosen because they best described the intent of the research, the individuals involved, and the purpose of the PLC.

Job Satisfaction

A number of factors have been identified as impacting job satisfaction. Some of those include: working and developing relationships with children, intellectual challenge, and professional autonomy (Zembylas & Papanastasiou, 2005). Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2005) go on to identify factors related to job dissatisfaction such as: reduced resources, moderate pay, and lack of professional autonomy. Csikszentmihalyi (as cited in Bishay, 1996) has proposed that individuals reach a state of happiness and satisfaction when they are involved in an activity and are functioning at the peak of their abilities. In this situation the individual experiences 'high levels of concentration, immersion, strength, and control.'

Csikszentmihalyi terms this experience 'flow' (as cited in Bishay, 1996, p. 147). Bishay (1996) uses the idea of "flow" to, "determine which activities are the most 'psychologically rewarding,' which are more conducive to higher teacher motivation, and which contribute to the fulfillment of higher-ordered needs (i.e., social relations, esteem and actualization)" (p.148). Flow may also be applied to measure job satisfaction. "Job satisfaction, in turn is an index of morale and motivation" (Schonfeld, as cited in Bishay, 1996, p.148). When teacher motivation is high, student self-esteem is affected: "Teachers with strong positive attitudes about teaching had students whose self-esteem was high. Students seem to recognize the effectiveness of teachers who are satisfied with their teaching performance" (Peck, Fox, and Morston, as cited in Bishay, 1996, p. 147).

Collective efficacy can be developed via a collaborative model such as a PLC and indirectly increase teacher self-efficacy. Recognizing that higher teacher efficacy is related to higher student efficacy the PLC model is a mechanism for increasing student success in a number of ways. Fostering student self-efficacy while improving student achievement should be at the heart of all schools. That being said, what link exists between student self-efficacy and academic achievement? What link exists between teacher self-efficacy and effectiveness?

Money

Both Bishay (1996) and McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007) highlight the fact that money is not a factor when it comes to teacher job satisfaction and effectiveness. According to McKinsey, "For over 50 years nearly every aspect of education has been altered in order to try and improve the state of education including increasing education budgets significantly. No matter which angle is taken or which area is studied, the same results are noted. There is

no change" (p. 1). Bishay (1996) concurs that, "pay incentives have been unsuccessful" (147).

While increasing teacher pay may prove unsuccessful, resources must be available to support initiatives such as the implementation of a PLC. Resources include money necessary for time to work collaboratively and for professional development. Resources may also translate into a willingness to remove a staff member's responsibility in order to take on another (i.e., one meeting for another). There is only so much time and energy that individuals have to give and at some point something has to give.

Other findings highlighted by Zembylas and Papanastasiou (2005) link one aspect of job dissatisfaction to moderate pay. If money, including pay incentives apparently has no impact on student learning but is linked to job dissatisfaction, what link exists between job satisfaction and student learning? Moreover, significant monetary investments were made in Philadelphia to address the shortage of teachers (Useem & Neild, 2005). Some of the areas in which additional funding was required included: aggressive marketing initiatives, tuition reimbursement for new teachers pursuing their master's degree, $1000 awards for teachers who recruit candidates into high-need areas, and hiring bonuses (Useem & Neild, 2005).

Getting the best

Three characteristics of effective schools have been identified by McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007) which include: hiring the best teachers, getting the best out of the teachers, and intervening when students lag behind. DuFour's (2004) four guiding questions of a PLC are these: What is it we want students to learn? How will we know when they have learned? What will we do when they do not get it? What will we do when they have got it? It is DuFour's fourth question, "What will we do when they do not get it?" and McKinsey's

("How to be top," 2007) description of effective schools intervening when students lag behind that have a striking resemblance. Both authors note the importance of identifying and working with those students who require additional assistance.

McKinsey's ("How to be top," 2007) hire the best teachers policy is not always possible. Nonetheless, if models for improvement are in place, which claim to foster best practice, then although you may not have the ability to hire the *best* teachers, you have a model for getting the best from those you do have. Getting the best out of the teaching staff in place will improved the attribute that is said to affect student performance more than anything else – teacher quality ("How to be top," 2007).

John Kotter (as cited in DuFour, 1999, para. 9) also speaks to the importance of reaching our potential or, in other words, getting the best from our teachers. He stresses the importance of professional development being embedded in the working day:

> Because we spend so many of our waking hours at work, most of our development takes place – or doesn't take place – on the job. If our time at work encourages us and helps us to develop, we will eventually realize our potential. If time at work does little or nothing to develop our skills, we will never live up to our potential.

Efficacy

The importance of both self-efficacy and collective efficacy on teacher job satisfaction has been outlined by Caprara, Barbaranelli, Borgogni, and Steca (2003). While the article reminds us of the significant impact self-efficacy has on job satisfaction and achievement, it goes on to suggest an even greater link between collective efficacy, job satisfaction, and achievement. "Collective efficacy reflects the beliefs members of an organization hold about their capacity to operate in concert and to create the needed synergies among different roles and expertise to meet adequately the obligations and

challenges of the group or organization" (Caprara et al., 2003). Ross and Gray (as cited by

Naylor, 2006) also identify the strength of collective efficacy and collaboration over the

individual when it comes to student achievement: "Unless people believe they can produce

desired outcomes, they have little incentive to pursue ambitious goals and to persevere in the

face of difficulties" (Caprara et al., 2003). When it comes to collective efficacy, beliefs

engender a "sense of mission and purpose of a system, the strength of common commitment

to what it seeks to achieve, how well its members work together to produce results, and the

groups' resiliency in the face of difficulties (Bandura as cited in Caprara et al., 2003).

When it comes to esteem or self-efficacy, the PLC model speaks to the heart of

teachers, "…teachers want to make a difference in the lives of people" (DuFour, Eaker,

DuFour, & Sparks). Those teachers who are active participants in the PLC model want to

make a difference. Once engaged they will begin to recognize the power of the collective.

In the sources reviewed, there was never any disagreement with respect to the

strength of the collective. What is an essential piece of the collective being effective is the

development of trust among colleagues, and the ability to work together in a respectful

manner even when perspectives differ. Furthermore, professional autonomy is a factor

related to job satisfaction. The question to consider is: can professional autonomy be

protected in a collaborative environment?

Professional Development

Professional development is critical when it comes to the improvement of teaching

and learning. In order to improve student learning and teaching, one must continue to seek

professional development opportunities. Today's society has become so focused on results

that often professional development evolves around the "latest and greatest" and those areas

which boast proven results achieved sooner than later. While the value in this cannot be disputed, Laura Servage (2006/2007) identifies critical reflection as a component essential in sustaining school improvement. She stresses the importance of tackling what she calls "foundational questions": "It is one thing to work together to improve teaching strategies for later literacy; it is another to ask hard questions about why our strategies to date cannot help Aboriginal students to succeed" (p. 15).

Taking professional development opportunities a step further, both DuFour (1999) and McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007) explain the importance of staff development being a part of the regular working day. In some of the top performing schools, McKinsey ("How to be top,"2007) notes accommodations are made for things such as teachers planning lessons collaboratively, afternoons set aside for collaboration, and time for those teaching common subjects to collaborate. "As one educator remarked, 'when a brilliant American teacher retires, almost all of the lesson plans and practices that she has developed also retire. When a Japanese teacher retires, she leaves a legacy'" ("How to be top," 2007, p. 82).

When a staff comes together and commits to improving the development of both teaching and learning using a collaborative model such as a PLC, it does more than address the issue of the day. The model becomes a structure for ongoing improvement and support in many areas. It provides a safe and welcoming place for new staff, it becomes a forum for sharing experiences from which one can learn, it is a place to showcase knowledge, skills, and abilities otherwise not recognized, and it is collaborative mentoring. It is a place where as in the case of the retiring Japanese teacher, a legacy can be created and remain.

Intervene Early

DuFour (2004) and McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007) recognize the importance of intervening early when students start to lag behind. DuFour identifies one of the guiding questions in the PLC as, "How will we respond when a student experiences difficulty in learning?" He goes on to suggest a number of possible intervention strategies. McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007) describes one of the characteristics of top schools being early intervention when students start to fail.

If the importance of intervening early and often when students start to struggle is critical as suggested by DuFour (2004) and McKinsey ("How to be top," 2007), educators need to put more emphasis on this recommendation and begin to reflect diligently on student results collaboratively (i.e., via PLC meetings) and individually (i.e., in the classroom). Schools need to be more in tune with those students who are not meeting acceptable standards. Early intervention is essential and strategies and structures for supporting the students should be available. How do we make this a priority when our time is already committed? What are we willing to drop in order to deal with what is being identified as critical?

Doing Differently

"Teacher motivation is based in the freedom to try new ideas, achievement of appropriate responsibility levels, and intrinsic work elements. True job satisfaction is derived from the gratification of higher-ordered needs, 'social relations, esteem, and actualization' rather than lower-order needs" (Sylvia and Hutchinson, as cited in Bishay, 1996, p. 147). The factors that Bishay (1996) highlights regarding job satisfaction can be achieved through the PLC model. The PLC allows for social relations to be fostered because

of its collaborative nature. It allows for the achievement of appropriate responsibility levels because it fosters shared leadership. It allows for the freedom to try new ideas and generates new questions: What will we do when they get it? What will we do when they do not? Moreover, PLC recognizes the power of both self-efficacy and collective efficacy. Bandura (1997) identifies collective efficacy as being even more powerful than the efficacy of the individual.

What had been happening at Carney Hill was not successful. The PLC with support from administration is a model for doing things differently. It is a factor not only directly linked to teacher job satisfaction, but also one that fosters positive change.

Autonomy

It seems that at the heart of many discussions regarding the implementation of a PLC is a sense of concern around teacher autonomy. Will participating in the PLC mean a loss of professional autonomy?

"A learning community is, by definition, a group of individuals working together to enhance their ability to achieve their shared vision and goals" (DuFour, 1999). Although the framework for a PLC is built on a foundation of collaboration, the model does recognize that there is a time and a place for individual autonomy. The individual teacher will make personal decisions as required such as: diverting from lesson plans, re-teaching strategies, and the teaching of topics that are of particular interest to them personally. However, what it does suggest is a consensus on what would be described as essential knowledge and skills for student success (DuFour, 1999). When it comes to identifying what is essential and defining success one must consider how essential is determined, and how "success" is defined. Is

what is deemed essential for one student essential for all students? Is the definition of success the same for all students?

Ongoing Debates

Connected to the concern regarding autonomy is the concern over whether or not the PLC should be voluntary or mandatory. The establishment of PLC's is being toted as "best practice" which suggests that it is a model that we cannot and should not avoid. At the same time, with relationships being at the heart of its existence, the choice of whether or not to make the meetings mandatory has become a touchy subject. How can the value of such a model be introduced to a profession that for so many years has functioned independently? When the day is completely filled and the staff are tired, how do we introduce and get "buy-in" for yet another initiative that may be perceived a just another "latest and greatest"?

Missing Pieces

In the sources reviewed, the one piece that I felt was missing was a more detailed summary of what it takes to build a professional learning community. When it comes to developing a PLC or introducing the very things that are said to improve job satisfaction, how does this effect staff emotionally, socially, and physically? What about the human component? The articles talk about hard work, persistence, and dedication but do not elaborate upon or give much insight into what that means or looks like. The literature makes it sound easy. I believe it is much more difficult to keep a group of staff members working together collaboratively and, more importantly, effectively. An increased awareness of the human side of change needs to be recognized and valued. I have attempted to address that void with this project.

Important Information

From the literature reviewed, a number of findings stood out which included: the importance of intervening early when students fall behind, the importance of getting the best out of your teachers, and the benefits of working collaboratively ("How to be top," 2007; DuFour, 1999; Servage, 2006/2007). In addition, an awareness of those attributes that are said to contribute to either job satisfaction or dissatisfaction is important. A question generated is whether there is a link between job satisfaction and student learning?

Conclusion

The literature review suggests that there is an important link between efficacy (i.e., self and collective), job satisfaction, and professional learning communities. By increasing teacher knowledge of working with students in poverty, the work of the professional learning community will move in the direction required to increase both self-efficacy and collective efficacy of the staff at Carney Hill. As a result, overall job satisfaction should increase thereby contributing to the retention of teachers and an increase in student achievement.

A number of factors have been identified as being related to improving the state of education. Those factors include: job satisfaction, money, getting the best, efficacy, professional development, intervening early, doing things differently, and autonomy. While the very thought of being able to address each of these areas can be extremely overwhelming, Black and William (2001), acknowledge that widespread evidence exists, "that fundamental educational change can only be achieved slowly – through programmes of professional development that build on existing good practice" (p. 2). We must be patient but we must experience progress.

Chapter Four: Research Procedures

Introduction

In order to determine whether or not there was a link between job satisfaction and being an active participant of the professional learning community at Carney Hill, a professional learning community needed to be created and staff insight into the impact of being a part of the PLC was required. This section will discuss in detail the procedure for determining whether or not participating in a PLC at Carney Hill increased job satisfaction.

Initiating the PLC

The birth of the PLC began with full endorsement from our former principal who made arrangements for four staff members to attend the PLC conference. Those staff members who attended the conference were highly motivated by the knowledge that they had attained and were willing to return to the school and take on the roll of a "steering committee." They were dedicated to attaining commitment from their colleagues on the value of initiating a PLC model at the school.

The work began in mid-October. In order to create a plan and work effectively, the steering committee first met with four objectives in mind: (1) Determine what information would be important to share with the staff; (2) Discuss how best to deliver that information to the staff; (3) Develop a proposed schedule that would include a weekly PLC meeting; and (4) Determine how best to speak with current administrators regarding the development of the PLC at Carney Hill. All four objectives were met that day (Appendix B). As the steering committee was beginning to get the PLC initiative underway, two other initiatives were also in the process of being implemented; no recess and an alternate education program. Because of these initiatives, it was imperative that we were also aware of the needs and wants of our administrators. There was a lot happening at the school.

With the steering committee feeling energized, positive, and well on their way, they soon came to realize the reason for DuFour's (2007) emphasis on passion and persistence. When it came time to meet with the administration, a number of roadblocks surfaced and this marked the beginning of the need for passion and persistence. The biggest roadblock was centered on whether or not PLC meetings could be held within the working day. The steering committee was intent on embedding the PLC within the working day and the administration was intent on it being voluntary. This difference led to some very difficult conversations.

Approximately one month later (November) we presented to our colleagues the PLC initiative. The presentation included: a PowerPoint presentation (Appendix C), a group activity – Why a PLC at Carney? (Appendix A), the Passion and Persistence video, and a question and answer period. The presentation was well received with comments such as,

"you could take that on the road…" being made. Our principal was also impressed by the presentation and complimented us as well.

Now it was time to get the PLC meetings started. The administration did not support the PLC being embedded in the working day and although not entirely in agreement with this decision, the steering committee, believing in the value of the model, agreed to participate in meetings scheduled outside of the working day. This created what was described as "a division" among staff. Aside from the division that was created, there were a lot of other things happening at the school. Five staff members were shuffling rooms in order to create space for the alternate program and the ceasing of recess, which a number of staff strongly opposed. In the midst of the turmoil and low morale, the PLC steering committee continued to proceed. A PLC is said to improve morale and we needed a morale boost in a serious way! This was the beginning of the PLC at Carney Hill.

Research Design

In making the decision as to which research design to use for this project, a number of steps were taken. With the general focus of the project in mind and an idea of which methods would be used to gather data, my initial thoughts were that both a case study[3] approach as well as action research would be fitting.

In order to choose the most appropriate design, "The Five-Question Method for Framing a Qualitative Research Study" was used (McCaslin & Scott, 2003). By way of this procedure, I decided my project would be a case study. I used a mixed methods approach for gathering evidence. Focus groups, individual interviews, and a before-and-after survey were completed by participants. The purpose of completing the survey was to corroborate the

---

[3] Case Study – A detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event.

focus group findings and to identify additional information from which the school may benefit. The questions that were asked in the survey may or may not have been discussed during the focus groups and individual interviews. Throughout this project I played a number of roles. I was part of the group that initiated the PLC and I was the researcher. While Bogdan and Biklen (2003) do not recommend studying something you are directly involved in, they go on to remind us that successful studies have been done this way. Keeping their warning in mind, I was sure to incorporate some of the recommendations made by Dan Bachor (2000) to increase the believability of my case study.

> "To determine if the case study is believable, the reader needs to determine if the evidence has been collected in a systematic and thoughtful manner to ensure that it is both accurate and meaningful. To make that judgment, the reader - again regardless of how the researcher's evidence was collected and interpreted – should be able to answer the following three questions":
>   1. How was evidence collected? What sources of evidence were employed? What rules of evidence were applied?
>   2. How will evidence be verified and confirmed?
>   3. How has the evidence been interpreted, conclusions reached and/or judgments made? (Bachor, 2000, p. 5)

It is these three questions that I addressed in detail to increase the believability of my study.

How was evidence collected?

The research participants were those staff members who were active participants in the meetings of the PLC during the 2007/08 school year. On average twelve staff members attended the meetings on a regular basis. The regular participants consisted of two administrators, three support teachers, and seven classroom teachers. It was anticipated that of those twelve, eight to ten would be willing to participate in the study. In the end, all twelve participants agreed to be a part of the study.

Prior to collecting data, I gave a brief presentation during one of the scheduled PLC meetings. The presentation focused on sharing my intentions for the research project and

outlining what participants could expect should they agree to participate (Appendix D). The project received approval from the Research Ethics Board and staff members who were willing to participate in the research were given an information sheet (Appendix E) and asked to sign an informed consent form (Appendix F). In addition, those who chose to participate received a $10.00 gift card from either of two local coffee shops. Participating in the research, meant they agreed to take part in a focus group discussion (Appendix G) and to complete a survey (Appendix H). Following the focus group, participants were treated to a meal at one of several local restaurants.

Three different measures were used to address the research question: focus group discussions, individual interviews, and a survey. Two focus group discussions were scheduled and participants could sign up for the one that best suited their schedule. The focus groups took place at Carney Hill Elementary. The first focus group consisted of four participants and the second consisted of six participants. In order to avoid any discomfort which may have surfaced as a result of interviewing both staff members and administrators together individual interviews were done at a later date with both the principal and vice-principal.

The focus group discussions were recorded using a digital audio recorder and an audio tape was used as a back-up. In addition, notes were also taken during the focus groups. Following the completion of the focus group discussion, participants were asked to complete a survey which they could either do right away, or could bring back at a later date. Ten out of a possible twelve surveys were returned.

Work Plan

In order to ensure the project was successful in both the planning and implementation stage of project development a "Proposed Project Time Line" was developed (Appendix I).

An anticipated completion date of the rough draft was scheduled for the beginning of August with the final review and completion of the project occurring in December. This became an overly ambitious time line. While I do believe it was possible, I did not work efficiently enough as intended throughout the summer months. As a result the rough draft was completed in February.

How will the evidence be verified and confirmed?

A number of potential sources of error have been recognized as requiring consideration throughout the duration of this project. With respect to ensuring internal validity, those that will be of particular interest include: history, selection, group, subject attrition, maturation, experimenter effects, subject effects, and statistical conclusion.

The process of establishing a professional learning community at Carney Hill began in October 2007 with four individuals attending the Summit Tree Conference. I was one of those individuals. The conference instilled in me a sense of responsibility for having to create a PLC at our school. Carney Hill was in a dismal state of affairs and to me the PLC meetings would become the framework for "raising the bar" and moving our school forward. We needed to become a "true" PLC. So I became a part of moving this initiative forward at our school.

At the same time, I was also in the process of selecting a topic that would become the research project required for the completion of my MEd degree. It was during the PLC conference that I decided I would make the PLC at Carney Hill the topic of my research. I

did not know which aspect but I did know that two reasons for developing a PLC would be better than one! This became my personal incentive for committing to establishing the PLC. We needed to improve student achievement and I needed a research project.

I have always been aware of the intensity of my emotions when I feel passionately about something. Because I was so passionate about Carney Hill and establishing a PLC, I knew this would be one of the most difficult factors to control. Experimenter effects, "…may be reflected in differential treatment of subjects, such as using a different voice tone, being more reassuring to one group than to others, reinforcing different behaviors, displaying different attitudes, selectively observing different subject responses, and any other demeanor that influences either the subjects' behavior or the evaluation of the behavior by the researcher" (McMillan & Schumacher, 1997, p. 188). To keep myself in check, I made a concerted effort to put myself in the role of an "unbiased reporter" when it came to attaining and analyzing data.

In addition, the nature of the respondents also had to be considered when it came to reporting the results. "Ecological external validity refers to the conditions of the research and the extent to which generalizing the results is limited to similar conditions" (McMillan and Schumacher, 1997). The effects of this study needed to be considered as a potential factor affecting its generalizability. Because the sample size used in this study was small, the findings could not be generalized, but teachers working with students in poverty and those considering establishing a PLC would benefit from an awareness of the project findings.

My project focused on assessing the PLC at Carney Hill. Being well aware of my involvement in its creation, I needed to remind myself continually to look for both positive

and negative factors that were discussed during the focus groups and be committed to reporting faithfully. I was constantly reflecting back and forth between the themes I was identifying and how I recalled events transpiring throughout the process. Was I identifying themes that my colleagues would disagree with or did I believe my colleagues would find them an accurate reflection of the PLC reality? In the end it would be them who would let me know. Several colleagues reviewed the themes that were identified.

How has the evidence been interpreted?

If there is evidence in conflict with identified patterns, Bachor (2000) and Soy (1997) suggest follow-up interviews be conducted to confirm or correct the initial data. The staff survey, quantitative in nature, will be used to corroborate the evidence uncovered by the interviews. The use of both a quantitative and qualitative data gathering approach will be done in order to increase the "believability" of the findings.

Many sophisticated systems exist for interpreting and analyzing data. I familiarized myself with a number of approaches, but made the decision to use a traditional "cut and paste"[4] approach with the small twist of "cutting" and "pasting" via a word processing document. I felt that this would give me a firm grasp of the process and allow me to become more familiar with the data I had obtained. The "cut and paste" approach began once the transcribing had been completed and themes identified.

Once the focus group discussions had been transcribed, I reviewed the data and pulled the "general sense" from each and every paragraph. This "general sense" became the initial list of data codes which numbered seventy-nine. Recognizing that this was far too many codes, a further attempt to reduce them was made by looking more closely at similar themes.

---

[4] "Cutting and Pasting" via a word document allows the writer to select data by highlighting it and then using the "cut" function under the edit toolbar, the data can be moved to a more appropriate location in the document using "paste" also found under the edit toolbar.

This resulted in a further reduction of codes to thirteen. Three additional themes were given so little attention that they were not included in the discussion.

The thirteen groupings then became the "sub-codes" and an attempt was made to create a title for the "major code" that would best capture the meaning behind the sub-codes. Once this was completed, I reviewed the list of recommendations to determine whether or not the recommendations would fit appropriately under the major code.

Dey (as cited by Ryan and Bernard, 2003) noted, "there is no single set of categories [themes] waiting to be discovered. There are as many ways of 'seeing' the data as one can invent" (p. 103). Therefore, a second attempt at uncovering themes was done in order to identify the ones that I felt would be most appropriate to report. This process involved once again using a cut and paste technique. The transcriptions were copied into a "read only"[5] document and then using "outline" under the "format" bar each paragraph was given a number to ensure that it could be found easily in the original data. The same general sense codes were used to identify the meaning behind each and every paragraph. The paragraphs were then sorted using the cut & paste function of the word processor. At times multiple meanings were found in individual paragraphs. When this occurred the paragraph was placed under multiple headings. For example, if the research participant spoke about administration, embedding PLC, and a teacher-led process all in one paragraph that paragraph was placed under three separate headings (i.e., administration, embedding PLC, and teacher led). I felt that the second attempt resulted in a more succinct summary of the findings without compromising the quality of the results; therefore, I created a leveling

---

[5] By saving a word document as "read only," any changes done after prompts the writer to "save as" which creates an additional document thereby protecting the original from any unwanted changes.

template based on the second attempt at uncovering potential themes (Table 1). The themes that stood out the most during the initiation of the PLC at Carney Hill were uncovered.

I requested that three colleagues who had participated in the focus group discussions and individual interviews review the leveling template that had been created. One colleague stressed that she felt it was very important to emphasize the level of dedication by the four "core people" who continued to persevere when things were becoming very difficult at the school. This point has been highlighted in the findings. Another colleague shared feelings about the importance of recognizing that previous attempts at creating a PLC at Carney Hill had been made. This too has been included in the final report.

Bachor (2000) identifies one of the dilemmas in reading a case study as not knowing how evidence was selected for inclusion in the report. The themes that were chosen to be included in the final report were selected based on the amount of attention they were given during the focus groups and interviews. Although specific "ratios" were not identified, quotes that best illustrate the reported theme were selected for inclusion (Bachor, 2000). I felt this approach was most fitting for the research project.

In addition to the focus group and individual interviews, participants completed a before-and-after survey that asked them to assess the impact of participating in a PLC at Carney Hill. They were asked to reflect upon their experience at the school before the PLC was initiated and then their experience after the PLC was initiated so they could answer 21 questions that compared specific aspects of job satisfaction before and after the PLC was initiated and functioning at the school. These questions were organized to assess five different themes of job satisfaction: (1) vision, (2) collaboration/communication, (3) professional development, (4) job satisfaction, and (5) retention.

Chapter Five: Findings

Focus Group and Individual Interview Analysis

The results of the focus group and individual interviews were combined and transcribed for an inductive qualitative analysis to identify the major codes and principal themes of the interview transcripts. Specifically, audio recordings of the focus group and individual interviews were transcribed as text files for subsequent analysis. With the aid of a text editor, the transcript statements were linked with their speakers, tagged with their transcript locations, sorted into categories, and coded with category and category-level symbols. The initial categories for the analysis were the focal points of the group discussion that were noted during the interviews and verified by the participants. The descriptions of these categories were then compared with the transcript and edited to reflect the statements made during the focus group and individual interviews. The next stage of the analysis was an examination of the statements in each category and then specification of sub-categories which reflected the unique aspects of each category. The final part of the analysis was a cross-category and then cross-question examination of the transcript statements, sub-categories, and categories to determine the minor themes associated with individual questions

and then the major themes that represent the interview results as a whole. The results of this analysis were recorded in a leveling template that is presented as Table 1.

This inductive analysis indicated that the initiation of a PLC at Carney Hill impacted the school in many different ways when analyzed in detail tended to represent experiences that focused upon one of four major themes. Specifically, these themes are as follows: (1) the experience of hope, (2) the experience of frustration, (3) the experience of stress, and (4) the experience of improved job satisfaction. The themes have been numbered from one to four and ordered from highest to lowest respectively, based on the number of comments made in relation to each theme. As the results in Table 1 indicate, the experience of "hope" stood out as the number one theme for the research participants with the experiences of "frustration" and "stress" being second and third, and, perhaps surprisingly, the experience of "an increase in job satisfaction" being expressed sufficiently that it constituted the fourth and final major theme.

Table 1
Staff Interviews: Leveling Template

	1		2		3	Definitions/ Notes
1	**HOPE** The formation of the PLC at Carney Hill *instilled a sense of hope* among staff that improvements could be made with respect to student learning and job satisfaction.					Believing that things at Carney Hill School can improve.
		1.1	An attitude of *"stretch and catch"* was adopted by the staff. That is permission to think and do differently with a safety net. "If it doesn't work we'll pick you up and try again."			Being given administrative permission to "think differently"
				1.1.1	Staff was *excited* about being part of a team that had the potential to *"make a difference."*	
				1.1.2	Recognizing that *results* had/have been *flat* and that something must *change*.	
				1.1.3	Because of the freedom to think and do differently, *others will want to join*.	
		1.2	The *PLC* model is the *mechanism* in place to support and foster change.			Establishing a professional learning community
				1.2.1	Those who attend the PLC meetings are a part of a *high performing team*.	Define - high performing team
				1.2.2	As a member of the team, you are committed to moving from working in *isolation to a collaborative model* with the common goal of improvement in student learning.	
				1.2.3	The general feeling at the meetings was that of staff presenting a *positive attitude* - "if something isn't working, what can we do to improve it?"	Note importance of norms in developing the tone for how staff interacted during meetings. (Non-defeatist attitude)

1			2		3	Definitions/ Notes
		1.3	The PLC model allowed us to create a vision which would move us from where we were to where we were going. The staff could envision a "*new picture*." (potential)			Closing the gap between what we wanted and what we had - define using Glasser's Reality therapy model.
				1.3.1	For a number of years the results in *student learning have been flat*.	Highlight sources which speak directly to Carney and to Carney in the province.
				1.3.2	Staff members *together created a plan* and a vision for Carney Hill. The buy in and commitment is high.	
				1.3.3	Should the model in practice be as successful as is appears in theory, it has the potential to attract teachers and become *a place where educators want to be*.	Highlight the discussions around retaining and having the potential to retain.
				1.3.4	While optimism in the school setting is high (i.e. hope), there is a *sense of "hopelessness"* with respect to the impact staff can have outside of the school.	How daunting the thought of affecting change outside the school is. Refer to "hope and hopelessness" continuum as per Counselling Practice reading.
				1.3.5	Being only in the initial phase of establishing a PLC, its affect on student *achievement to date cannot be confirmed*. However, staff is optimistic that they will in fact see improvements as a result of the model.	Speak to the research findings of the model. The very reason PLC is being promoted is due to the significant improvements being made in student learning.
2	**FRUSTRATION** The development of the PLC model fostered not only excitement. It also fuelled a significant amount of *frustration* among staff.					A number of issues at school that could have contributed to the frustration aside from PLC. That is alternate program, staff interpersonal issues, new administration, embedding of PLC etc.

1			2		3	Definitions/ Notes
		2.1	The relationship that existed between staff and administration needed to be redefined. A model of *"shared leadership"* evolved.			Difficult shift in way of thinking and working together - administration and staff
				2.1.2	Because *administrators come and go,* how do staff members work comfortably with a three to five year model for improvement?	Concern regarding how we protect what we are creating.
				2.1.3	Some staff members were concerned about *whether or not it was safe* to share their "true" thoughts and feelings.	Can I put myself out there without my contributions being detrimental to my career?
				2.1.4	The very move to feeling comfortable about putting selves out there despite the *"power" differential*.	Collaborative Leadership, making accommodations (p. 54) - recognizing power differences
				2.1.5	Staff felt that the *direction* of a number of the meetings was changed inappropriately by administration.	Including redundancy (i.e. learning focused meetings)
		2.2	Staff felt frustrated by what appeared by some to be a lack of *"action"*. They wanted to know, "What have we accomplished?"			Feeling of moving forward - accomplishing something.
				2.2.1	Staff felt that *knowing where they were heading* would be helpful (i.e. identifying a beginning/middle/end)	Wanting to see what is achieved
				2.2.2	Not all staff felt there was a lack of action. It was defined differently by some.	I.e. Good/great progress in having developed a working model.

1		2		3		Definitions/ Notes
				2.2.3	Staff felt that a number of the **meetings did not always pertain to everyone**. In order to keep everyone engaged, "How this could be avoided?"	
				2.2.4	Although frustrated at times, staff did recognize that the PLC model was being developed.	I.e. Focus of first year - parameters, norms
		2.3	There was some **uncertainty about the process** as only 4 out of the regular 12 participants attending the workshop on PLC's.			Uncertainty about process
				2.3.1	PLC needs to be **better defined** and perhaps periodically throughout its development.	
				2.3.2	Clarification about **why we are doing what we are doing** would have been beneficial to some.	
				2.3.3	Clarification about **what each person's role is** would be beneficial to some.	
3	**STRESS** Undergoing such a significant change process at the school proved to be **very stressful** for many participants.					The pressure and tension resulting from change
		3.1	A clear **division** among staff was noted.			Causing a division of staff
				3.1.1	Deciding whether or not to **"embed"** the PLC time in the working day was felt to be the number one cause of a lot of the stress and the division.	Scheduling meeting during the working day
				3.1.2	Although the division was apparent, it was felt that because the staff worked through it, it would **make them stronger** in the upcoming year and, it was something that they could not avoid.	

1		2		3		Definitions/ Notes
				3.1.3	Working through the stress and dealing with the division *identified those that were committed* to the process and "on board."	
				3.1.4	A number of *other significant changes* were taking place at the school that year (i.e. alt. program, new administrators, room changes etc.)	
		3.2	Staff identified the process to that of a "roller coaster". It had its ups and its downs.			Frustration and excitement wrapped into one.
				3.2.1	Frustration and Excitement	
				3.2.2	Baby Steps	Developing something new/patience
4	**JOB SATISFACTION** A number of different factors about the PLC model contributed to *increasing job satisfaction* on a whole.					Contributing to a better experience
		4.1	The PLC was seen as *contributing to the retention* of teachers.			Keeping staff at the school
				4.1.1	PLC was not necessarily keeping staff here but, it was one aspect of their job that *made them happy to be at Carney*.	Some sad to go. Several had a "better year."
				4.1.2	PLC for some was the *reason they were staying* at Carney.	Clear cut retention as stated by several research participants.
				4.1.3	*Relationships were being strengthened* among colleagues because of the PLC model and these improved relationships were keeping people satisfied with their jobs.	

1				2		3	Definitions/ Notes
					4.1.4	The PLC model allows staff to share their experiences both in and outside the classroom which helps to *normalize their experiences* at the school. This is identified as contributing to self efficacy.	
			4.2	Staff enjoys and appreciates the opportunity *to work collaboratively with colleagues*. They recognize the value of aligning their practice for the greater good of the students who attend Carney.			Aligning practice - common language.
					4.2.1	Being given the opportunity to be *active participants in identifying the direction* the school goes is rewarding	
					4.2.2	The staff recognizes the *dedication of their colleagues* and indicates that the dedication is a personal motivator.	
			4.3	The PLC model provides a place where staff is *"given a voice."* In addition, it fosters accountability among colleagues.			
					4.3.1	Staff enjoy being able to hear the *different perspectives* from their colleagues and reflect on the discussions which take place.	I.e. Being a reflective practitioner.
					4.3.2	Participating in the PLC meant that staff needed to *trust one another* and feel safe voicing their opinions.	
					4.3.3	The model was viewed as a *increasing the confidence* of many.	It "empowered" staff - stated explicitly by staff as well as viewed by other participants.

Survey Analysis

At the conclusion of the study, 10 of its 12 participants completed a job satisfaction survey that measured the impact of participating in a PLC at Carney Hill. Each participant answered 21 questions that compared specific aspects of job satisfaction before and after the PLC was initiated and functioning at the school. The format of each question included a statement that represented a positive attribute of job satisfaction; for example, "Staff members work together to solve problems related to school issues." For each question, the participant was asked to choose and checkmark one of the the following six categories: (1) "No basis to judge," (2) "Don't agree at all," (3) "Agree slightly," (4) "Agree moderately," (5) "Agree mostly," and (6) "Agree completely." The 21 questions were organized and then ordered to assess five themes of job satisfaction: (1) vision, (2) collaboration/communication, (3) professional development, (4) job satisfaction, and (5) retention. A copy of this survey protocol that includes the response frequencies for the 10 participants is presented as Appendix H.

To determine the results of the survey, the frequency scores were totalled for both the "before" and "after" ratings for each question. This was followed by the calculation of the percentage of change between the two rating totals and the determination of the direction of the change. The results of this frequency analysis are presented in Table 2. Those results indicate that a positive change occurred for every one of the 21 questions included in the job satisfaction survey. The values of the increases for the individual questions ranged from 11 to 48 percent and had a mean value of 35.76.

In addition to the analysis of the results for individual survey questions, the mean scores for the question/s included within each of the five major themes were calculated and

then used to determine the mean percentage of change for each theme. Again, these results indicate that a positive change occurred for each of the five themes. The magnitude of those changes ranged from a low of 30 to 47 percent. A t-test was calculated for the changes that occurred for each of the five themes (see Appendix L). None of the results of these tests was statistically significant, but these results would certainly have been influenced by the small size of this sample.

Table 2
Survey Results: Percentage of Change Calculation

Vision	Pre Item Score	Post Item Score	% of Change
1 The school has a clear sense of purpose.	31	44	42
2 I have a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve.	31	42	35
3 The staff shares a common understanding of what the school wants to achieve.	27	40	48
4 All staff are committed to achieving the school's goals.	32	46	44
5 The staff keeps the school's goals in mind when making important decisions.	31	47	52
6. The school's primary emphasis is improving student learning.	38	51	34
	Mean % Change		42

Collaboration/Communication	Pre Item Score	Post Item Score	% of Change
1 The school uses a system to obtain a variety of perspectives when making a decision.	30	43	43
2 Teachers discuss teaching on a regular basis.	29	43	48
3 Staff members work together to solve problems related to school issues.	32	47	47
4 The staff works in teams across grade levels to help increase student learning.	30	40	33
5 Staff routinely work together to plan what will be taught.	27	33	18
6 Teachers have frequent communication with the families of their students.	27	30	11
7 Staff members trust one another.	31	40	29
	Mean % Change		34

Professional Development	Pre Item Score	Post Item Score	% of Change
1 Assessment results are used to determine professional learning activities.	30	39	30
2 Staff members get help in the areas they need to improve.	28	39	39
3 Professional development activities are consistent with school goals.	32	41	28
4 I have enough opportunities to grow professionally.	39	47	21
5 Different staff members periodically lead professional development activities for staff.	28	39	39
6 Instructional staff views themselves as learners as well as teachers.	40	53	33
	Mean % Change		31

Job Satisfaction	Pre Item Score	Post Item Score	% of Change
1 Working collaboratively with my colleagues increases my job satisfaction.	40	52	30
	Mean % Change		30

Retention	Pre Item Score	Post Item Score	% of Change
1 Working collaboratively with my colleagues increases my interest in continuing to work at Carney.	36	53	47
	Mean % Change		47

Discussion

For the duration of the discussion, the term "staff members" will be used to encompass classroom teachers, learning assistants, English as a second language teachers, counsellors, and Strong Start teachers. The term "administrators" will be used when speaking about the Principal and Vice-Principal.

Experiencing Hope

The PLC has definitely given participants a sense of hope. To summarize: "Together we can make a difference and the PLC is the vehicle which allows us to come together as a team and affect that difference."

Stephenson (as cited by Larsen et al., 1991) defines hope as, "a process of anticipation that involves the interaction of thinking, acting, feeling, and relating, and is directed toward a future fulfillment that is personally meaningful" (p. 402). The PLC at Carney Hill has given new hope to the staff members and to the administrators at Carney Hill. It has been described as a "vehicle" for positive change, one that has the potential to improve the learning and working environment at the school.

What was particularly timely in terms of initiating the PLC at Carney Hill was the arrival of a new principal who made it clear to staff members that they had permission to "think differently." This way of thinking was appropriately titled, "Stretch and Catch" and was defined as, "being given permission to think differently and do differently with a safety net. If things don't work out as intended, we'll pick you up and try again" (C. Brennan, personal communication, August 2008). As one staff member commented: "That really excited me. If we are going to be doing new and different things, I want to be a part of that team."

In my opinion, that permission fostered much of the PLC success that would eventually be seen. When taking the risk to develop a new culture, a new way of interacting and working together, permission from your administrators to make mistakes is critical. It seemed that because of the will of the group to do things differently and because staff had permission to do that with a safety net, this meant that Carney Hill was potentially positioned to see its greatest amount of movement in a very long time. Everything was falling into place.

Participants in the PLC recognized the fact that results in student learning were flat and that the working environment needed to be improved in order to retain and attract teachers. One staff member stated: "What we have been doing has not been enough, not been effective, and not been right. I believe we are now developing a sound and coherent plan to improve student learning." Participants viewed the PLC as: "One of the greatest mechanisms in place in the school for positive change."

A high performing team is defined as a team, organization, or group that is highly focused on goals. Some characteristics of these high performance teams as described by Traut (n.d.) include: participative leadership, responsive, aligned on purpose, communicative, task focused, problem solving, shared responsibility and innovative. The PLC became the vehicle for creating a high performing team at Carney Hill.

One of the first tasks of the PLC was to develop a set of norms. The norms would become the guidelines to which that group would be held accountable individually and collectively (Appendix J). The agenda for the meetings followed a regular format (Appendix K), but it was the norms that were created by the group that

were instrumental in establishing meetings that run smoothly and productively. In particular three of the six norms stand out. Those norms include time, listening, and expectations. The meeting will begin and end on time (1:45-2:45 p.m.), we will encourage a list of speakers, and we will move problems to solutions. The group did an exceptional job of committing to the norms.

DuFour et al. (2007) described making progress as a PLC when: "…we move from a language of complaint to a language of commitment, from a language of 'they' to a language of 'we' and, from focusing on what we can't stand to what we stand for" (p. 74). Those involved in the PLC at Carney Hill did just that. Although there were numerous ups and downs and a number of roadblocks experienced throughout the year, the PLC meetings were seen by participants as having a "positive outlook." The participants took on a non-defeatist attitude, and, as summarized by one participant, they experienced a shift: "This isn't working so… what are we going to do about that?" It truly did become a move from "What we can't stand… to what we stand for" as intended by the DuFours.

In order to develop a vision for the school, the group began to create a new picture of how they wanted Carney Hill to look. This process was done using aspects taken from Glasser's Reality Therapy Model. When the picture one has in mind of how things should be does not match what is happening in reality, there is an experience of dissatisfaction. It was important for the group to develop collectively a vision for the school in order to get everyone not only on the same page but also to know where they are heading. The group needed to begin closing the gap between what they envisioned and what was happening at Carney Hill. In order to improve satisfaction, there must be

movement towards the vision. One participant noted: "I see the picture and I know it is going to be awesome. That's why I keep coming. I really, really want that."

As a group, PLC participants created a new vision for Carney Hill and believe that should things go as envisioned, Carney Hill would become: "A place where educators want to be." This sentiment was captured in the following comment: "Despite all the turmoil we go through with the students and with the community and how exhausting it is, my hope is that this model will be so successful and so rewarding that people will want to stay."

While the sense of hope was clearly heard, there was also concern for what can be described as a sense of hopelessness regarding issues that some participants felt were outside of their control. For example, the absentee rate is quite high at the school resulting is lost classroom time for students which means that they are missing important instruction. Other issues such as violence in the home and the use of drugs and alcohol by caregivers are also a big concern to the teaching staff. Many of the students social needs are not being met which means they do not come to school ready to learn at the same pace as most children. Their social needs must be addressed first.

With student learning at the heart of all schools, student achievement is first and foremost on everyone's mind. When it comes to the hope of narrowing the achievement gap for students at Carney Hill, it was felt by the participants in this research project that we are too early in the process to be able to report with confidence an increase in student learning. Nonetheless, participants were very optimistic about the potential for improved student learning, which is the sole reason for developing such a culture as that defined by a PLC. In addition, this particular study was not

intended to focus on student learning. Determining how the PLC has affected student learning would be an additional research endeavour.

Experiencing Frustration

While an obvious sense of hope was present in the school, there was also an undertone of frustration. The frustration that developed in the school was due to a number of different issues.

The change from staff working in isolation to working collaboratively as one large group had never been done before. Moreover, staff members were now collaborating with their administrators. A model of "shared leadership" had evolved which in and of itself was the cause of much frustration because it called for the relationship between staff members and administrators to be redefined.

Concern was raised over whether or not it was safe for individuals to share their true opinions. As one participant said: "There are people who are threatened because they are your bosses. If you really disagree, people might not be as forthcoming about saying what they really think." While this fear was recognized, the participants also noted the need for both staff members and administrators to make accommodations when working together. For example, one staff member noted: "… there will be restrictions on our power (staff members) and things that we will probably have to just accept but, they (administrators) are going to have to make accommodations as well. So it will be interesting."

Those who were active participants in the PLC valued working together as a group (i.e., staff members and administrators). The staff members, as highlighted on numerous occasions, felt strongly that in order for the PLC to be successful, it must not

be a "top down" endeavor. The participants must be viewed as equals and it must be a safe place for participants to share their opinions: "They need to step out of that administrative role for that hour and be equal – you have to be equal."

The subject of the PLC meetings also became a cause of frustration. Not only did participants feel that the discussions had at times been redirected by the administrators, but also there was a lot of frustration about "redundancy." A separate "learning focused" staff meeting took place once a month. This meeting resulted in an increasingly frustrated staff because the focus of that meeting would often mirror that of the PLC agenda. The intention of such a meeting was to acknowledge that not all staff attended the PLC. Unfortunately because the vast majority of the staff did attend both the PLC and the learning focused meeting, frustration was experienced because the topics were often viewed as a repeat of what was discussed at the PLC meeting. As a result, staff recognized that the PLC could be further improved by sticking to the agenda as outlined and by reducing redundancy. It was felt that the learning focused staff meeting would not be necessary if the PLC became a mandatory meeting for all staff.

Another frustration experienced at Carney Hill is what can appropriately be defined as a revolving door for administrators. In the last six years, the school has seen seven new administrators in the building. In light of creating a PLC at the school, there is a sense of fear among staff as to whether or not what has been created can be maintained should a new administrator be appointed. As one participant noted: "… it really does fall on the administrator at the school because a lot of administrators are more than happy to grant you that professional autonomy. They trust that as a staff you

will do the right thing and then you have some that come in and say, 'no I am

responsible – I need to ensure' and it can be a completely different PLC." It is this fear

that is driving the sense of urgency for the process to be teacher driven.

Frustration was also felt by some to what was deemed, "lack of action." A

number of participants were looking for concrete accomplishments. They felt that there

was too much "fluff" talk and that the meetings at times felt open ended. This sense of

lack of action was best captured by this statement, "… I felt it was very incomplete. I

want a goal – work on it – end! (Then)… we all know it has ended and we have come

up with something concrete." Participants wanted to know what they had

accomplished.

At the same time, an important point was raised by one participant:

> "I agree and I think as painful as it was to have to go through being stuck in
> the quagmire a lot of the time, I think that it is sort of like an "aha"
> moment. If I tell you something it is not nearly as effective as if I discover
> it on my own. It became powerful once we got it. If we hadn't done that I
> don't think it would have been as powerful as it is right now."

Although some were frustrated by what felt like a lack of action, others felt that

progress had been made. This conclusion was best captured by the following

statement:

> "I think a lot of this year was getting a feel for what it looked like, what the
> rules are, what the cultural parameters are that are going to define the way
> people work in the group and then, I think next year there is going to be a
> lot of focus on action."

Frustration also resulted from uncertainty about the process. Four of the twelve

participants attended the initial PLC conference. This meant that the majority of

participants were entrusting their colleagues to guide them in the process of initiating a

PLC. Some of the concerns that surfaced were the need to define PLC more precisely,

to clarify why the group is doing what it is doing, and define each person's role in the PLC. In addition, there were times where some of the participants felt that the topics being discussed did not pertain to them. "There were lots of things that didn't apply to me as well. There were times that I really had to push myself to come the following week...." While a number of days were set aside to familiarize staff with a PLC, several of the participants would have appreciated additional knowledge.

It is important to note that at the same time that the PLC was being initiated other significant changes took place: a change in administration, the removal of recess, and the creation of an alternate program These changes were putting immense pressure on the staff, which contributed significantly to the experiences of both frustration and stress.

Experiencing Stress

Implementing a PLC at Carney Hill was not easy. The process could accurately be described as very stressful. It was further described as creating "personal angst" and being a "painful" process.

One of the first roadblocks experienced was making the decision to embed or not embed the meeting time in the working day. This decision became very controversial as two schools of thought emerged. One favoured scheduling the meetings outside of working hours to ensure that those who attended were dedicated to the process; the other favoured scheduling the meetings within the working day so that participants would not have to "volunteer" their time to attend. The administrators felt strongly that embedding the time would run the risk of individuals participating who really did not want to be there and possibly sabotaging the process. In the end, the

decision to hold the meetings outside of the working day was made. This was viewed by many as the number one cause of what became termed "a division among staff." Yet, it was noted by several participants that: "…having worked through the division has made the team that will be here next year that much stronger because the members of the team will have all said 'yes' I want to be a part of it (PLC)."

The initiation of the PLC at Carney can be best described as "a rollercoaster." While it was definitely a stressful time for those working at the school, it is important to keep in mind the other changes taking place at the school as noted above. As one participant said: "… the background politics that was going on in the school created a lot of distraction and noise." There were many ups and downs. From one moment to the next, participants fluctuated between hope and excitement, frustration and stress. It was a balancing act; it required an awareness of how people were feeling in order to keep them on board with the process.

Being able to cope with the frustration and stress that was experienced throughout the year was not easy. One staff member identified the dedication of the "founders" as significantly contributing to the success of the PLC implementation.

> "I really commend the four core people for ensuring that they got us through the difficult times and were not going to allow things to defeat them. Their passion and vision was so strong that I felt they pulled me through times that I could have easily said 'it's not going to work here'."

This sentiment was echoed by a number of staff members.

The importance of persistence in the process is noted by DuFour (2004): "The rise or fall of the professional learning community concept depends not on the merits of the concept itself, but on the most important element in the improvement of any school – the commitment and persistence of the educators within it." The staff at Carney Hill

needed to persist. When it came to believing in the process, the team was motivated by recognizing that at any given time someone remained hopeful and had not given up. "When you start to lose hope and you see all those around you that have not abandoned it you think okay, 'I'll proceed with you'." "At times it was tough but I wasn't going to quit if you guys weren't going to quit."

When it comes to trying to establish such a significant change in culture such as initiating a PLC at Carney Hill, it is imperative that there is at the very least a core of dedicated staff. The core must be optimistic and when the going gets tough they must get going! In addition, a relationship with the administration that takes the stance of moving from, "a language of complaint to a language of commitment" needs to develop (Dufour et al., 2007, p.74). A model of shared leadership must evolve.

In summary, the PLC has opened the door to conversations and action geared toward improving both student learning and job satisfaction. The group who became active participants in the PLC made crucial steps toward change at the school. "It's taught me that when I have a goal I have to be patient and keep working towards that goal, and work towards that goal with other like minded people" said one participant.

Experiencing an Increase in Job Satisfaction

PLC was identified by participants as improving their job satisfaction in a number of ways. For some, the PLC was the reason that they made the decision to remain at the school. For others, it may not be keeping them at the school but it was a part of their job that was making them happy to be working at Carney Hill. "Having PLC makes teaching here a richer experience. At another school my job might be

similar but if they don't have a PLC, I will be missing that collaborative reflection on practice."

Carney Hill has historically been described as a difficult school at which to work. The PLC model allows staff to share their experiences both inside and outside of the classroom, thereby normalizing the experience of working at the school. The opportunity to do this is important. This thinking was captured by one participant who made the link to an increase in self-efficacy: "I think the important part of self-efficacy is feeling that you are in an endeavor with someone else who is going through the same thing. The responses heard during the check-in and check-out really gives you the sense that you are accomplishing something."

Not only does the PLC tend to normalize the experience, but also it eases the transition to working at the school. One participant new to the school shared: "My learning curve would have been huge no matter what, but PLC provided me with support over and above what I already felt from the staff. It helped me to understand the school and develop a vision much faster that I could have without it." When working in a potentially stressful setting or field one participant said: "PLC allows staff to meet, to grow, to share, and to support each other which is very important."

Simply having the opportunity to connect with colleagues was one aspect related to improving job satisfaction: "I really enjoyed meeting with colleagues and sharing ideas – just getting together." This feeling was reiterated throughout the focus groups. One participant summed it up nicely: "There is a lot of potential in a system which fosters the feeling of going to work knowing that you are part of a community and that you are an important part and you are valued by other people."

The PLC participants at Carney Hill embraced the collaborative nature of the model and as a collective are moving towards alignment of practice. They recognize the unique make up of the students they are working with and realize that coupled with a strong relationship, the alignment of practice will narrow the achievement gap that their students are currently experiencing. The staff is focused on developing a common language and they are being given the opportunity to step outside of their classrooms and contribute to a larger group.

Not only did the PLC become the vehicle for change, but also it was an avenue for voices to be heard. The ability to move from keeping what you were thinking to yourself to having the courage to voice an opinion or make a recommendation in an honest and respectful way proved to be a big learning curve. A number of participants felt that this was an area that still required work. At times it was felt that: "People were listening and thinking one thing but not saying it." One participant commented on the fact that many times a number of us would be feeling the same way regarding a particular issue but not discuss it openly at the PLC. Rather the discussion would occur outside of the PLC. "It's like we needed to know that everybody else is on the same page too. Then we go back and voice how we truly feel." Although this remains an area to continue to work on, participants for the most part felt safe and empowered by the process. "It has opened up that avenue for dialogue and I can hear what others are thinking about what is going on at the school. There is no right or wrong it is just opinions. So whether they are agreeing or disagreeing, it is a wonderful safe environment in which to share those thoughts."

The PLC at Carney Hill has also increased confidence. Participants feel empowered. "I am more confident about my teaching this year and I really attribute a lot of that to PLC. Walking into a meeting and finding out that somebody that I admire has the same ideas is powerful."

Four significantly different themes emerged from the data analysis. The themes ranged from experiencing frustration to experiencing hope, and from experiencing stress to experiencing an increase in job satisfaction. While these themes are a true reflection of the ups and downs of the PLC, what cannot be argued is the value of such an initiative. The staff at Carney Hill committed to continuing the PLC in the 2008/09 school year and of the twelve participants who were a part of the initial PLC, nine remain active participants. Three of the initial PLC group no longer work at Carney Hill for reasons not related to job dissatisfaction.

Staff Survey

In addition to the focus groups, a survey was also completed by staff members and administrators. The survey covered five areas that were related to the development of a professional learning community. Those five areas included; vision, collaboration/communication, professional development, job satisfaction, and retention.

Two methods of analysis were employed for the survey. The first analysis was a t-test (Appendix L) and the second analysis was a calculation of the percentage of change (Table 2). As predicted prior to undertaking the research project, no statistical significance was identified in any of the five areas by the t-tests because the number of participants was simply too small (i.e., sample size of 10). However, when the percentage of change calculation was done on the survey themes, the change in

percentage ranged from 30 to 47. For those participating in the PLC at Carney Hill this change, although not statistically significant, says a lot. The greatest change was seen in "retention" which increased by 47%. Then came "vision" increasing by 42%, "collaboration/communication" increased by 34%, "professional development" increased by 31% and "job satisfaction" increased by 30%.

In all the areas that were surveyed, a substantial percentage of change occurred. Of particular importance in this study are the areas of job satisfaction and retention. Carney Hill Community School has struggled when it comes to attracting and retaining teachers. This project has identified the PLC as a tool for increasing both job satisfaction and retention. Should the PLC continue to operate in the same fashion as it currently is, it may well become a school where people will want to come and work.

Recommendations

Because there is always room for improvement, research participants were asked to share their thoughts on how to improve the PLC at Carney Hill. A number of recommendations were made which included:

1. Working in small groups more often – Participants in the PLC enjoyed the opportunity to work in small groups (i.e., 3-5 individuals) which were often determined by similar grade level groupings.

2. Regular reflection meetings (i.e., two stars and a wish) – Participants appreciated the time to reflect on the PLC process and the direction in which the group was heading. Being able to hear differing perspectives from colleagues about what was and was not working appeared to be very well received when

discussed during the focus groups. A regular reflection piece was identified as beneficial.

3. Sending others to the PLC conference – In order to continue to motivate each other in the PLC process it was recommended that each year a new group of staff be given the opportunity to participate in the PLC conference.

4. A structured check-in – This approach would see a "topic" for check-in which would be related to the PLC agenda.

5. A rotating Chair – To avoid the concern about some staff members being the Chair either too often or not enough, the creation of a rotating "chair" schedule was recommended.

6. Increase the role of the Chair – The Chair would be responsible for preparing and posting (staff email) the agenda for the meeting that she or he would be leading.

7. Structured action items – Identify specific action items in such a way that participants recognize the work that they have done. This would include the identification of a beginning, middle, and end point, and documentation of the progress made.

8. Assign homework – Incorporate into the regular meetings an element of additional learning to take place outside of the classroom and the PLC meeting itself (i.e., literature reviews etc.).

9. Embedding PLC meetings in the working day – Rather than attending the meeting outside of working hours, the meeting would take place within the working day.

10. Broaden participation – Work towards building representation of participants to include additional participants such as teaching assistants.

For the 2008/2009 school year the recommendations that have been implemented include:

1. Working in small groups more often,

2. Having reflection meetings,

3. Sending others to the PLC conference,

4. Using a rotating chair system,

5. Increasing the chair's role,

6. Presenting structured action items,

7. Embedding the PLC into the working day.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

The intent of this project was to assist in the creation of a PLC and to assess

whether or not being an active participant of the professional learning community at

Carney Hill Community School increased job satisfaction. This study has shown that

job satisfaction does increase as a result of participating in the PLC. While it is evident

that there were many stressful and frustrating moments experienced throughout the

2007/08 school year, these moments were outweighed by the experience of hope and

the experience of increased job satisfaction. These findings were corroborated by the

staff survey which saw a percentage increase of no less than 30 percent in all areas.

The areas surveyed included; vision, collaboration/communication, professional

development, job satisfaction, and retention.

Of particular interest is the "retention" percentage change which was 47 percent.

Useem and Neild (2005) note the importance of retention when it comes to school

improvement – according to them, "School improvement efforts require a reasonable

degree of staff stability; it is almost impossible to create change with a transient,

inexperienced staff" (p.44). Retention is an area that Carney Hill has struggled with historically; therefore, if the PLC is improving job satisfaction and increasing retention rates, the opportunity for school improvement should also increase.

Aside from struggling with job satisfaction and retention, student achievement at Carney Hill is extremely low in comparison to the provincial statistics. The very intent of a PLC is to increase student achievement. The ability to do this via a PLC has been proven by advocates such as the DuFours, Hulley, Reeves, and Eaker. Therefore, if the PLC at Carney Hill is operating in a manner outlined by the advocates identified above, student learning at Carney Hill should be improving. To substantiate this, further research concerning the PLC model at Carney Hill and student achievement would be required. Some questions to focus on might include the following ones. What does the PLC at Carney Hill look like? How does the PLC at Carney Hill operate? How does the work of the PLC translate to the classroom? Has student achievement at Carney Hill increased since the initiation of the PLC?

In summary, the findings of this project have shown an increase in many areas that are important for the future success of students attending Carney Hill Community School. Based on the information contained in this project, it is my recommendation that ongoing support for the PLC at Carney Hill is required and imperative for further school improvement. While the study focused specifically on Carney Hill, the findings are valuable for other schools in the process of trying to establish a PLC. Too often when we experience frustration or stress we give up. The staff at Carney Hill continued to believe in the power of the PLC even when things were frustrating and stressful. The staff persisted, changed the culture of Carney Hill and is now seeing improvement in a number of areas.

References

Bachor, D. (2000). Reformatting reporting methods for case studies. Retrieved February 25, 2008, from http://www.aare.edu.au/00pap/bac00287.htm

Bandura, A. (1997). Self-efficacy. *Harvard Mental Health Letter*, 13 (9), 4-6. Retrieved February 3, 2008, from the Academic Search Premier database.

Bishay, A. (1996). Teacher motivation and job satisfaction: A study employing the experience sampling method. *Journal of Undergraduate Sciences,* 3, 147-154.

Black, P., & William, D. (2001). Inside the black box: Raising standards through classroom Assessment. Retrieved October 10, 2009, from http://www.pdkintl.org/kappan/kbla9810.htm

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th Ed.). New York, NY: Pearson Education Group.

Caprara, G., Barbaranelli, C., Borgogni, L., & Steca, P. (2003). Efficacy beliefs as determinants of teachers' job satisfaction. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95 (4), 821-832. Retrieved February 16, 2008, from the Academic Search Premier database.

DuFour, R. (1999). Autonomy: In the midst of community, there's room for the individual. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (3). Retrieved March 3, 2008, from http://www.nsdc.org/library/publications/jsd/dufour203.cfm

DuFour, R. (2004). What is a "Professional Learning Community"? *Educational Leadership*, 61 (8), 6-11.

DuFour, R., Eaker, R., DuFour, R., & Sparks, D. (n.d.). Let's talk about PLC: Getting started [Videotape]. (Available from Solution Tree, 304 West Kirkwood Avenue, Bloomington, IN 47404-5131)

DuFour, R., DuFour, R., Eaker, R., Hulley, W., Kuykendall, C., Reeves, D., & al. (2007).

    Learning by doing [Conference Handbook]. Solution Tree Education Canada Inc.

How to be top. (2007, October 18) *The Economist Print Edition*, p. 80.

Larsen, D., Edey, W., & Lemay, L. (2007). Understanding the role of hope in counselling:

    Exploring the intentional uses of hope. *Counselling Psychology Quarterly*, 20 (4),

    401-416.

McCaslin, M. L., & Wilson Scott, K. (2003). The five-question method for framing a

    qualitative research study. *The Qualitative Report*, 8 (3), 447-461.

McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (1997). *Research in education* (4th Ed.). Don Mills,

    Ontario: Addison-Wesley Longman, Inc.

Mauch, J. E., & Park, N. (2003). *Guide to the successful thesis and dissertation: A*

    handbook for students and faculty (5th Ed.). New York, NY: Marcel Dekker.

Payne, R. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty* (4th Ed.). Highlands, TX: aha!

    Process.

Ross, J. A., & Gray, P. (2006). School leadership and student achievement: The mediating

    effects of teacher beliefs. *Canadian Journal of Education*, 29 (3), 798-822.

Ryan, G. W. (2004). Using a word processor to tag and retrieve blocks of text. *Field*

    Methods, 16 (1), 109-130. Retrieved on September 2, 2008, from

    http://fmx.sagepub.com

Ryan, G. W., & Bernard, R. H. (2003). Techniques to identify themes. *Field Methods*, 15

    (1), 85-109. Retrieved on July 29, 2008, from http://www.fmx.sagepub.com

Servage, L. (2006/07). Making space for critical reflection in professional learning

    communities. *Education Canada*, 47 (1), 14-17.

Shannon, G.S. & Bylsma, P. (2007). *The nine characteristics of high-performing schools: A research-based resource for schools and districts to assist with improving student learning.* (2nd Ed.). Olympia, WA: OPSI.

Soy, S. K. (1997). *The case study as a research method.* Unpublished paper, University of Texas at Austin.

Traut, T. (n.d.). Characteristics of high performance teams [Review of 50 studies on high performance teams]. Retrieved on December 16, 2008 from http://www.entreprencurismbible.com/business/kb_high-performance-teams.htm

Useem, E., & Neild, R.C. (2005). Supporting new teachers in the city. *Educational Leadership*, 62 (8), 44-47. Retrieved February, 16, 2008, from the Academic Search Premier database.

Zembylas, M., & Papanastasiou, E. (2005). Modeling teacher empowerment: The role of job satisfaction. *Educational Research and Evaluation*, 11 (5), 433-459.

Appendices

Appendix A

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

Why a PLC at Carney?

- Carney is hard
- Help with behaviour problems (i.e., FASD/ADD etc.)
- Learn with others
- Share ideas and responsibilities for kids
- Community is strong here – working like this can only make it better
- Stronger support for each other
- More communication with each other
- Different methods to get to the same place
- Team work & building (staff & students)
- Support
- Reflective practice/evaluating student learning (how can we do it differently)
- Collective responsibility
- Eliminates isolation
- Diminishes feelings of inadequacy
- No ownership of knowledge – shared knowledge
- Each school is unique and has specific problems
- Current practice is not working for a percentage of students
- We need change – we need a plan to facilitate the change
- A way for teachers to work together and support one another
- Collection of skill sharing
- Open discussions for different actions
- Generating ideas
- Welcome for new staff
- Decrease isolation
- Allow for unique strategies
- Opportunities for improvement
- Liberation
- Coherence
- Collegiality
- It's a change – we choose our path
- What we've been doing hasn't been working

Appendix B

Steering Committee Work Plan

Colleague 1:
- ❏ Bookmarks
- ❏ Article p. 297 (more to follow)
- ❏ Start discussions in a week
- ❏ Cultural Shift handout given on Tuesday

Colleague 2:
- ❏ Go over what we'll share with administrators – overview
- ❏ Go over what they need to do to make PLC work
- ❏ Request one hour to present to staff at staff meeting
- ❏ Present our new schedule (framework) to be reviewed with LAT/ESD/Library (alt, reset, counselling)

Colleague 3:
- ❏ PowerPoint for Wednesday's presentation

Colleague 4:
- ❏ Projector
- ❏ Question sheets
  Question recorder

Presentation to Staff

Colleague 1: Overview

Questions at the end – hand in to question box and we will discuss them all later
There has never been such wide-spread agreement about a promising approach to improving schools (p.126)
- In any other profession, if you are not using best practice it is malpractice
- If a doctor used the same approach to corrective eye procedures that he used 10 years ago it would be malpractice

Not a program it's a new way of thinking – quote on a bookmark (p.186)
We're not experts, we have the initial knowledge, but we know there will be ups and downs and bumps and bruises
We've been presented with a model that supports best practice in the most recent research

Build on our strengths – learn from our colleagues by observation as well as discussion
Give the "Shifts in a PLC" handout the day before we present to staff on Tuesday
Shifts
Shift in fundamental purpose
Shift in assessment

Shift in response to when students don't learn
Shift in work of teachers
Shift in focus
Shift in school culture
Shift in professional development

Colleague 2:

Bump dips and roadblocks
Definition of Team – a group working <u>interdependently</u> toward a <u>common goal</u>, for which members are <u>mutually accountable</u>
- Marathon example: group of people, together, toward a common goal; "but what is missing?" not interdependently (they aren't saying "I can't accomplish this without others")

Reciprocal obligation – if principal asks principal must provide (skills, resources, and time to do it)
Greatest threat to PLC is Personal Autonomy
Research shows it will take at least three years
Change Killers (p. 56)
1. Toxic Feedback
2. Hierarchical Communication
3. Blame – it's NOT student caused, its teacher or admin caused

Colleague 3:

23 years to complete current ILOs -- choose essentials to be taught
- Levels of curriculum: intended, implemented, attained?

Focusing on the kids learning and NOT on teaching the curriculum – schedule will facilitate it
Schedule
No new instruction time everyday—intervention and enrichment time (align with LATs)
Teach about PLC until Jan. then implement in Jan
Deep implementation of one thing (90%) rather than a basic implementation of many things (p.56)

Colleague 4:

PLC requires a deep understanding of:
- Shared mission, vision, values, goals
- Collaborative teams
- Collective inquiry – gain shared knowledge, "this is an excellent math" find out if it truly works based on research
- Action research/experimentation
- Continuous improvement
- Results orientation – focusing not on "how do you like it" but on "how is it affecting learning"

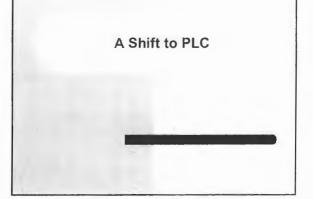MY versus OUR students – School teachers NOT Classroom teachers

Build on our strengths – learn from our colleagues by observation as well as discussion
Attitude will be important

Appendix C
Power Point Presentation

Professional Learning Communities

Carney Hill Community School

Today's Agenda

- Welcome and Introduction
- PLC's at Work – Video
- A Shift to PLC - Ann
- "Why PLC at Carney?" – Activity
- The Importance of Attitude – Liza
- Break (10 min.)
- Collaboration Focus – Kim & Leah
- Question Period
- Passion and Persistence…

A Shift to PLC

Professional Learning Communities

There has never been such wide-spread agreement about a promising approach to improving schools.

Professional Learning Communities

- ➢ Not a program…it's a way of thinking
- ➢ We have been presented with a model that supports best practice in the most recent research
- ➢ In any other profession, if you are not using best practice it is 'Malpractice'.

Professional Learning Communities

Build on our strengths…learn from our colleagues by observation as well as discussion

Cultural Shifts in Professional Learning Communities

What are these shifts?

- A Shift in Fundamental Purpose
- A Shift in Use of Assessments
- A Shift in the Response When Students Don't Learn
- A Shift in the Work of Teachers
- A Shift in Focus
- A Shift in School culture
- A Shift in Professional Development

A Shift in Fundamental Purpose

- ✓ From a focus on teaching... to a focus on learning
- ✓ From an emphasis on what was taught...to a fixation on what students learned
- ✓ From coverage of content...to demonstration of proficiency
- ✓ From providing individual teachers with curriculum documents such as curriculum guides...to engaging collaborative teams in building shared knowledge regarding essential curriculum

A Shift in Use of Assessments

- ✓ From infrequent summative assessments...to frequent common formative assessments
- ✓ From assessments to determine which students failed to learn by the deadline...to assessments to identify students who need additional time and support
- ✓ From assessments used to reward and punish students...to assessments used to inform and motivate students
- ✓ From assessing many things infrequently...to assessing a few things frequently

A Shift in Use of Assessments

- ✓ From individual teacher assessment...to assessments developed jointly by collaborative teams
- ✓ From each teacher determining the criteria to be used in assessing student work...to collaborative teams clarifying the criteria and ensuring consistency among team members when assessing student work
- ✓ From an over-reliance on one kind of assessment...to balanced assessments
- ✓ From focusing on average scores...to monitoring each students' proficiency in every essential skill

A Shift in the Response When Students Don't Learn

- ✓ From individual teachers determining the appropriate response...to a systematic response that ensures support for every student
- ✓ From fixed time and support for learning...to time and support for learning as variables
- ✓ From remediation...to intervention
- ✓ From one opportunity to demonstrate learning...to multiple opportunities to demonstrate learning

A Shift in the Work of Teachers

- From isolation...to collaboration
- From each teacher clarifying what students must learn...to collaborative teams building shared knowledge and understanding about essential learning
- From each teacher assigning priority to different learning standard...to collaborative teams establishing the priority of respective learning standards
- From teachers determining the pacing of the curriculum...to collaborative teams of teachers helping each other improve

A Shift in the Work of Teachers

- From individual teachers attempting to discover ways to improve results...to collaborative teams of teachers helping each other improve
- From privatization of practice...to open sharing of practice
- From decisions made on the basis of individual preferences...to decisions made collectively by building shared knowledge of best practice
- From an assumption that "these are my kids, those are your kids"...to an assumption that "these are our kids"

A Shift in Focus

- From an external focus on issues outside of the school... to an internal focus on steps the staff can take to improve the school
- From a focus on inputs...to a focus on results
- From goals related to completion of projects and activities...to SMART goals demanding evidence of student learning
- From teachers gathering data from their individually constructed test in order to assign grades...to collaborative teams acquiring information form common assessments in order to (1) inform their individual and collective practice and (2) respond to students who need additional time and support

A Shift in School Culture

- From independence...to interdependence
- From a language of complaint...to a language of commitment
- From long-term strategic planning...to planning for short-term wins
- From infrequent generic recognition...to frequent specific recognition and a culture of celebration that creates many winners

A Shift in Professional Development

- From external training (workshops and courses)...to job-embedded learning
- From the expectation that learning occurs infrequently (on the few days devoted to professional development)...to an expectation that learning is ongoing and occurs as part of routine work practice
- From presentations to entire staff...to team-based action research

A Shift in Professional Development

- From learning by listening...to learning by doing
- From learning individually through courses and workshops...to learning collectively by working together
- From assessing impact on the basis of teacher satisfaction ("Did you like it?")...to assessing impact on the basis of evidence of improved student learning
- From short-term exposure to multiple concepts and practices...to sustained commitment to limited focused initiatives

Professional Learning Communities

What we advocate···is not a program, but an *ongoing, never-ending process* specifically designed to change the very culture of schools and districts

~ Taken from "Learning By Doing. A Handbook for PLCs at Work

Take Some Time To Discuss

Any questions – jot them down!

"Why PLC at Carney?"

The Importance of Attitude

Collaborating Effectively

- Successful implementation will take three years.

- Wynnebrook Elementary School: Weathering the Storm

Ups and Downs, Bumps and Bruises

- We will make progress as a PLC when we move from a language of complaint to a language of commitment, from a language of "they" to a language of "we" and, from focusing on what we can't stand to what we stand for.

A Team...

- A group working <u>interdependently</u> toward a <u>common goal</u>, for which members are <u>mutually accountable</u>

Everyone has a sweater but they may not be on the same team...

Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Planning	Change
	Skills	Incentives	Resources	Action Planning	Confusion
Vision		Incentives	Resources	Action Planning	Anxiety
Vision	Skills		Resources	Action Planning	Resistance
Vision	Skills	Incentives		Action Planning	Frustration
Vision	Skills	Incentives	Resources		Treadmill

Developing a Stretch Culture

- A stretch culture is, in fact, a culture of encouragement, caring and support, for both students and adults.
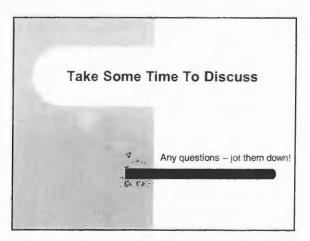
- Attitude is important!

Positive Action is Required

Action Stimulates Hope

As simple as it may seem, the way to begin overcoming cynicism, negativity and hopelessness is to act. We need leaders who:

1. Have the will to act
2. Have the courage to act
3. Have the persistence to keep acting

When people begin to act, people begin to hope. When people begin to gain hope, they begin to behave differently. When people behave differently they experience success. When people experience success their attitudes change. When a person's attitude changes it affects other peoples'. This is the essence of reculturing schools into professional learning communities.

DuFour, DuFour and Eaker

Take Some Time To Discuss

Any questions – jot them down!

Collaborative Focus

A Key Question in PLCs

- The Critical question to consider in a PLC is not, "do we collaborate," but rather,
  "what do we collaborate about."
- You must not settle for "Collaboration Lite!"

Critical Corollary Questions!
If We Believe All Kids Can Learn

- What is it we expect them to learn?
- How will we know when they have learned it?
- How will we respond when they don't learn?
- How will we respond when they already know it?

Align School Structures

Traditional Schedule
- Frequent disruption to teaching/learning blocks
- Sporadic Specials classes throughout the week
- Sporadic Planning Time for Instructional Staff
- No Collaborative Time Built into the schedule
- No time for additional support built into the daily schedule *except* before/after-school tutoring
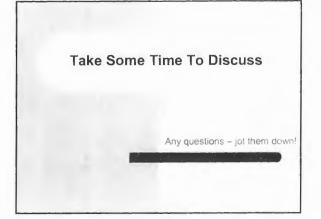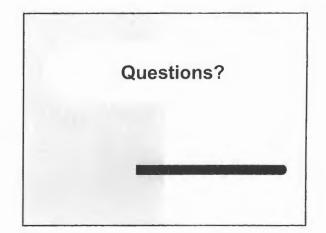
New Master Schedule
- Protected time for Teaching/Learning
- Daily "Specials" for all Students
- Daily Individual Planning for all instructional staff
- Weekly Collaborative Planning for all teams
- **Intervention/Enrichment Block for all Grade Levels During the School Day**

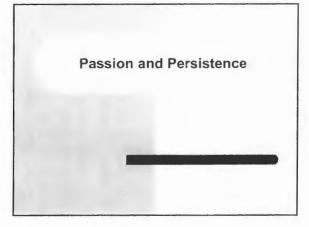## Characteristics of a Learning Community

- Shared mission, vision, values, goals
- Collaborative teams FOCUSED ON LEARNING
- Collective inquiry into "best practice" and "current reality"
- Action orientation/experimentation
- Commitment to continuous improvement
- Results orientation

PLC is not a program
- *it's a way of thinking*

A way of thinking that is beneficial for OUR students.

Take Some Time To Discuss

Any questions – jot them down!

Questions?

Passion and Persistence

Appendix D

What to Expect...

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

I am asking you to:

- participate in a focus group (see questions p. 4)
- complete a survey (see questions p. 5/6)

You will receive:

- a meal (served during focus group)
- a $10.00 gift certificate to Tim Hortons or Starbucks (your choice)

Potential benefits of project:

- information related to increasing job satisfaction at Carney
- information related to increasing the retention of staff at Carney
- information related to ongoing support of the PLC at Carney

In this package:

- information sheet
- informed consent
- focus group questions – sample
- survey questions – sample

Appendix E

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning
Community at Carney Hill Community School

Information Sheet

Researcher:	Mrs. Liza Arnold
	Student – Masters of Education (Counselling) UNBC
Address:	2681 Hewlett Court, Prince George, B.C., V2N 5H4
Phone No:	961-6147 (cell)
Email:	arnoldl@unbc.ca
Supervisor:	Dr. Bryan Hartman
Title of Project:	Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a
	Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School
Type of Project:	Research Project

Purpose of Research: The purpose of this project is to determine whether a professional learning community (PLC) at Carney Hill Community School increases job satisfaction. If the findings suggest that being an active participant in the PLC at Carney Hill does increase job satisfaction, we will have obtained information about a "system" for contributing to improved morale, increased motivation, retention of staff, and, ultimately higher student achievement. In addition, the findings will also be used to justify and strengthen the rationale for ongoing support (i.e., time and resources) of the PLC.

Potential Benefits: The potential benefits associated with this project may include; an increase in teacher job satisfaction, an increased retention rate of teachers, an increase in student success and, ongoing support of the PLC.

Potential Risks: There are no potential risks associated with this project.

How was respondent chosen: Respondents are any staff members working at Carney Hill Community School who are active participants in the PLC and are willing to complete a survey and interview.

What will the respondent be asked to do: Respondents will be asked to complete a survey (Appendix H) and participate in an interview (Appendix G) which will be recorded.

Who will have access to the respondents' responses: Access to the respondents' responses will be given to the supervisor (Dr. Bryan Hartman), the researcher (Mrs. Liza Arnold) and committee member (Dr. Linda O'Neill).

Voluntary nature of participating: Participation in the research is completely voluntary. At anytime, respondents have the right to withdraw without question. Should a participant wish to withdraw, their information will be withdrawn as well.

Whether there is remuneration for participating: Respondents will receive a $10.00 Tim Hortons or Starbucks gift certificate for participating in the study (i.e., survey and interview). Upon completion of the study participants will be invited to a luncheon.

How is anonymity addressed: Surveys will not require a respondent to reveal his/her name nor position. The survey will be submitted via a secure drop box (i.e., box with lock). The interview will not require the respondent to reveal his/her name nor position. As the participant pool is small, anonymity may be difficult to ensure.

How is confidentiality addressed: No name, context or circumstance will be linked to any of the information or quotes in the project.

How is information stored and for how long: All information will be stored in a secure file cabinet which is equipped with a lock and located in a locked room. The information will be stored for one year following the completion of the project.

How will information be destroyed: All paper will be shredded and all audio and videotapes will be erased.

Name and phone number of person to contact incase questions arise: Mrs. Liza Arnold (250-961-6147), Dr. Bryan Hartman (250-960-6647) or, the Office of Research (250-960-5820).

How to get a copy of the research results: Contact Liza Arnold at 250-961-6147 or arnoldl@unbc.ca Copies can also be requested from the University of Northern British Columbia Library.

Name and phone number of person to contact for more information: Mrs. Liza Arnold (250-961-6147).

How can complaints be addressed: Complaints about the project should be directed to the Office of Research, 960-5820 or by email reb@unbc.ca or Dr. Bryan Hartman (250-960-6647).

Signed consent: The research participants must and will receive a copy of their signed consent forms.

Appendix F

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

Informed Consent

This document **must** be completed by the respondent prior to participating in the research project.

Question	Yes	No
Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research project?		
Have you received and read a copy of the information sheet?		
Do you understand that the interviews will be recorded?		
Do you understand the benefits and risks of participating in this study?		
Have you had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss the study?		
Do you understand you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without explanation?		
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?		
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?		
Do you understand the purpose of the research?		

This study was explained to me by: (Print Name) _____

I agree to participate in this study: (Print Name) _____

_____   _____
Signature of Research Participant   Date of Signature

Witness information: (Print Name) _____

_____   _____
Signature of Witness   Date of Signature

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate. _____   _____
                                                                Signature of Researcher   Date of Signature

The information sheet must be attached to this Consent Form and a copy given to the Research Participant

Appendix G

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

Focus Group and Individual Interview Questions

1. Vision – What impact has PLC had on school vision? Share in terms of before PLC and after PLC?

_____
_____
_____
_____

2. Collaboration/Communication – What impact has PLC had on collaboration and communication? Share in terms of before and after PLC.

_____
_____
_____
_____

3. Professional Development – What impact has PLC had on professional development? Share in terms of before and after PLC.

_____
_____
_____
_____

4. Job Satisfaction – What impact has PLC had on job satisfaction? Share in terms of before and after PLC.

_____
_____
_____
_____

5. Retention – What impact has PLC had on retention? Share in terms of before and after PLC.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Appendix H

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Initiating a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

Staff Survey

Survey adapted from the perception survey provided by Shannon & Bylsma (2007)

As you read each of the statements below think about your experiences at Carney Hill Community School before and after becoming a participant of the PLC. Then circle the number that best describes how much you agree with that statement.

Vision

	Time	No basis to judge	Don't agree at all	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree mostly	Agree completely
a. The school has a clear sense of purpose.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
b. I have a clear understanding of what the school is trying to achieve.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
c. The staff shares a common understanding of what the school wants to achieve.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
d. All staff are committed to achieving the school's goals.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
e. The staff keeps the school's goals in mind when making important decisions.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
f. The school's primary emphasis is improving student learning.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5

Collaboration/Communication

	Time	No basis to judge	Don't agree at all	Agree slightly	Agree moderately	Agree mostly	Agree completely
a. The school uses a system to obtain a variety of perspectives when making a decision.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
b. Teachers discuss teaching on a regular basis.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
c. Staff members work together to solve problems related to school issues.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
d. The staff works in teams across grade levels to help increase student learning.	Before PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5
	After PLC	0	1	2	3	4	5

Appendix I

Job Satisfaction: Assessing the Impact of Participating in a Professional Learning Community at Carney Hill Community School

Project Time Line

Date	Task	Notes
2-Mar	Proposal Completed for Initial Review	
3-Mar	Proposal to Supervisor for Review	
10-Mar	Revisions	
21-Mar	Proposal Due to Research Ethics Board	
6-May	Revise Proposal (REB and Supervisor)	
7-May	Request Permission to Share Proposal with PLC Members	
9-May	Schedule Proposal Defense for May 20th	
9-May	Copies of Proposal to Committee and SD#57	
10-May	Prepare Presentation for PLC	
14-May	Share with PLC - Request Participation	
20-May	Defend Proposal	
26-May	Revisions to REB	
27-May	Schedule Interviews and Survey Times	
May	Ongoing Literature Review	
July	Analyze Data	
August	Write Rough Draft of Project	
8-Sep	Rough Draft to Supervisor for Review	
6-Oct	Corrected Draft to Committee Members	Write Rough Draft of Project
3-Nov	Final Revisions and Supervisor Review	Write Rough Draft of Project
1-Dec	Project Completion - Final Submission	Rough Draft to Supervisor for Review
2-Feb	Request Convocation	

Appendix J

Norms of the Carney Hill Learning Community

Time: We will begin and end our meetings on time (Wednesdays from 1:45-2:45pm). We will consider staying longer if required.

Listening: We will encourage listening and speaking of ourselves and others not only by modeling but also via a "speakers list".

Confidentiality: We will welcome our colleagues to participate in an "open" manner and will share the outcomes of our meetings in a transparent fashion (i.e. posting minutes via email etc.).

Decision Making: We will make decisions in the best interest of student learning by way of consensus. We will make whole school decisions with input of those who are not in attendance. We will deal with conflicts as they occur in the learning community; we will keep each other honest.

Participation: We will encourage participation by allowing all members the opportunity to contribute (awareness of who has/hasn't spoken). We will bring food!

Expectations: We will ask of ourselves to participate with honesty, respect, and a commitment to professionalism. We will move problems to solutions.

We are a team – "A group of people working interdependently to achieve a common goal for which members are held mutually accountable."

Appendix K

Carney Hill Elementary School
A Learning Community

Agenda: *Date*

Chair:
Secretary:
Snacks:

- Welcome and record participants

- Check-in

  o How everyone is doing personally
  o Done individually around the table

- Focus of meeting
  o Determined the meeting prior
  o Based on four guiding questions, vision, and goals

- Check-out
  o Reflection on meeting
  o Done individually around the table

- Next week:
  o Focus
  o Chair
  o Secretary

Guiding Questions:

1. What is it we expect them to learn?
2. How will we know when they have learned it?
   (What is the standard of mastery that they have to demonstrate?)
3. How will we respond when they don't learn?
4. How will we respond when they already know it?

Appendix L

Staff Survey: T-test Calculations

Vision

Subject (i)	Before (Xi1)	After (Xi2)	Difference Di=Xi1-Xi2		
1	14	27	-13	169	457.96
2	12	20	-8	64	286.96
3	16	20	-4	16	153.76
4	13	22	-9	81	302.76
5	11	26	-15	225	547.56
6	9	26	-17	289	645.16
7	13	21	-8	64	286.96
8	19	19	0	0	70.56
9	8	17	-9	81	302.76
10	15	16	-1	1	88.36

$\sum Di = -84$
$\sum Di = 990$
n=10
D= 8.4
$\sum(Di-D) = 3142.8$
sd=18.69
sd=5.91

Collaboration/Communication

Subject (i)	Before (Xi1)	After (Xi2)	Difference Di=Xi1-Xi2		
1	17	27	-10	100	324
2	11	26	-15	225	529
3	10	17	-7	49	225
4	16	23	-7	49	225
5	15	26	-11	121	361
6	12	25	-13	169	441
7	19	23	-4	16	144
8	12	13	-1	1	81
9	11	19	-8	64	256
10	13	17	-4	16	144

$\sum Di = -80$
$\sum Di = 810$
n=10
D=8.0
$\sum(Di-D) = 2730$
sd=17.42
sd=5.51

Professional Development

Subject (i)	Before (Xi1)	After (Xi2)	Difference Di=Xi1-Xi2		
1	13	22	-9	81	228.01
2	15	20	-5	25	123.21
3	6	10	-4	16	102.01
4	13	19	-6	36	146.41
5	15	27	-12	144	327.61
6	14	23	-9	81	228.01
7	15	18	-3	9	82.81
8	13	18	-5	25	123.21
9	19	26	-7	49	171.61
10	14	15	-1	1	50.41

$\sum Di = -61$
$\sum Di = 467$
$n = 10$
$D = 6.1$
$\sum(Di-D) = 1583.3$
$sd = 13.26$
$sd = 4.2$

Job Satisfaction

Subject (i)	Before (Xi1)	After (Xi2)	Difference Di=Xi1-Xi2		
1	4	5	-1	1	4.84
2	2	4	-2	4	10.24
3	1	3	-2	4	10.24
4	2	4	-2	4	10.24
5	3	5	-2	4	10.24
6	4	5	-1	1	4.84
7	4	4	0	0	1.44
8	4	5	-1	1	4.84
9	2	3	-1	1	4.84
10	4	4	0	0	1.44

$\sum Di = -12$
$\sum Di = 20$
$n = 10$
$D = 1.2$
$\sum(Di-D) = 63.2$
$sd = 2.65$
$sd = 0.84$

Retention

Subject (i)	Before (Xi1)	After (Xi2)	Difference Di=Xi1-Xi2		
1	4	5	-1	1	7.29
2	2	4	-2	4	13.69
3	0	5	-5	25	44.89
4	2	4	-2	4	13.69
5	3	5	-2	4	13.69
6	2	5	-3	9	22.09
7	3	4	-1	1	7.29
8	3	4	-1	1	7.29
9	3	3	0	0	2.89
10	4	4	0	0	2.89

$\sum Di = -17$

$\sum Di = 49$

n=10

D=1.7

$\sum(Di-D) = 135.7$

sd=3.88

sd=1.23

Glossary

Action Research – Research for the purpose of advancing a social cause, to change existing practices of inequality, discrimination, or environmental endangerment. Also used in a more general way to refer to research that leads to any kind of immediate change.
Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Group.

Alternate Program – An alternate location in the school where learning can occur for students who struggle in the traditional classroom as a result of learning difficulties and/or behaviour difficulties.

Case Study – A detailed examination of one setting, or a single subject, a single depository of documents, or a particular event.
Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Group.

Collective Efficacy - Efficacy beliefs at the collective level refer to judgments that people make about a social system (family, team, organization, or community) and about its level of competence and effectiveness in specific domains of action.
Caprara, G., Barbaranelli, C., Borgogni, L., & Steca, P. (2003). Efficacy beliefs as determinants of teachers' job satisfaction. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 95 (4).

Foundation Skills Assessment (FSA) – Annual province-wide assessment of British Columbia students' academic skills, and provides a "snapshot" of how well BC students are learning foundation skills in Reading, Comprehension, Writing, and Numeracy.
http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/assessment/fsa/

Percentage of Change – $\frac{\text{Posttest mean} - \text{Pretest mean}}{\text{Pretest mean}} \times 100$
http://www.cfchildren.org/media/files/STRstudentexpsurvey.pdf

Poverty – The extent to which an individual does without resources (i.e. financial, emotional, mental, spiritual, physical, support systems, relationships/role models, and knowledge of hidden rules).
Payne, R. (2005). *A framework for understanding poverty* (4th Ed.). Highlands, TX: aha! Process.

Professional Learning Community - A group of individuals working together to enhance their ability to achieve their shared vision and goals.
DuFour, R. (1999). Autonomy: In the midst of community, there's room for the individual. *Journal of Staff Development*, 20 (3).

Qualitative Study – An approach to social science research that emphasizes collecting descriptive data in natural settings, uses inductive thinking, and emphasizes understanding the subjects' point of view.

Bogdan, R.C., & Biklen, S.K. (2003). *Qualitative research for education: An introduction to theories and methods* (4th Ed.). Pearson Education Group.

Quantitative Study – Research that examines phenomena through the numerical representation of observations and statistical analysis.

http: ojp.usdoj.gov/BJA evaluation glossary glossary_q.htm

Self-efficacy - An impression that one is capable of performing in a certain manner or attaining certain goals. It is the belief that one has the capabilities the courses of actions required to execute and manage prospective situations.

http: en.wikipedia.org wiki Self-efficacy

Strong Start – Free, play-based early learning program for preschool-age children (0-5) attending with their parents or caregivers.

http: www.learnnowbc.ca/Parent_Information_Centre/EarlyLearning StrongStartCentres.aspx