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Collective Impact: A Case Study in Collaboration at a Teacher-Developed School

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Education

by

Jane Marie Patterson

2012



ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Collective Impact: A Case Study in Collaboration at a Teacher-Developed School

by

Jane Marie Patterson

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2012

Professor Tyrone Howard, Co-Chair

Professor Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

This study explored collaboration at a teacher-developed and implemented small high school that was a product of a district's comprehensive school reform initiative. This initiative was aimed at improving outcomes for youth in communities where chronic school failure had become entrenched. Specifically, this study investigated how the phenomenon of teacher collaboration both catalyzes and fosters teachers' sense of shared responsibility for student success and well being, their perceptions of collective efficacy, and their trust in colleagues to both internalize and implement the school's mission. I used a single-case study as the mode of inquiry in order to create a detailed portrait of teacher collaboration based on how teachers both talk about and implement their work. I drew from five principle information sources: (a) all 19 faculty members completed three surveys aimed at understanding teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy, faculty trust, and shared responsibility; (b) I conducted 16, hour-long

interviews to understand collaborative practices relative to trust, collective efficacy, and shared responsibility; (c) I conducted one focus group that focused on the nature of collaboration at the site; (d) I observed four collaborative teacher meetings; and (e) five teachers wrote twice-weekly reflections on their collaborative practices. I conclude this study with recommendations for teacher-led school transformation as one approach to turning around failing schools.

The dissertation of Jane Marie Patterson is approved.

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James Stigler

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Louis Gomez

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Diane Durkin, Co-Chair

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Tyrone Howard, Co-Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2012

## DEDICATION

I dedicate this 3-year exploration into the nature and meaning of teacher-led school transformation to the Humanitas teachers in the Los Angeles Unified School District. I never cease to feel inspired, empowered and emboldened by your drive to do what is right. I hope that in a few years the current vitriolic public discourse about teachers' work is replaced by a dialogue worthy of your service to our nation's most vulnerable youths.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“Our chief want is someone who will inspire us to be what we know we could be.”  
(Ralph Waldo Emerson)

When I began teaching as a second career, I was stunned by the difficulty of the work. The horrendous workload, the seeming impossibility of empowering 45 students an hour, five periods a day, and the isolation of the classroom made me wonder if my new path was ill conceived. I had been inspired to change careers by my memory of the first person to respond to my “chief want:” Gene Howard. Mr. Howard was my fourth and fifth-grade teacher in a blue-collar community in Southern California. He challenged me to breach the barriers that had been constructed to limit my personal and intellectual growth. He accomplished this with kindness and support and with high expectations for my academic and personal integrity. On my most challenging days as a teacher, I remembered Mr. Howard and what he had meant to me, and I knew that, with persistence, caring, and skill, I might begin to repay my debt to this giant heart.

As my first year drew to a close, my eyes began to open. I saw the depth of talent and inspiration at my school site. My first mentor, Pam Jamison, knew exactly what I needed. She guided me, not with advice or binders of curriculum, but with a process of inquiry that helped me see what I already knew was true. That year, I met a group of teachers who were part of a network called Humanitas. I learned from each of them what high expectations for youth and for teachers truly meant. I learned that collaboration was the enemy of mediocrity and that shared responsibility vanquished isolation. Fifteen years later, I found myself hungry to know why these phenomena matter. I acknowledge each of these teachers for, unbeknownst to them, catalyzing this study. I thank Wendy Erpino for making all-day Saturday planning a complete joy. I thank her for setting a high bar for my performance, for trusting me, and for inspiring me to be the best teacher I could be—a critical step in my doctoral journey.

Mr. Howard showed my 10-year-old self what I was capable of, and Peggy Funkhouser, my mentor, shined a light on all that I could be as both an education professional and as a human being. Peggy is the founder and former CEO of the Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP), my present employer. She has empowered me to become a leader in urban school transformation. When I was too bold and transgressed the placid tone at LAEP, she encouraged me to harness my indignation and shape it into a powerful platform for real and lasting school reform. When my ideas were big and unwieldy, she helped me refine them into a policy for action. Peggy has been a constant voice of reason, honesty, kindness, and action. She has read blustery drafts of my dissertation (and she still thinks I'm smart) and she has watched these 3 years' progress in my doctoral program with keen interest. I owe so much of who I am now as a leader in education reform to Peggy.

Neither my passion nor my good intentions were enough to succeed in UCLA's Educational Leadership Program. I would have accomplished nothing if not for the truly patient and tireless support of Diane Durkin. She put a lump in my throat every time I opened a first draft and saw more red than black on the page, but she was always right—always. I can only scarcely imagine the unending hours she spends bringing out the best in each of us. I also acknowledge the friendship of Rhonda Sivaraman, my classmate and an example of the pinnacle of integrity and achievement in this program.

I acknowledge the love of my life, Kenneth Robert Brown. He is kindness personified. He quelled my anxiety, read countless drafts of my writing after teaching all day, and believes that I represent what is right and just in urban education, and for that, I love him most. He reminds me that I am, to the absolute core of my being, trying to live up to the person Mr. Howard knew I could be.

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## CHAPTER 1

### Overview of the Study

#### **Introduction**

For more than two decades, policy makers, researchers, and educators have been engaged in considerable thought and action concentrated on improving our nation's public schools. Over the last four years in the Southland School District (a pseudonym), 30 teacher-developed school proposals were approved by the Board of Education. The success of these schools is of great interest to the district, the Teachers' Union, the community, the teachers who developed them, and, most importantly, to the students who will attend these schools.

In 2010, the East Heights (a pseudonym) campus, the first new school built in the community in 85 years, opened with five teacher-developed schools. My study focuses on one of these small high schools, Urban Arts Academy (UAA; a pseudonym), during its second year of implementation. I looked at the extent to which teacher collaboration, a foundational principle of the school's design, is woven into the school's culture. In describing how collaboration functions as part of the core work processes of this school, I provide a theory-in-use model that will empower other teachers to create collaborative school models as local solutions to systemic urban school failure. I situate this study in the context of comprehensive school reform (CSR), and I provide a theoretical framework that is based upon agency, which grows out of social cognitive theory. This model of school reform is built upon teachers' agentic authority to act in the best interest of their students by creating collaboratively designed and implemented small schools. I sought to describe how collaboration influences three essential elements of sustainable

school transformation: shared responsibility for student success, teacher perceptions of collective efficacy, and relational trust.

Alarming high school dropout rates and low post-secondary educational attainment point to the urgency of finding high school transformation models that work. The discourse surrounding how to improve the quality of teaching and learning in America's public schools is intensifying, particularly in light of data that shows the U.S. falling behind most other developed nations in the percentage of adults who have completed a post-secondary education. The percentage of the U.S. population between the ages of 25 and 34 who have attained post-secondary education is 40%, falling well below Canada, South Korea, and the Russian Federation, each at 55%. Portugal and Poland far exceed the U.S. in the percentage of the population that has completed post-secondary education. From 1998 to 2006, the Portuguese population increased by approximately 13% and the percentage of the population that completed a post-secondary education during that time was 75%, and the data for Poland are similar. The U.S. population also grew by approximately 13%, and the post-secondary attainment was, as stated previously, 40% (Office of Economic Cooperation and Development, 2009).

Low high school graduation rates are predictors of low post-secondary educational attainment. In California, African-American and Latino average freshman graduation rates in 2008 were 65.1% and 61.1%, respectively. Other appraisals, such as those provided by the Manhattan Institute, estimate those percentages at 56.3% and 52.2%. In Southland Unified, the average freshman graduation rate is 48.6% for African-American students and 43.7% for Latinos. The Manhattan Institute estimates are 49.5% and 39.8%, respectively. Southland is home to four schools among the 20 highest-poverty, highest-minority schools in California with the lowest A-G attainment rates; if one includes charter and continuation schools, the number



increases to nine. Three of these schools are large, comprehensive high schools, and in each, only 11% of their seniors have completed University of California's A-G minimum requirements for acceptance (Education Trust West, 2011). The purpose of CSR is to change statistics like these.

### **History of Comprehensive School Reform**

The 1983 report, *A Nation at Risk*, sounded the alarm; comprehensive improvement of the public school system was the nation's highest priority. The report claimed that the nation's intellectual, economic, and moral capacity were at risk due to its flagging public educational system. The report called for systemic change: more rigorous graduation requirements; higher standards for student performance; more time for teaching and learning; higher salaries and longer school calendars for teachers; and more responsible leadership at the federal, state, district, and school levels (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). One of the reactions to the report was the mobilization of researchers and practitioners in what has become known as CSR (Desimone, 2002).

The 1996 report, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, echoed the warnings of 1983 and foreshadowed those of the Office of Economic Cooperation and Development in 2009. The report claims that U.S. schools are structured for failure, citing centralized, bureaucratic systems modeled on an industrial economy as the major impediment to improvement. Schools, the report contends, must be redesigned to improve the quality of teaching and learning (National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, 1996). The report called for vast improvements by the year 2006. The aforementioned statistics make it clear that this goal has not been met. Still, the nationwide movement towards CSR continues with vigor.

## **Comprehensive School Reform in Southland Unified**

In 2005, Southland Unified embarked upon an initiative for transforming comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities. At present, most of the district's large high schools are configured as smaller learning communities sharing a single campus. In 2009, Southland's Board of Education approved a resolution that allowed both internal and external operators to write proposals to operate both new and chronically failing schools. The competitive process awards schools to applicants with innovative, research-based proposals that are aimed at improving educational outcomes in the district's high-poverty communities. Since the initiative is intended to improve the quality of the learning experience for students, a great deal of weight is given to curriculum, instruction, and professional learning. This reform effort is open to charter operators, in-district administrators, and teacher teams. School operators may adopt the structure of their choice. The school in this study is a product of the district's CSR initiative. The model that my case study site adopted is a semi-autonomous small school model, which offers schools autonomy over budget, staffing, governance, curriculum, and scheduling. In exchange for this autonomy, schools must show success within 3 years or risk being restructured by the district.

This school model offers promise for restructuring schools around the principles of democracy and educational equity. The governance structure requires participation from students, parents, and the community, and the instructional models are required to be student-centered, research-based, and focused on A-G attainment. The school in this study is typical of most semi-autonomous schools in the district; it was developed by teachers and has a small administrative staff—one principal, one counselor, and one office manager. There are no assistant principals; no deans; no college counselors; and no English language, special education,

or Title I coordinators. Teachers and the scant administrative teams are responsible for ensuring that their schools meet the various needs of all 400-500 students in each school. The nature of the structure creates opportunity born out of necessity: the school's success depends upon distributed and collaborative leadership.

The purpose of this study was to understand and describe the phenomenon of teacher collaboration. I describe the interaction between teacher collaboration and teachers' confidence in their colleagues' professional competence, sense of mutual obligation to students, and relational trust. This study sought to delve deeply into the collaborative work processes at one site in order to describe how collaboration influences the teaching and learning environment during the second year of school implementation. Since this site is teacher-developed, implemented, and operated, I sought to understand how the phenomenon of collaboration serves as an act of informal leadership and a manifestation of teachers' agentic authority to impact teaching and learning.

In this case study I generalize to three distinct theoretical propositions: student achievement is positively related to teachers who believe in their colleagues' ability to teach all students (Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2000), student achievement is positively related to teachers who share responsibility for student success (Lee & Smith, 1996; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998), and student achievement is positively related to high levels of faculty trust (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). I sought to expand each of these theories by integrating them, by unifying them under the umbrella of teacher collaboration, and by situating them in the context of a teacher-developed school. I sought to understand how teacher collaboration both catalyzes and fosters shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and trust.

## **Need for the Study**

Recent nationwide small school reform models in high school have created an unprecedented opportunity to implement sustainable improvement in teaching and learning. Over the past decade, urban school districts in New York, Illinois, and California have restructured large, comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities. These districts have also created the conditions for small, autonomous schools to take root. Central to this type of restructuring is the notion that when a team of teachers takes responsibility for a small group of students, teaching and learning improve (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Kronley & Ucelli-Kashyap, 2010; Lee & Smith 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010; Moore Johnson 2010; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998).

In the early 1970s, Alfred Bandura developed a branch of psychology called social cognitive theory. His theory provides a useful framework for understanding behaviors that are based upon teacher agency. Bandura argued that humans become motivated when they are active agents who have control over their futures and that the strength of these beliefs is related to perceived self-efficacy (Bandura, 1977). Bandura's findings showed a positive relationship between high levels of teacher perceptions of self-efficacy and high student achievement; these findings spurred subsequent research that sought to define and measure this relationship (Allinder, 1994; Anderson, Green, & Lowne; Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Meijer & Foster, 1988; Ross, 1992, 1994; Tschannen-Moran, Woolfolk Hoy, & Hoy 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

Goddard et al.'s (2000) study built off of Bandura's work and showed a positive relationship between teacher perceptions of collective efficacy and student achievement. Lee and Smith's (1996) longitudinal study demonstrated that collective responsibility for student success

and student achievement are positively related. Seashore Louis and Marks' (1998) study showed that when teachers assume shared responsibility for students, student achievement increases significantly. In 2002, Bryk and Schneider confirmed, after a decade of study, that trust is a foundational feature of effective schools. Combined, these studies demonstrate that, under the right conditions, schools can succeed in providing high-quality learning environments for all students. Small schools offer a foundational condition: a structure that enables teachers to assume collective responsibility for student learning.

Systemic improvement is not as daunting as it sounds. School districts across the nation, and Southland Unified high schools in particular, have begun to create the conditions to fundamentally improve teaching and learning. Southland has removed a significant impediment to systemic improvement by reconfiguring comprehensive high schools into smaller learning communities and building new campuses to accommodate small schools. The district's current challenge is to capitalize on recent findings that show positive relationships between increasing teachers' collective capacity for improvement and significantly improving student achievement (Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Goddard et al., 2000; Lee & Smith 1996; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990).

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study is to describe the relationship between teacher collaboration in one small, teacher-developed school and teachers' confidence in their colleagues' professional competence; teachers' sense of mutual obligation to students; and teachers' trust in one another to fulfill the school's mission. This school is a product of a large urban school district's CSR initiative. Central to this initiative is improving the quality of teaching and learning. A number of school structural models are acceptable under this reform; this study, however, focuses on the

semi-autonomous small school structure. Under this model, teacher teams develop and implement small schools that operate using collaborative decision-making processes. This study sought to understand and describe how collaboration influences the teaching and learning environment during the second year of implementation.

### **Research Questions**

This study sought to answer the following research questions:

1. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' sense of shared responsibility for academic success for all students?
2. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' professional competence/collective efficacy?
3. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' feelings of trust in colleagues' ability to implement the school mission?

### **Study Design**

This case study is a qualitative inquiry that aimed to understand and describe how the phenomenon of collaboration influences and interacts with collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and trust. I conducted this case study over a 2-month period, focusing on the daily lives of teachers as they interact with their colleagues to achieve collective goals. In order to ground my understanding of school-site dynamics, I administered two previously tested and validated surveys measuring collective efficacy and trust, as well as a survey that I developed on shared responsibility, to get an initial assessment of teacher perceptions of the extent to which these phenomena are present on each campus. I then conducted 16 hour-long, one-on-one interviews to gain a deeper understanding of these three phenomena as well as one focus group. Additionally, I observed four 2-hour all-staff professional development sessions to triangulate

what teachers say and think about collaboration with what they do as collaborators. I also engaged five teachers in twice-weekly reflections on their formal and informal collaboration experiences.

I used Maxwell's (2005) three-part process for analyzing my data: First, I established "organizational" (p. 97) categories that emerged from what teachers say, what they do, and what they think. The surveys captured what participants say; the interviews and focus group illustrated what teachers think; the observation and reflection data captured what teachers do. I then developed "substantive" (p. 97) categories that captured descriptions of participants' beliefs, values, and experiences. In the third phase of my data analysis I placed coded data into categories that aligned with my conceptual framework. The theoretical lens for this study consisted of three constructs: shared responsibility for student learning, relational trust, and collective efficacy. I began looking for data that supports and diverges from my pre-existing framework, and both provided evidence to support my research questions and established a foundation for developing a comprehensive theory for my study.

I conducted a case study in order to provide a detailed description of the culture of collaboration during the second year of implementation at one teacher-developed school. A case study is well suited to explore questions that seek to investigate how complex phenomena operate in particular settings (Yin, 2009). While a case study has the potential to offer a richly detailed description of the collaborative work processes, the method is not without limitations. For instance, I was not able to determine whether or not a quantifiable relationship between my three theoretical propositions and student achievement exists. Although the three major research studies that I cite do offer substantial quantitative analyses, these studies are limited in that they do not provide detailed descriptions of school site phenomena. Furthermore, I have found no

substantial research on teacher-developed schools. My desire was to contribute to the knowledge about how teachers implement a small school plan by creating a detailed description of how collaboration influences: teachers' confidence in their colleagues as teaching professionals; teachers' sense of mutual obligation to students; and trust among teachers. I also sought to learn how these constructs interact.

### **Conclusion**

If Southland Unified is going to succeed with teacher-led reform, we need to understand how teachers implement the mission as stated in their school proposals. We need to know how the work gets done at the school site level. We also need to learn what motivates teachers to function in a school that depends on distributed leadership. If we can better understand how agency is operationalized at the level of the school site through informal collaborative leadership, then we can begin to build confidence in teacher-led school reform.



## CHAPTER 2

### Literature Review

#### **Introduction**

This project sought to understand the collaborative culture of a teacher-developed small urban high school in a high-poverty community. The school was designed to operate as a collaborative workplace in order to provide high-quality teaching and learning. This study aimed to understand and describe the influence of collaboration on teachers' confidence in their colleagues' professional competence, their sense of collective responsibility for student success, and their level of trust. First, I discuss how each of these characteristics is related to student achievement. Second, I examine literature related to shared responsibility. Third, I discuss studies that show the relationship between collective efficacy and student achievement. Fourth, I synthesize studies that show the relationship between trust and collaborative cultures. I discuss research on school restructuring throughout this chapter, as my study is situated within the context of an urban school district's restructuring initiative. Finally, I define the connection between shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and trust.

#### **Student Achievement and School Culture**

Research positively correlates highly collaborative school cultures and improved student success. Four empirical studies have shown the relationship between building collective teacher capacity and increasing student achievement. Newmann and Wehlage's (1995) seminal 5-year study of restructured schools found that the most successful schools—those that improved student achievement on standardized tests—emphasized building teachers' collective capacity for improvement. They define this as a team of teachers working interdependently toward the

common goal of improving the quality of instruction. Goddard et al.'s (2000) study showed a positive relationship between collective efficacy (the belief that teachers, collectively, can achieve desired outcomes for students) and high student achievement. Lee and Smith's (1996) 2-year study demonstrated that collective responsibility for student success and improved student achievement are positively related. Seashore Louis and Marks' (1998) study showed that when teachers assume shared responsibility for students, student achievement increases significantly. Bryk and Schneider's 3-year study of Chicago public schools found that schools that are organized to foster trust show stronger student improvement compared to schools that do not create intentional opportunities for trusting relationships to thrive (Bryk & Schneider, 2002).

Further research indicates that the more confident a teacher is in his/her ability to influence positive outcomes for students, the fewer doubts students have about their own capabilities (Bandura, 1993; Goddard, 2001; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, Hoy, & Woolfolk Hoy, 2004; Goddard & LoGerfo, 2007). Confident and capable teachers create learning experiences that support students as they achieve mastery (Bandura, 1993). Yet Bandura (1993) notes how easily efficacy beliefs can erode for teachers who work in challenging schools. Constant disruptions from students and academic apathy can cause high levels of stress as well as emotional fatigue, which can lead to feelings of despair and a sense of hopelessness for teachers. However, when teachers work together with purpose and intention, their perceptions of collective efficacy increase, as do their effort and persistence, especially in challenging environments (Goddard, et al., 2000).

In two empirical studies, Goddard et al. found a relationship between achievement on standardized test scores and perceptions of collective efficacy among school faculty. In their 2000 study, the researchers analyzed survey results from 47 randomly selected elementary

schools by comparing them to student achievement on standardized tests in reading and mathematics. They found that high levels of collective efficacy were significantly and positively related to student achievement. They also noted that that collective efficacy had a greater influence on student achievement than student socio-economic status (SES). In 2004, Goddard and his team wanted to find out if this relationship existed in high schools as well. Their study of 96 midwestern high schools supported their hypothesis that a significant and positive relationship exists between these factors. They found that collective efficacy, once again, was a strong predictor of student achievement on 12th grade standardized tests that measure verbal and mathematical proficiency. Both studies controlled for SES and prior achievement. These studies provide evidence that teacher perceptions of collective efficacy have a stronger effect on student achievement than students' prior proficiency level or SES. These are promising findings for teachers who work with students of poverty and for reformers who are seeking to understand how to create conditions for sustainable urban school reform that improves student achievement.

### **Shared Responsibility for Student Success**

Shared responsibility is a cultural value that also has organizational features. Research on shared responsibility shows a positive relationship between teacher adherence to a unified vision or mission and high student achievement (Lee & Smith, 1996; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998; Scribner, Sawyer, Watson, & Myers, 2007). Some researchers suggest that a school vision has the ability to transform the educational process by emphasizing high quality learning and aligning curriculum with a school-wide mission (Kose, 2011; Silins, Mulford, & Zarins, 2002).

Shared responsibility for students has the potential to strengthen the professional community when teachers focus on student achievement (Lee, Bryk, & Smith, 1993; Newmann

& Wehlage, 1995; Saunders, Goldenberg & Gallimore, 2009; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998; Vescio, Ross & Adams, 2007). Reliance on a team of teachers increases the accountability of each member to his/her shared students and to one another, requiring significant input and oversight from peers (Goddard et al., 2000). Using NELS:88 data, Lee and Smith (1996) looked at the relationship between collective teacher responsibility and student achievement in mathematics, reading, science, and social studies for 11,692 students as they progressed from grades 8-10. The researchers analyzed the attitudes and behaviors of 9,904 teachers from the schools these students attended. They found that achievement gains were higher in all subjects and across demographics in schools where teachers assumed shared responsibility for student success.

Lee and Smith (1996) cite de-privatized teacher practice and purposeful teacher collaboration as characteristics of shared responsibility. They emphasize that these practices are part of school culture and are based on the value that teachers find in their work rather than on mandates or directives. The researchers found that teachers value their work when they are empowered to make decisions that impact their students and when they collaborate with colleagues. In schools where teachers feel empowered, student achievement is higher and student learning is more equitable across demographic areas than in schools where teachers do not feel empowered.

A significant finding that has implications for low-SES urban schools is that teachers who accept collective responsibility for student achievement do not fault students or their home environments for learning challenges. Collectively responsible teachers alter their instructional methodology to meet the needs of learners because, as a group, they believe that all students can learn. However, Lee and Smith (1996) also found that teachers in high SES schools have greater

control over the teaching and learning environment, and thus assume more responsibility for learning. However, they also discovered that as school size decreased, the differences between high and low-SES achievement decreased and teacher responsibility for learning increased.

Researchers recommend moving away from bureaucratic forms of school organization to more collaborative models that shift the focus of responsibility from the individual to the collective and that emphasize purposeful rather than contrived collaboration (Hargreaves & Dawe, 1990; Lee & Smith, 1996). Teachers who work collaboratively are accountable to their peers, and they receive much-needed guidance and support from them as well (Darling-Hammond, 1998; Kronley & Ucelli-Kashyap, 2010; Lee & Smith 1996; McLaughlin & Talbert 2010; Moore Johnson, 2010; Newmann & Wehlage, 1995; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998). In schools where professional community is purposeful, is guided by faculty determination to provide high-quality teaching and learning, and is rooted in teachers assuming shared responsibility for all of their students in their collective care, student achievement, as measured by standardized tests, was higher in mathematics, science, reading, and history (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

### **Collective Efficacy: The Evolution of a Construct**

Collective efficacy is a construct that grows out of research in psychology. This section looks at the development of the collective efficacy construct by first explaining its connection to social cognitive theory and then by showing its relationship to self-efficacy.

Social cognitive theorists—psychologists who posit that people learn and change when they are agents of their own motivation and action—maintain that lasting change in an organization depends upon mastery experience, vicarious experience, social persuasion, and affective states working in conjunction and, perhaps most importantly, each working as features

of group learning (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000). Mastery experiences are an important feature of social cognitive theory and are related to collective efficacy beliefs because they help explain how and why groups persist in particular endeavors. That persistence is associated with past experiences and the group's judgment about how successful they will be in the future. Success in the past is a motivating factor for people who are considering responding to a future challenge. The greater the degree of difficulty, the greater influence mastery experiences have on a group's confidence that they have the capacity to meet new challenges (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

People engage in vicarious experience when they see someone else with whom they identify perform well on a challenging task (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004). This is an important vehicle for new learning and has implications for education. Faculty teams who work collaboratively typically engage in de-privatized practice (Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998). When teachers open up their classrooms to their colleagues, plan curriculum with their teams, and evaluate student work, they are engaging in de-privatized practice.

Social persuasion is also a feature of this theory and will be discussed in more detail in the section on school culture. Briefly, it is the practice of inculcating members into a particular culture. Finally, affective states refer to a group's ability to manage crises (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004). There are clear implications for crisis management in low SES urban schools. The challenges associated with living in high-poverty communities are abundant and teachers who work in such communities need to be prepared to manage crises in such a way that school stability is maintained.

Collective efficacy grew out of Albert Bandura's studies of self-efficacy in the 1970s. As previously mentioned, Bandura (1977) argued that humans are motivated when they are active

agents who have control over their futures, noting that the strength of these beliefs is related to perceived self-efficacy. Bandura's extensive research on agency reveals numerous considerations, but he stressed that the central feature of all considerations of agency is the degree to which people feel confident and capable about controlling factors that impact their lives. Highly efficacious people, according to Bandura, are able to manage challenging environments by applying creative solutions to their circumstances. Their determination to overcome obstacles and to find opportunities where few exist is a common characteristic of such people (Bandura, 1993). When highly efficacious people are not successful, they generally cite lack of effort rather than lack of capability as the source of their failure. A person with strong self-efficacy beliefs is more likely to persist while engaged in challenging endeavors than an inefficacious person.

As previously mentioned, Bandura's findings showed a positive relationship between high levels of teacher perceptions of self-efficacy and high student achievement. These findings spurred subsequent research that sought to define and measure this relationship (Allinder, 1994; Anderson et al., 1988; Armor et al., 1976; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Gibson & Dembo, 1984; Meijer & Foster, 1988; Ross, 1992, 1994; Tschannen-Moran et al., 1998; Woolfolk & Hoy, 1990;). Ample research in teacher self-efficacy shows a strong positive relationship between teacher self-efficacy beliefs and student achievement.

### **Collective Efficacy and a Culture of High-quality Teaching and Learning**

Collective efficacy is a construct that is useful in understanding the academic culture of some low-SES schools with high student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, LoGerfo, & Hoy, 2004). Perceived collective efficacy beliefs are based upon the "the judgment of teachers in a school that the faculty as a whole can organize and execute the courses

of action required to have a positive effect on students” (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004, p. 4). Recent research has shown that student achievement is higher, when SES is controlled for, in schools where teachers characterize the faculty as having a high degree of collective efficacy. Collectively efficacious faculty teams build school cultures that focus on academics. When faculty teams engage in tasks that have high levels of interdependence, teachers work together to achieve common goals (Ware & Kitsantas, 2007). Newmann and Wehlage’s 1995 study of school restructuring found that student achievement in what they refer to as authentic tasks, those that require higher-order thinking skills, is directly related to the level of determination that faculty members have to create and sustain high-quality education. They maintain that it is teacher commitment, and not particular instructional practices, that lead to positive outcomes for students. Goddard and Hoy et al. (2004) agree, although they apply the construct of collective efficacy to explain teacher resolve. Their research shows that when teachers perceive that they are working with a capable faculty, their perceptions of collective efficacy increase, and this confidence in the group’s ability leads to the determination to pursue goals that lead to higher student achievement.

The pursuit of common goals based on student achievement helps create a school culture that is focused on improved teaching and learning. This focus empowers teachers to become agentive by placing them in control of their circumstances rather than merely responding to the circumstances in which they find themselves (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004). Agentive people are interested in pursuing goals that are challenging, but they need to feel that their efforts will be rewarded through a successful response to those challenges (Bandura, 1997). Bandura’s decades of research has shown that the greater a person’s sense of efficacy, the greater his/her level of determination to overcome hurdles and endure when faced with failure. When a faculty team is



confident in their ability to create learning environments that enable student success, they are more likely to create a culture of rigor for students (Newmann & Welhage, 1995).

High levels of collective efficacy are characterized by a faculty team's ability and desire to apply creative problem solving to perplexing situations. When a faculty team feels confident in their group abilities, they are likely to apply innovative solutions to challenges that impede their ability to reach students (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004; Klassen, 2010; Newmann, Rutter, & Smith, 1989; Skaalvik & Skaalvik, 2007). The zeal with which teachers pursue creative options is dependent upon their perceptions of faculty capacity, which is weighed against the level of challenge in their particular teaching context. If the teaching challenge is high, then teachers need to have high levels of confidence in their colleagues (Goddard et al., 2000). When efficacy levels are high, teachers encourage one another to overcome difficulties. The level of group dedication and the strength of their unity weigh heavily on faculty judgment about their ability to have a positive impact on student learning (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004). Conversely, when a faculty team believes that it is powerless to effect change, that attitude can become pervasive and can ultimately lead to a belief that the entire educational endeavor is in vain (Bandura, 1993). In contrast, when teachers in these schools feel that their colleagues are capable teachers, they feel empowered to respond to student needs through innovation.

School cultures can serve to strengthen the faculty's resolve to provide excellent teaching and learning, or they can destroy the morale of teachers who wish to move beyond impediments associated with high poverty schools (Brookover, Beady, Flood, Schweitzer, & Wisenbaker, 1979; Good & Brophy, 1986; Purkey & Smith, 1983; Rutter, Maughan, Mortimore, Ouston, & Smith, 1979). Social persuasion is a useful construct when considering how to create a culture of collaboration and trust. When the faculty has a high level of collective efficacy, which is

determined by their perception that their colleagues are capable of achieving successful outcomes for students, they are able to create a cultural norm that encourages their colleagues to become more effective teachers. Higher overall teaching performance leads to greater staff confidence in their abilities and, therefore, greater trust among the faculty that each member is living up to high expectations (Hoy & Woolfolk, 1990). Teachers such schools understand that large amounts of effort are the norm. High expectations among the faculty demand the pursuit of excellent teaching and encourage teachers to persist in this endeavor regardless of the challenges, setbacks, and failures they may face (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

A culture of high expectations for teachers creates a culture of high expectations for students as well. Teachers who assume collective responsibility for student success believe that they can help students achieve regardless of prior performance or home environment. This belief must be accompanied by a strong determination among the faculty to employ instructional methods that respond to student needs (Lee & Smith, 1996). Teachers who are confident in their ability to reach all students make future-oriented judgments about their own, their colleagues, and their students' capabilities to achieve success (Bandura, 1997). When the faculty believes that all students can learn, they create a culture of high expectations, which has a direct impact on students' willingness to be responsible for their learning. When students take greater responsibility for their own success, they learn more (Lee & Smith, 1996). When students learn more, teachers feel a greater degree of teaching mastery, which increases their perceptions of collective efficacy (Bandura, 1993).

Creating a culture of high expectations requires that teachers hold one another accountable for upholding group norms. As with any interdependent group, teachers judge one another based on the extent to which individual actions are consistent with shared values. In

collectively efficacious groups, when a teacher violates norms or does not live up to established standards, his/her peers are likely to bring him/her into compliance by sanctioning unacceptable behaviors (Goddard et al., 2000). Determination to ensure student achievement, taking responsibility for student success, and persistence in reaching shared goals are non-negotiable characteristics of school cultures that create high expectations in high poverty schools.

In their study of restructuring schools, Newmann and Wehlage (1995) found that student achievement was higher when the faculty had a clear vision for what constitutes high-quality learning. The researchers characterize such learning as that which develops in-depth understanding, requires higher-order thinking skills, and has value beyond the classroom. When teachers accepted shared responsibility for ensuring that all students were given opportunities to engage in high-level learning, overall student achievement increased, even after controlling for SES. Goddard and LoGerfo et al. (2004) suggest that when schools are organized to foster collective efficacy, faculty teams can gain the confidence to engage all students in academically rigorous coursework. In their longitudinal study of restructuring schools, Newmann and Wehlage found that successful schools are organized to provide high quality learning to all students. One of the characteristics of these schools is that teachers work in teams to support one another in creating rigorous curriculum. Seashore Louis and Marks' 1998 study extends previous studies of collective responsibility by trying to understand the relationship between strong professional communities, the intellectual quality of student work, and the organization of classrooms that sought to engage students in such work. They found that strong professional community was present when instruction was rigorous. Faculty teams with high levels of collective efficacy work in a culture of high expectations for teachers and for quality of

instruction; thus, they expect one another to employ appropriate methodologies to ensure that all students have the opportunity to learn (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

### **Collective Efficacy and Group Goal Setting**

Since individuals typically operate within social and political structures, they act collectively as well as individually. A group's perceptions of collective efficacy influence their shared beliefs about producing desired outcomes (Bandura, 1997; Goddard, 2001). When schools work purposely toward a desired goal, they are exercising group agency, which produces experiences rather than passively responding to them (Bandura, 2000; Goddard et al., 2000; Wood, 2007). Research in the cognitive sciences stresses the importance of individual autonomy and control over goal setting and shows a direct relationship between self-regulation and improved workplace performance (Bandura, 1993; Weiner, 1992). When teachers participate in defining goals for improvement, they become clear about expectations, which leads to their sense of collective efficacy or belief that, as a group, they can be successful in the classroom (Moore Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Supovitz, 2002). New research in collective efficacy and its relationship to improved teacher performance and student achievement suggests that a team approach to defining high-quality teaching and learning is warranted (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004; Peterson, 2000; Pintrich & Schunk, 2002). Improving student achievement is an aspiration that requires more than the efforts of individual teachers, particularly in complex learning environments. Social cognitive theory provides evidence that people are more motivated when confronted with challenges than they are when tasks are less complex (Latham & Locke, 1990). This suggests that teachers in high-poverty schools have ample reason to feel motivated to effect change, but sustaining that motivation requires a group effort that is guided by a clear mission that requires faculty

cooperation and collaboration to achieve high quality teaching and learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

### **Measuring Collective Efficacy**

Two ways to measure collective efficacy are to aggregate individual efficacy beliefs or to aggregate individual perceptions of group efficacy. Goddard, Hoy et al. (2004) believe that aggregating individual perceptions of group efficacy is the most effective. They base this on Bandura's contention that perceived collective efficacy is a group feature rather than the sum of individual perceptions. Their further rationale for this is that collective efficacy is related to the social system as a whole rather than an individual's judgment about his or her own capabilities. Perceived collective efficacy beliefs vary more between groups than do individual efficacy beliefs of group members. This is an important distinction because when teachers believe in the collective efficacy of the faculty, students as a whole are more successful.

Studies of teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy use instruments that measure beliefs about group capabilities (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard & Goddard, 2001; Goddard & LoGerfo, 2007; McCoach & Colbert, 2010). This represents a significant departure from individual perceptions of self-efficacy beliefs because the measures are not intended to find the mean of individual perceptions of each teacher's self-efficacy beliefs. What is of interest to researchers studying the relationship of collective efficacy and student achievement is the inter-school differences that exist when collective efficacy beliefs are correlated with student achievement (Bandura, 1993; Ciani, Summers, & Easter, 2008; Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004; Woolfolk Hoy, Sweetland, & Smith, 2002).

Goddard et al. (2000) sought to apply self-efficacy theory to organizations in order to explore collective teacher efficacy, to develop a reliable and valid measure of collective efficacy,

and to examine the effects of collective teacher efficacy on student achievement. They developed a collective efficacy questionnaire that asks teachers to respond to items on a Likert scale that measures both group competency and challenges of the teaching task that are associated with the teachers' specific teaching context. Initially, the researchers surveyed teachers and students in 47 randomly selected elementary schools in one large urban school district in the Midwest. Goddard et al. validated their theory that high levels of collective teacher efficacy would be positively associated with self-efficacy and trust in colleagues. Their analysis indicated that teachers' perceptions of group collective efficacy were related to the specific teaching context and the teachers' confidence that the faculty as a whole could respond effectively to those specific challenges. The researchers compared collective efficacy scores to standardized test score data for each of the 47 randomly sampled schools. Subsequently, the researchers studied 96 high schools in the Midwest to determine if a relationship exists between perceived collective teacher efficacy and high school student achievement in reading, mathematics, science, social studies, and writing. Their findings show that collective efficacy is a significant positive predictor of student achievement as measured by standardized, state-administered tests (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004).

### **The Limitations of Collective Efficacy and Shared Responsibility**

Researchers maintain that teacher perceptions of collective efficacy and high levels of shared responsibility increase student achievement, regardless of student SES levels. Still, their studies show that collective efficacy levels and shared responsibility are higher in more affluent schools and in lower grade levels (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004; Knoblauch & Woolfolk Hoy, 2008; Lee & Smith, 1996). This creates a unique challenge for low SES high schools. Goddard, LoGerfo, et al. (2004) explain that faculty members of average teaching ability may feel

competent when teaching more academically prepared students, but may feel inefficacious with more struggling students in more challenging circumstances. SES, according to Goddard, LoGerfo, et al. and Lee and Smith (1996), is a strong predictor of student achievement. Still, when teachers collaborate around a vision for high quality teaching and learning, and when they feel that they have the capacity to produce results for students, low SES is not a limiting factor (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004; Lee & Smith, 1996). In other words, teachers can overcome the challenges associated with high-poverty communities when they believe that, as a group, they can have a positive effect on student achievement.

### **High-quality Instruction and a Culture of Trust**

The pursuit of educational equity for students of poverty requires a new way of envisioning high school culture. Both increased national, state, and local accountability for student achievement and the moral imperative to provide students of poverty a high-quality education, require a departure from teaching in isolation to teaching as a collective. Teaching collaboratively, however, is only possible in a culture that has cultivated high levels of relational trust. Relational trust is the shared explicit or tacit understanding of individuals within a group that each member will honor his/her obligation to fulfill group's mission. In school settings, relational trust is strongly and positively related to teacher commitment to the welfare of students (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). Trust increases when teachers are confident that their colleagues will uphold school values and implement the school mission.

Bryk and Schneider (2002) surveyed 1,462 teachers in 270 schools and found that relational trust was positively related to teachers' level of commitment, their willingness to try new strategies, and their feelings of shared responsibility. According to Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000), interdependent organizations, such as schools, thrive in trusting environments.

Faculty members that trust one another are more likely to share concerns, be open about their struggles, expose weaknesses, and confront school-wide challenges (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000). Trust is critical to maintaining healthy levels of interdependence and avoiding the isolating nature of the high school campus. Collaborative school cultures, where decision-making is shared, produce higher levels of relational trust and lead to greater perceptions of collective efficacy (Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Bryk and Schneider (2002) maintain that schools are loosely coupled rather than centralized systems. This is an important consideration for a small low-SES urban school because such a system places a great burden on an individual school to create its own cultural conditions and to be fully responsible for its impact on students. The notion of a small school untethered from the central district is liberating as well because it allows educators at the school site to develop and maintain their collective vision for teaching and learning. The voluntary acceptance of responsibility engages teachers in working toward collective goals and shifts the driver for educational equity away from compliance and toward each individual's moral obligation to students.

As noted throughout this literature review, purposeful teacher collaboration provides a powerful framework for creating high-quality teaching and learning. Researchers believe that relational trust is a critical element in creating and sustaining meaningful collaboration in schools because it grows out of shared norms and values and is reinforced by group expectations (Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 2000).

Collectively efficacious faculty teams build cultures of trust (Hoy & Kupersmith, 1985; Hoy & Sabo, 1998). Teachers who trust one another are likely to de-privatize their teaching practice; this increases opportunities for a greater amount of vicarious learning to occur.



Teachers who work together to improve the quality of their instruction become better teachers, as measured by standardized test scores (Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998). When collective efficacy beliefs are strong, teachers are more likely to work collaboratively to improve practice (Goddard, LoGerfo, et al., 2004). Goddard and his colleagues (2000) found that there is a direct and positive relationship between high levels of collective efficacy and high levels of trust. Building trust in the high school setting is a particular challenge since these schools are often characterized by cultures that isolate rather than collaborate (Goddard & Skrla, 2006; Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998). The nature of comprehensive high schools is that they operate more like universities than their K-8 counterparts. High school students move from class to class for up to eight periods a day and teachers have little reason to collaborate. Recent high school reforms are hoping to change this feature by creating smaller schools and smaller learning communities. Researchers of restructuring efforts suggest that small school size does not necessarily lead to more faculty cohesion, but it does create the conditions to foster greater cohesion among faculties (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995).

### **Developing a Collaborative School Culture**

Student achievement is stronger in schools where teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy are strong (Bandura, 1993; Goddard et al., 2000). When teachers feel that, as a group, they have the capacity to provide high-quality learning for all students, they strive to accomplish challenging goals (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004). These beliefs create school norms that allow teachers to exercise influence over the actions of their peers. Faculty members whose actions are not aligned with group norms are subject to group sanctions since strong levels of collective efficacy inspire a commitment to group goals and discourage departure from those goals (Coleman, 1990). New school structures challenge educators to accept greater

responsibility for student learning, which requires that faculty teams work together to improve teaching and learning (Newmann & Wehlage, 1995) and work with drive and determination to ensure student success (Goddard et al., 2000; Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004).

Increased accountability for high-quality teaching and learning requires purposeful and unified approaches to ensuring positive outcomes for students. When teachers assume shared responsibility for students in their care, create the conditions for high-quality teaching and learning, and stay focused on a vision that guides their actions towards success for all students, they have an opportunity to meet the challenges associated with high-poverty schools.

## **Conclusion**

Nationwide, more than a million students drop out of high school each year. The 71% nationwide graduation rate masks the nearly 50% rate of Latino and African American students who drop out of high school annually (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2009). In California, the 2008-2009 dropout rate for Latinos and African Americans was 22.4% and 29%, respectively, and in Southland Unified those percentages increase to 37.4% and 38.8%. Those numbers soar to 48% for the community in which my study site is located (California Department of Education, 2010). The urgency is clear; high-poverty youth need educators to take action now. The research in this literature review illustrates that a unified and collaborative approach to serving students is associated with high student achievement. Teachers already have the core technology at their disposal: a team of educators who have chosen to serve students in low-SES urban communities. The research has also shown that student achievement is higher: in schools where teachers share responsibility for a group of students, such as in a small school or smaller learning community; when teachers have a vision for providing students with instruction and curriculum that is of high intellectual quality; and when teachers trust their colleagues and believe that, as a team, they can

make a difference for their students. My study aimed to add to this body of research by showing how shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and relational trust were operationalized at a teacher-developed low SES small urban school. In the next chapter I detail the methodology for this case study.

## CHAPTER 3

### Research Design and Methods

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to learn what influence, if any, teacher collaboration has on teachers' confidence in their colleagues' professional competence, their sense of mutual obligation to students, and trust in their colleagues' ability to implement the school mission. The school in my study is a product of a large urban school district's CSR initiative. Central to this initiative is improving the quality of teaching and learning. A number of school structural models are acceptable under this reform; this study, however, focused on the Pilot school structure. Under this model, teacher teams develop and implement small schools that operate using collaborative decision-making processes. This study sought to delve deeply into the collaborative work processes at one site in order to understand and describe how collaboration influences the teaching and learning environment during the second year of school implementation. Since this site is teacher-developed, implemented and operated, I wanted to understand how the phenomenon of collaboration serves as an act of informal leadership and a manifestation of teachers' agentic authority to impact teaching and learning. Figure 3.1 represents the relationships that I analyzed.



*Figure 3.1.* Relationships analyzed in the study.

## Research Questions

This study sought to explore the following research questions:

1. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' sense of shared responsibility for academic success for all students?
2. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' professional competence/collective efficacy?
3. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' feelings of trust in colleagues' ability to implement the group's instructional mission?

## Definition of Terms

The following terms will be used throughout this study:

**Collaboration.** Teacher interaction that is focused on teaching and learning and engages teachers in construction of knowledge.

**Collective efficacy.** Teachers' belief that the faculty, as a whole, can achieve desired results with students. In this study, I used this theory to represent teachers' perceptions about their colleagues' professional competence.

**Relational trust.** Teachers' shared perception that they can trust colleagues to implement the instructional mission of the school.

**Shared/collective responsibility.** Teachers' shared perception that all faculty members have an obligation to ensure the academic success of all students.

## Research Paradigm

This study was situated in a critical theory paradigm (Maxwell, 2005) that informs every aspect of my inquiry, from conception to conclusions. My methods made use of data collection and analysis strategies that are most useful in understanding the phenomenon of teacher

collaboration, regardless of their particular philosophical categories. In some instances I used positivist approaches espoused by Yin (1994) and in others I employed constructivist approaches (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), but my purpose was far from agnostic. I endeavored to understand the meanings that teachers bring to the school's social/political environment in order to accurately interpret my findings and feel confident in using the empirical data that I have collected to add to the discourse of political praxis, which in this case refers to reflection on teachers' place in CSR in order to transform the educational landscape. As such, my study contributes to the current political dialogue (Creswell, 2009) about how best to transform schools by describing the collaborative work of teachers who are active agents in the reform process.

### **Research Design**

I conducted a qualitative analysis by employing a case study as my strategy for this inquiry; a richly detailed description of the collaborative work processes of teachers helped explain how collaboration influences professional relationships. Case studies are particularly useful when the purpose of the inquiry is to describe how phenomena are related to a particular context (Yin, 1981). This case explains how the phenomenon of teacher professional collaboration influences teachers' perceptions of collective efficacy, trust, and collective responsibility for student learning. The context of the study is a teacher-developed school that aims to provide educational equity in a region of concentrated poverty in a large urban school district.

This study was informed by a research-based conceptual framework (Yin, 1994) that explains how three constructs – shared responsibility, teacher perceptions of collective efficacy, and relational trust – interact with teacher collaboration. As discussed in Chapter 2, all three elements show a positive relationship between the stated construct and increased student

achievement. I used these constructs to inform my data collection and analysis in order to learn the extent to which my case study generalized to these theories. However, Miles and Huberman (1984) suggest not disclosing the theoretical framework to participants because doing so might imply that the researcher is seeking confirmation of the constructs, which can limit the reliability of the study. Thus, I was precise in articulating the expected relationships between the research-based constructs while engaged in analysis, but I did not ask participants to think of their professional practice in light of these constructs.

I selected a qualitative design rather than a quantitative design because I wanted to understand and describe how teachers turn the emphasis on collaboration as stated in their school proposal into actions at their school site. I was interested in understanding how data interrelates, rather than seeking causal relationships. Further, in light of nationwide CSR initiatives, readers may find a detailed description of collaboration useful when contemplating teacher-led small school reform.

### **Site Selection**

My study site was part of a district-wide CSR initiative that began on a limited basis in 2007 and became district policy in 2009. This initiative was intended to increase student achievement, graduation rates, and A-G completion rates (minimum course requirements for acceptance into the University of California). My study site is located in an area of concentrated poverty and is the result of an extensive building process that was intended to relieve overcrowding and eliminate truncated multi-track school calendars. As a small school designed by teachers to address the needs of the students in a high-poverty community, my study site is placed squarely in the center of my research paradigm since it is particularly well suited to a

social justice inquiry that centers on teachers' agency to change educational outcomes for students of poverty (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Since my study site's district exists in a high poverty area and all schools responding to the CSR process are mandated to be collaborative, an additional rationale for site selection was warranted. In order to "limit the parameters of [the] study" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 41), I selected Urban Arts Academy (UAA; a pseudonym) from among 30 teacher-developed school sites in the district. The CSR initiative requires innovative practices and, as such, this school has considerable latitude to create curriculum and instruction that aligns with its mission. My particular interest was in learning how the phenomenon of teacher collaboration informs and interacts with shared responsibility for students, collective efficacy beliefs, and relational trust among teachers. This critical case sampling (Patton, 2003) enabled me to generate data that were applicable to other educators who wish to make collaboration central to their professional culture.

### **Participant Selection**

The participants in this study were the entire faculty at one teacher-designed small school. These teachers are agents of change in a district-wide CSR process and are, therefore, typical of other nationwide grassroots stakeholders undergoing a similar process. The 19 teachers at this site are heterogeneous in that they range in years of experience from 1.5 years to more than 30 years of service. Five of the 19 teachers were on the original school design team.

In order to adequately answer my research questions, I elicited participation from all teachers at my study site. All 19 teachers, the school counselor, and the principal completed questionnaires related to the following constructs: perceptions of collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and trust. Sixteen of the 19 teachers participated in hour-long interviews. Five of



the 19 teachers participated in a focus group and five completed reflections on collaboration twice a week. I also observed four 2-hour, whole-staff professional development sessions.

In order to garner teacher interest in my study, I explained how their participation in teacher-led reform is a model for grassroots CSR in the district, state, and nation. I encouraged their active participation by asking to teachers to engage in my study as both scholars and practitioners who are committed to serving high-poverty urban youth. I shared the timeline for my study, the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), and a table that illustrated each method and the time requirements for participants for each method. In addition, as a small gesture to honor his/her time, I gave each participant a stipend in accordance with his/her level of participation.

I explained that the validity of the study depended on collecting a wide variety of data and that their willingness to participate would create a robust explanation of the effects of their collaboration. I emphasized, however, that their participation was entirely voluntary. I distributed and collected interest forms that allowed teachers to check which methods they were willing to participate in, or to check a box that stated that they were not interested in participating in the study.

### **Data Collection Methods**

My data collection occurred during spring semester and lasted 8 weeks. In order to answer all three of my research questions, I administered three brief questionnaires, observed four school-wide professional development sessions, conducted 16 one-on-one interviews, conducted one focus group with five participants, and engaged five teachers in twice-weekly reflections upon practice over the course of 4 weeks. Each of these methods is detailed below.

**Surveys.** To understand teacher perceptions of their colleagues' professional competence and relational trust, I administered two previously validated and publically available surveys on teacher perceptions of collective efficacy and trust. To gain an understanding of shared responsibility, I developed a survey instrument that emerged from the content in a study of shared responsibility. While some of the questions had been used in previously validated surveys, I constructed my own survey instrument, which was used for the first time during this study. These three survey instruments were essential to laying the foundation for all three of my research questions.

**Interviews.** All 19 teachers at the site were invited to participate in a one-on-one interview: 16 of them ultimately chose to participate. Individual interviews were fundamental to answering all three of my research questions as they developed my understanding of how teachers view their collaborative experiences at their school site. Interviews allowed me to learn the degree to which teachers believe their collaboration is related to shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and relational trust. Most interviews lasted 1 hour, although two concluded in 45 minutes and three extended beyond 1 hour. Teachers at my study site were eager to share their insights and observations.

**Focus group.** I conducted a stratified random sample of participants willing to participate in a focus group. I wanted to have representation from each academic department. I organized participants into academic departments, then I randomly selected one teacher from each group. The focus group consisted of one teacher from each of the following departments: art, social studies, science, English, and foreign language. Teachers in this group ranged from 8 to more than 30 years of teaching experience. The focus group lasted 1 hour and centered on teachers' collaboration experiences at UAA. The focus on collaboration allowed me to learn how teachers

describe this phenomenon in the company of their colleagues, and it triangulated what I learned during interviews and observations.

**Observations.** To investigate how teacher collaboration operates at the school-wide level, I observed four whole-staff professional development sessions over the course of 2 months. I looked for evidence of all three of my study's constructs: collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and relational trust.

**Teacher reflections.** In order to answer all of my research questions, I invited all 19 teachers to write twice-weekly reflections on their collaborative practices. Eight teachers agreed, and I randomly selected five to participate. Teachers from the following departments were randomly selected: social studies, English, math, art, and foreign language. Teachers in this group ranged from 9 years to more than 30 years of teaching experience. Teachers were asked to log and reflect upon both formal and informal collaboration. Reflection on practice is a heavily researched area of study, particularly for teachers of underrepresented students. Considerations of concern for students, high expectations for learning, and teacher attitudes toward teaching and learning are all elements of reflective inquiry (Howard, 2003). Each of these elements aligns with my research questions regarding shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and relational trust.

### **Data Analysis**

To understand the degree to which collaboration, in its many nuanced manifestations, impacts the teaching environment at my study site, I combined and analyzed data from three surveys, four observations of school-wide professional development, 16 one-on-one interviews, a focus group, and teacher reflections. I administered and analyzed the results of previously validated surveys on teacher perceptions of collective efficacy and trust, and I administered a

survey on shared responsibility that I developed. I observed school-wide professional development sessions, and teacher reflections on their collaborative practices. I analyzed these data to learn how teachers perceive their collective responsibility to students, their feelings of trust, and how they feel about their collective capacity to achieve desired outcomes for students—collective efficacy. I coded all data according to my theoretical framework, looking for evidence of shared responsibility for student learning, teacher collective efficacy, and trust.

I used Maxwell's (2005) three-part process for analyzing qualitative data. First, I established "organizational" categories (p. 97). These categories emerged from what teachers say, do, and think. The surveys captured what participants say, the interviews and focus group illustrated what teachers think, and the observation and reflection data captured what teachers do. This approach constituted an important first step in managing the large quantity of data that I collected over a 2-month period.

In the second phase of analysis I developed "substantive" categories (Maxwell, 2005, p. 97) without referring to my pre-established conceptual framework. I categorized descriptions of participants' beliefs, values, and experiences. At this stage, I began paring down the data by merging broad, organizational categories with the more detailed substantive categories. This stage captured emergent data such as informal mentoring and guidance, feelings of agency, student empowerment, caring, accountability, confidence, etc.

In the third phase of my data analysis I placed coded data into categories that aligned with my conceptual framework. The theoretical lens for this study consisted of three constructs: shared responsibility for student learning, relational trust, and collective efficacy. I began to look for data that supported and diverged from my pre-existing framework, providing evidence to

support my research questions and establishing a foundation for developing a comprehensive theory for my study.

I used a double-entry journal that had field notes on the left page. This page captured what I observed and included a detailed description of people, events, and settings as well as diagrams when necessary (Merriam, 2009). The right page contained my memos (Maxwell, 2005), which reflected how I made sense of the data and how I grappled with contradictions. My double-entry journal allowed me to increase the reliability of my study by both providing high levels of detail and being honest about challenges (Gibbert, Ruigrok, & Wicki, 2008).

I employed a frequency analysis for each of three survey instruments that used a 6-point Likert scale that measured teacher perceptions of collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and trust, from strong disagreement to strong agreement. I selected the questions that best supported or refuted data gathered during interviews and the focus group. The survey data triangulated what teachers say with what they believe and do.

I had interviews and the focus group conversations transcribed immediately and saved both the audio and text files in a secure database. I analyzed the findings from the interviews and focus group using Maxwell's (2005) aforementioned three-part process. The interview experience allowed participants to think about their collaborative work and its relationship to their teaching practice in a safe and anonymous setting, and the focus group gave participants an opportunity to consider their responses in light of feedback from their peers. I analyzed the interview and the focus group transcripts to develop a deep understanding of how teachers think and talk about their collaborative experiences and learn the degree to which these experiences influence their feelings of shared responsibility, trust, and collective efficacy.

Over a 4-week period, teachers emailed twice-weekly reflections on their formal and informal collaboration. I analyzed their reflections after analyzing all other data. This helped me avoid applying the participants' beliefs to my analysis before considering them as important statements of personal values and philosophies and not merely fodder for my study. Teacher reflections allowed me to triangulate all other data by asking teachers to share their daily collaborative practices.

Data collection and analysis were largely simultaneous (Merriam, 2009). I used my conceptual framework to guide the third stage of my analysis, but I paid particular attention to data that both illuminated my research questions and deviated from my framework. To test the relevance of my conceptual framework I used a pattern-matching process throughout my analysis (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005), and to the extent that deviant data began to emerge as distinct patterns, rather than as outliers, I took advantage of this as a critical data source.

### **Credibility and Trustworthiness**

Since my aim was to show the influence of an abstraction, teacher collaboration, on three other abstractions (collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and relational trust) my study made ample use of triangulation. I triangulated what teachers reported in surveys with what they said they believed in interviews and the focus group and with what they report they do during collaborative planning time. To triangulate all data, I engaged teachers in reflection about their collaboration to learn whether or not collaboration is occurring and in what forms it does occur. To ensure the external validity of this study, I organized topics around my conceptual framework (Yin, 1994), which includes teachers' shared responsibility for students, trust, and teacher perceptions of collective efficacy. This organizational strategy provided a framework for creating

strong analytical links between research-based theory and the empirical data that I collected at my study site.

### **Ethical Issues**

I created an informed consent document that notified participants of their rights. All participants: understood the purpose of my study, the benefits associated with their participation, were guaranteed personal and school-site confidentiality and anonymity, were provided with a timeline, and were given a clear description of the varying levels and types of participation. I informed all participants that their participation was purely voluntary and that they could withdraw from the project at any point. In order to ensure anonymity, I assigned pseudonyms to all persons, to the site, and to the school district prior to the publication of any materials.

### **Summary**

This study was a critical inquiry into the relationship between theory and practice at one teacher-developed small school in a district undergoing CSR. The teacher-developed school plan emphasizes teacher collaboration as a central approach to achieving the school mission. As a theory in a proposal, a collaborative approach to addressing the needs of students in a high-poverty community offers great promise for creating a rich culture of high expectations for both teachers and students. Central to this study, however, was how collaboration actually operates at the school site during the second year of school implementation. Describing how teachers translate this phenomenon into practice has implications for CSR in general. A detailed case study is a useful approach to understanding the intersection between theory and practice and to explain processes that might otherwise remain inscrutable.

There is great urgency in CSR initiatives to create learning environments that respond to the specific needs of minority and high-poverty youth. Thus, my hope is that this study will serve

as more than a description of process. It was my hope that this study would yield a social justice inquiry into educational equity and the role that teacher-led reform plays in this pursuit.



## CHAPTER 4

### Findings

#### **Introduction**

This single-case study investigated the relationship between teacher collaboration and teachers' sense of shared responsibility, perceptions of collective efficacy, and relational trust at a teacher-developed school in a high-poverty urban community. This school emerged in response to a district-wide initiative to improve educational outcomes for students who live in communities served by chronically underperforming schools. In California, the 2008-2009 dropout rate for Latinos was 22.4%, and in the community in which my study site is located, those numbers soar to 48% for the 99% Latino school population.

As discussed in Chapter 2, longitudinal studies show statistically significant relationships between improved student achievement and each of three single constructs: teacher perceptions of collective efficacy, shared responsibility, relational trust among teachers. My study found interactions among all three constructs and that all three are influenced by teacher collaboration.

This investigation examined the nature of teacher collaboration at teacher-developed and operated school where collaboration is an expectation. Eighteen months after the school opened I sought to learn:

1. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' sense of shared responsibility for academic success for all students?
2. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' perceptions of their colleagues' professional competence/collective efficacy?

3. What influence, if any, does teacher collaboration have on teachers' feelings of trust in colleagues' ability to implement the group's instructional mission?

To answer these questions, I conducted an in-depth case study of Urban Arts Academy (UAA; pseudonym) in the Southland Unified School District (pseudonym). The findings from this study are presented in four sections. The first three sections provide an in-depth description of how teachers described their collaboration and their perceptions of the three constructs in my study: shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and trust. These sections follow an organizational structure that begins with a brief introduction of the construct, provides interview data with supporting quantitative data, uses interview and observational data to profile one teacher who contributed extensive data on the construct at hand, and concludes with a summary. The fourth section summarizes my findings. Nineteen teachers, as well as the school's counselor and principal, completed questionnaires regarding their perceptions of faculty trust, collaboration, collective efficacy, and shared responsibility; 16 of the 19 teachers were interviewed for this study, five participated in a focus group, and five completed twice-weekly reflections on their collaboration experiences.

### **Collaboration and Shared Responsibility**

A unified mission is the cornerstone of shared responsibility, but there are additional contributing elements as well: value rather than mandate-driven practices, collegial support, and teacher agency. I sought to learn whether or not, a year after opening, collaboration has an influence on UAA teachers' sense of shared responsibility. Over a 2-month period, I conducted surveys, interviews, focus groups, observations and engaged teachers in weekly reflections over 4 weeks. The data generated indicate that teacher collaboration influences teachers' sense of shared responsibility.

**Collaboration: A foundational principle of the school's mission.** In order to build an understanding of teacher collaboration at the site, I first sought to learn whether or not the mission, as stated in the school plan or during teacher job interviews, played a role in UAA teachers' decisions to join the faculty of this teacher-developed school.

During individual interviews and the focus group, I asked: "Why did you decide to teach at a teacher developed and operated school?" Responses were complex and varied, but 10 teachers made reference to unsatisfactory former teaching experiences to frame their thinking about why they were attracted to UAA. In interviews, all 10 of these teachers told me about their desire to work towards a shared school mission, two teachers said that the vision that was articulated in the school's written plan had attracted them, and two teachers said the principal was a deciding factor. High expectations for teachers, a sense of teacher agency, and staff cohesion emerged as driving forces in teachers' decisions. Two divergent voices emerged, both of whom said the decision to join the faculty was not influenced by the mission. Both convergent and divergent points of view were found in the focus group.

For instance, during her interview, Olivia, a 12-year teacher and member of the school's design team, said that her former school lacked cohesion around academic expectations:

I felt like I was doing more important work when I was working with a small group of teachers who were all on the same page, and working in the comprehensive high school was often a feeling of fighting a tide of mediocrity that was happening in the kids' classes... Whereas, once I was at Urban Arts Academy I had the sense that the kids had the same academic expectations in all of their subject areas.

Cynthia, a 36-year teacher, joined the faculty during the school's second year of operation. In her interview, she said,

I read the [plan] of the school, and I immediately wanted to interview here... The vision was clearly stated in the documents and in the teachers' collaboration room. The people who interviewed me... were very clear about how everyone works together here.

One-on-one interviews revealed that Marilyn, a 9-year teacher, and Hector, a long-term substitute, chose to work at UAA because they were seeking a collaborative environment. Marilyn said, “I didn't like the way things were going at my other school. There wasn't cohesiveness...I wanted to be able to have that, where all the teachers were on the same page.” Hector said, “I chose to work with these teachers; I actually came from Texas to work with these teachers because I respect the way they work together and what they stand for.”

Michael, a 29-year teacher, was attracted to UAA's expectations that teachers assume shared responsibility for working towards the mission. During his interview, he framed his response by contrasting the limitations of top-down accountability at his prior school to the culture of collective responsibility at UAA: “I've been at big comprehensive schools; the only one who's going to get in your face is administration. And the administration can't always keep up with what's going on.” He described the difference in staff accountability at this teacher-operated school. “Suddenly, you know if you've got some responsibility, academic or whatever, in the school and [if] you're not doing it, people are going to get in your face and tell you.”

In both the focus group and in her interview, Isabelle, a 12-year teacher and UAA design team member, described her decision to join the faculty. Her interview focused on the lack of teacher agency she experienced at her former school: “You felt like you were doing a lot of things that people were asking you to do. You were always at the mercy of some decision-making body that you were not involved in.” In the focus group, Isabelle said, “There were people who were trying to move forward and make things better, and I don't really feel that the people in charge of the school were supporting that.”

Susan, a second-year teacher, explained that she wanted the authority to make curricular decisions. She told me that she had read the UAA school plan before her job interview and the school mission had inspired her to join the faculty. She said,

I felt like, after reading the school's proposal, I could really try to do what I want to do in the classroom, which is to bring together math with issues that are going on in our society...whereas when I went to the charter school interviews or some of the traditional public school interviews, I know that a lot of the curriculum is scripted.

Linda, a 37-year teacher, shared a similar desire to teach in a professional environment:

“When teachers have a vested interest in a school or a program, and when a teacher’s voice matters, and when you get teachers to work together to a common goal, I think that that's like heaven.”

Two dissenting voices emerged from the interviews regarding making a purposeful choice to teach at this school. In her interview, Ingrid, a 5-year teacher, confessed,

Really I'm just taking whatever job I possibly can. Because of the budget cuts, I'm just laid off every year so whatever opportunity is available, I grab as soon as I can. Had the situation been different and I had more options I guess, I don't honestly know where I would be right now.

During the focus group, Mario said, “I didn't have any preference actually whether to teach in a collaboration school or a more traditional school...I wanted to be in this school because of childhood memories in this community.”

These findings reveal that most teachers made purposeful decisions to move to UAA because of the collaborative mission—whether formalized in writing or explained during job interviews. Teachers said that they valued a mission that focuses on students’ academic success, holds high expectations for teachers, and empowers teachers as agents of change.

**Shared mission: Students at the center.** As mentioned previously, all but two teachers said that the school’s stated mission influenced their decision to join the faculty. I was eager to

learn whether teachers believed that a shared mission exists in practice. I analyzed survey results and interviews to learn whether or not teachers at UAA believe there is a shared mission for the school. Survey data indicate agreement regarding the mission, but interview data show some variation in the ways that teachers articulate the mission.

As shown in Table 5.1, 75% of the teachers agree or strongly agreed with the statement: “There is broad agreement among faculty about school mission.” A slightly lower percentage (70%) thought that teachers share beliefs about the school’s purpose. In interviews, teachers offered different descriptions of the mission—from measurable to visionary.

Table 5.1

*Shared Agreement and Shared Beliefs about Mission (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
There is broad agreement among faculty about school mission.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	1	5.0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	4	20.0
	Agree	8	40.0
	Strongly Agree	7	35.0
	Total	20	100
Colleagues share beliefs about the school’s mission.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.0
	Somewhat Agree	5	25.0
	Agree	8	40.0
	Strongly Agree	6	30.0
	Total	20	100

The difference between broad, general agreement and shared beliefs reflects a difference between teachers’ perceptions of group versus individual values. Group values are expressed in terms of a stated or implied mission whereas individual values are expressed in terms of evidence that teachers are implementing the school mission. The veracity of teacher beliefs is illustrated by what they say about putting the mission into action. Two teachers shared their

skepticism about the faculty's ability to fulfill their mission for students, which may account for the difference between broad agreement and shared beliefs regarding the mission.

During interviews, I asked teachers to describe the school's mission. Two teachers said that the mission centered on teachers and their collaboration, 13 teachers said the focus was directly on students, and one mentioned that the mission focused on both students and teachers. Two teachers punctuated their concluding thoughts with words of discontent about their colleagues' ability to fulfill the school's mission.

Seven teachers mentioned both specific and measurable goals, such as improving reading ability, graduating from high school, or being accepted into college, as well as more distal and less measurable goals, such as becoming a well-rounded person, a successful student, or a life-long learner. Six teachers said the vision centers purely on fluid outcomes such as creating student agency. One teacher described an instructional vision that centered on students, one teacher described a transformative vision that also included a vision for improving teacher effectiveness, and one teacher referred only to the instructional mission of the school.

In interviews, six teachers spoke of the school's mission as providing a transformative experience for students. Mario, who in the focus group said that the stated school mission was not a deciding factor for joining the faculty, was clear about what he believes is the duty of the school. He said, "I think the mission of this school is to reach kids and really transform their perception of education and transform their lives through education." Patrick offered a congruent but shorter-term—visible by teachers over 4 years—understanding of the mission: "Our mission is to see students unfold and blossom into everything that they can be." According to Michael, the mission is "to educate these kids to their highest potential." These teachers explained the

purpose of the school as providing a holistic experience that is not well suited to traditional measurements of whether or not the school is accomplishing its mission.

Seven teachers cited student agency as the central feature of the school's mission. Samantha said that teachers at UAA are galvanized around "always believing in the student—that they can do it and they can meet the challenge—and then helping them in any way to make that happen." Linda said, "I want the best for them and I want to help them get it, or [rather to] help them figure out how to get it." Judith said, "I want them to have the idea that they can have a positive impact on the world and others."

Other teachers said that the mission is to increase student skill levels for success in high school and college. Olivia said,

I think the basic mission of this school is to help kids learn and to help them be successful students and to help them leave here with the skills they need to go out and do something and I hope that that something is college.

Hector was more single-minded about the goal of college: "I think the mission of this school is to prepare the students for college." Two other teachers described the mission in terms of college acceptance.

Three teachers also emphasized interdisciplinary instruction and its impact on students. For instance, Susan said,

We are bringing together different content areas to teach in an interdisciplinary way; to make art and technology alive in students' educational experiences; to give students basic skills but also critical skills; to take part in their educations; [and to] be investigative as they get older.

Laura proffered a simpler but similar comment, "the mission is for kids to see that their learning in their separate classes is connected and [to learn that] skills that they get in one class are useful and helpful in other classes."



Ingrid described collaboration as a critical element of the mission; however, she described this as a vision for the future rather than a feature of present circumstances. She describes a future where:

we'll have a lot more time to collaborate and to analyze student data and figure out what we did wrong and what we didn't do wrong, and then also figure out what to do with individual students who just didn't get it that time.

She added, "I think, ultimately, in the future, I can see something like that happening." Cynthia also expressed frustration with the school's ability to implement the vision:

We don't have enough people on a daily basis at this school to fulfill every student's need...we're not just a learning center, we are a cultural center, we are a parenting center, we are a health center, we're like a hub part of a community. And when we don't have those things, we fail for some of—for many of our students.

These findings confirm that teachers share a broad and general agreement that the mission is aimed at improving outcomes for students. However, teachers' specific beliefs about how to achieve the mission are varied.

**Collaboration: A catalyst for achieving the school mission.** I wanted to understand whether or not teachers saw a link between the mission of the school, their collaborative practices, and their sense of shared responsibility for students. In interviews I asked, "What role, if any, does teacher collaboration play in achieving the school's mission?" During the focus group, I asked teachers to define the term "collaboration." Interview data confirmed that teachers believe collaboration fosters shared responsibility for the school mission. Furthermore, survey data indicated that teachers feel strongly that there is a great deal of cooperative effort among the staff, and teacher reflections give credence to this belief. As illustrated in Table 5.2, 75% of the staff agreed or strongly agreed that there is a great deal of cooperation among the staff, 20% somewhat agreed, and 5% (one person) somewhat disagreed.

Table 5.2

*Cooperation Among Staff (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.0
	Somewhat Agree	4	20.0
	Agree	5	25.0
	Strongly Agree	10	50.0
	Total	20	100

In describing the connection between mission and teacher collaboration, three teachers used the word “hope” during interviews to express the relationship between teachers’ collective impact and their ability to direct their efforts towards the school mission. Susan, a second year teacher said, “There are just really amazing folks trying to do collaborative work with each other, that gives me hope, and I think that having hope and optimism is really important.” Michael, a 29-year teacher, made a similar observation: “I feel like we work together, there's hope. I can work with the kids. I don't have days where I feel useless or helpless. I don't have days where I feel powerless.” Linda, a 37-year teacher, offered a similar response:

I’m very hopeful, being here. I’ve seen [students] change for the better. I’ve seen kids in other years, in other schools, who haven't changed. And it’s sad that they sort of drift through the school...not deepening their sense of self or deepening their convictions. I would hope that kids who leave here have a deeper sense of who they are, what they want.

In interviews, six teachers talked about collaboration and mission in terms of specific benefits that students derive, both from student-to-student collaboration and as a result of teachers planning and delivering interdisciplinary instruction. Laura explained that teacher collaboration supports student learning across disciplines: “Any time we meet in our interdisciplinary teams we're helping kids move towards this understanding that their learning is

connected across the curriculum...what you're doing in Spanish is going to somehow help you in your English class.”

In the focus group, all five teachers discussed developing interdisciplinary curriculum as the driver of teacher collaboration, but they also spoke of collaboration in terms of teacher-to-teacher support. Samantha said, “It’s really important to collaborate across a theme.” Maria explained that collaboration means to “plan lessons and projects together, look over student work, and look at rubrics, and reflect together.” Isabelle agreed with both but added that informal, “day-to-day” problem solving and support is an important feature of collaboration as well. Teacher reflection data confirms daily interactions as including both formal collaboration regarding curriculum and instruction and informal collaboration focused on support and problem solving.

Patrick, who does not participate in an interdisciplinary team, explained in an interview the value that he sees for students.

They were learning lifelong skills of how to see different aspects of the world and unite them into one set of statements...I was getting my credential recently, and they kept hammering us on Bloom's Taxonomy and synthesis and creation being the highest things that we can do cognitively. Actually seeing students that so many people write off, doing those things...it was amazing.

Teachers at UAA stated that collaboration is central to both the expectations they hold for one another and to their core work processes. Collaboration fosters cooperation among staff and drives curriculum development. Finally, collaboration gives teachers a sense of optimism about their collective ability to serve students.

**Teacher profile: Shared responsibility, teacher empowerment, and accountability.**

Olivia is in her 12th year as a teacher in a high-poverty, urban school. She was one of five teachers who wrote the Board of Education-approved proposal to operate UAA. In her interview,

Olivia articulated the clearest and strongest explanation of why a shared mission featuring teacher agency, collaboration, and value-based decisions are, together, critical elements for schools. She explained, “The most powerful thing is that we’re in charge of everything.” She added,

The teacher developed aspect of [the school] means, that in terms of formulating any of the decisions that we formulate about this school, academics come first: protecting classroom time [and] teachers’ relationships with the students always comes first...More than anything, I’ve been trying to help empower people—and to remind people that this is a teacher-directed institution. If you’re not happy with something and it’s institutional, then the onus is really on you to try to do something to make that different.

Olivia defined the relationship between the mission and teacher collaboration:

“The basic mission of this school is to help kids learn and to help them be successful students and to help them leave here with the skills they need to go...[to] college...to be bilingual...to be good people.” She added,

I do really sincerely believe that we have a staff that 100% at heart believes that they can do what I’ve just laid out for all kids. And I think then that sharing that vision allows you to work together in powerful ways to implement it...What I appreciate about our collaboration...is that it really does help us remind each other of the mission and to stay focused on that.

Olivia acknowledged that staying focused on the mission requires an intensive level of support for teachers:

As a teacher here in a small school you get a lot of personal attention...as soon as [teachers are] in that environment where they feel like they’re free to share, people need a lot of support. They need support dealing with difficult students and making changes in their practice...They need a lot of help. And these are experienced teachers I’m talking about...I think [personalized staff relationships] take people to new places in their practice; I think they take people to a deeper understanding of their relationships with their kids...As soon as you have a small environment where you really get to know the kids well, then you become very aware of the kids’ really gaping needs for support whether it’s academic support or emotional support or you know support with housing...I guess the same is true for the teachers, you know as soon as they’re in an environment where they feel like they’re cared for their expectations blossom.

Teachers at UAA confirmed that teacher collaboration, both formal and informal, influences and interacts with their sense of shared responsibility for students. They also confirmed that a shared mission, centered on students, both catalyzes and fosters collaborative efforts aimed at improving outcomes for students. Teacher agency emerged as a driving force in teachers' feelings of optimism for achieving desired outcomes for students and was directly connected to teachers' collaborative experiences.

### **Collaboration and Collective Efficacy**

UAA teachers articulated a mission centered on students, and whether or not that mission was visionary or specific and measurable, teachers expressed high expectations for their colleagues' collective ability to inspire and motivate students. Collective efficacy beliefs, however, focus on teachers' perceptions of the faculty's ability to put those aspirations—the mission—into action. When collective efficacy is high, teachers encourage one another to persist in achieving positive outcomes for students regardless of the challenges, setbacks, and failures they may face. With very few exceptions, teachers at UAA confirmed strong collective efficacy beliefs and agreement that these beliefs are being implemented.

**Collective efficacy: Shared beliefs about teacher and student ability.** Table 5.3 illustrates teachers' collective efficacy perceptions and reveals a difference between teacher perceptions of their colleagues' beliefs about students and their ability to successfully teach students. Fifty percent reported strong agreement with the statement, "Teachers in this school truly believe every child can learn." Thirty-five percent strongly agreed that "Teachers in this school have what it takes to get the children to learn," and 20% strongly agreed that "Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students."

Table 5.3

*Staff Skill, Belief in Students, Ability to Motivate (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Teachers in this school have what it takes to get the children to learn.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	1	5.0
	Agree	12	60.0
	Strongly Agree	7	35.0
	Total	20	100
Teachers in this school truly believe every child can learn.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.0
	Somewhat Agree	3	15.0
	Agree	6	30.0
	Strongly Agree	10	50.0
	Total	20	100
Teachers here are confident they will be able to motivate their students.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	2	10.0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	2	10.0
	Agree	12	60.0
	Strongly Agree	4	20.0
	Total	20	100

Table 5.3 reveals that teachers are less confident about their colleagues' ability to motivate students and ensure that all students learn than they are about their colleagues' belief that all students can learn, suggesting a difference between believing in a general principle and putting that principle into action. Fifty-percent of respondents said that they strongly agreed that teachers believe every child can learn, yet only 20% expressed strong agreement about their colleagues' ability to motivate students.

During interviews, five teachers were frank about the challenges they face when trying to motivate students to apply themselves academically. Marilyn's example of this struggle was typical: "My sixth period class this year has been my challenge, because I have so many students

in there that just don't care. They literally just don't want to do anything.” Lizette, a 23-year teacher who has spent her entire career in high-poverty communities, said, “For me it was a challenge to say ‘Oh my goodness I can't get to this kid.’” She discussed students from the last year and added,

The students we had were in the 11th, 10th, they had credits for 9th...Usually they were students that had been in jail...I never had, in [one] class, 5 students who had been in jail... In all my years, I have never seen so many students that had so many personal challenges that affected their performance in the classroom.

Two teachers expressed deep concern about the impact of years of educational neglect.

Mario said,

What you want to do is to implement a really top-notch education for the students and then they don't think that you do, or they don't want to accept that you do, because they've been left for dead for so long, they've been disenfranchised.

Isabelle said, “I don't know how to give kids agency. I can't even imagine how many empowering experiences a person has to have before they have it. I couldn't even begin to guess.”

Susan, the newest teacher on the team, said during her interview that student motivation is tied to understanding and responding to students based on their cultural background. She said,

I think that in many ways, a lot of the teachers really try to get at the students' assets, and bring them in and try to connect with them. But I also think, too, that there's a lot of deficit mentality of the students and what they bring. I feel like here there's a lot less of that than there is at other places—but I still think our school as a whole, and our staff as a whole, could do more to connect with the students, their lives, their backgrounds.

As illustrated in Table 5.3, teachers at UAA believe their colleagues are equipped to respond to the needs of their student population, yet interviews revealed that they are blunt about their concerns regarding low levels of motivation among some students. The first belief suggests a high level of collective efficacy, and the second, while not necessarily exemplifying a lack of

teacher persistence in the face of challenges, does point to an area of professional struggle and a low level of collective efficacy.

**Teacher profile: Collective efficacy as a catalyst for shared accountability.** Michael has been a teacher in urban Title I schools for the entirety of his 29 year career. What struck me during his interview were his two refrains that emerged in response to nearly every question I asked: “There is no dead wood here,” and “It’s not hopeless.” His first statement reflects his confidence in his colleagues and the second suggests that, as a group, the school can achieve its instructional mission. Both are indicators of strong collective efficacy beliefs.

Michael serves as the teachers’ union chapter chair at his site. During his interview he talked a great deal about this aspect of his teaching experience, and, in doing so, he referred to collaboration as a driver of teacher effectiveness and confidence in fellow educators as a foundational condition of his ability to practice with integrity. Michael revealed a long history of conflicts with administrators and teachers who did not engage in practices aimed at meeting student needs. He expressed both the need to protect good teachers from ineffective administrators as well as the need to remove ineffective teachers from the classroom:

When I first became a teacher...there's a woman standing at the door signing people up for the union. And I remember thinking “What do we need a union for? Aren't we all here for the kids?”...My first year in the Southland District I realized we do need a union because not all administrators are in it for the kids...I've seen bad administrators go after really good teachers simply because they disagreed with them...[but] we do have teachers in the district who are dead wood...we've gotta change the rules, we've gotta be able to get rid of crappy teachers. We do. But we also need to find a way to get rid of crappy principals too. Cause if you're not doing your job, we've got to find a way to get you to do it better, or get the hell out and go do something else. We don't want you here.

In these comments, Michael expressed a sense of urgency to improve school quality. When he speaks of removing “dead wood” from the district, he uses the term “we.” This indicates that Michael sees this challenge as the domain of all educators, not just the central district or the



union. Collectively efficacious teachers hold themselves and their colleagues accountable for serving the needs of the students in their care.

Observations of Michael's classroom give little hint of the importance he places on responding to individual student needs. He is demanding, does not tolerate disruptions, and his lecture format stands in contrast to the instructional methods that I observed in most other classrooms in which students were engaged in cooperative group learning. Yet, during his interview, Michael emphasized the importance of a staff-wide approach to responding to high-needs students at UAA.

Michael described three specific instances where he and his colleagues worked to support students, but one stood out as a particularly poignant example: "Randy [pseudonym] was really, really difficult. We all worked hard with him...He had major issues at home, he was a crack baby. We really did work with him. I never really felt like it was hopeless." Michael expressed a strong belief in the capacity of his colleagues to improve outcomes for students. Michael told me that Randy eventually chose to leave UAA. Despite this, Michael expressed optimism that Randy will "do something positive with his life." Michael did not see Randy's exit as a failure, rather, he framed the decision in terms of a long-term vision for Randy's productive future. Michael continually noted that he cannot achieve this level of student support on his own, and expressed strong collective efficacy beliefs about the faculty's collective ability to withstand setbacks.

UAA teachers confirmed the interaction between teacher collaboration and collective efficacy. In their experience, collaboration served as a catalyst for greater staff cooperation and greater confidence in one another's ability to respond to student needs, which fostered an environment of both hopefulness and high expectations for professional behavior.

## Collaboration and Faculty Trust

Faculty trust is characterized by faith in the integrity and professional competence of one's colleagues, but faith must also be made visible through action. UAA teachers confirmed in interviews and in the focus group that trust is foundational to their desire and ability to improve their professional practice, and survey data indicate high levels of trust among faculty.

**Collaboration: Fostering trust in a culture of support and honesty.** Survey data indicated that at UAA the majority of teachers reported being able to count on collegial support and they shared a belief that their colleagues have integrity. As seen in Table 5.4, 89% of respondents said that they agreed or strongly agreed that teachers believe in the integrity of their colleagues. Eighty-four percent of teachers who responded reported believing that their colleagues feel they can depend on one another in difficult situations.

Table 5.4

*Trust in Teacher Integrity and Support (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of their colleagues.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	2	10.5
	Agree	9	47.4
	Strongly Agree	8	42.1
	Total	19	100
Even in difficult situations, teachers in this school can depend on each other.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.3
	Somewhat Agree	2	10.5
	Agree	7	36.8
	Strongly Agree	9	47.4
	Total	19	100
	Declined to state	1	

In interviews, I asked teachers, “What role, if any, do you believe trust plays in how the faculty interacts at UAA?” Four teachers talked about trust as being fundamental to their willingness to be open and to communicate about teaching challenges. For instance, Linda, a 37-year teacher, spoke of how the trust she feels encourages her to analyze her practice:

I think [I have] the ability to change my mind and to re-evaluate where I am...I've seen the difference that it makes when I'm willing to listen and I don't know if I thought it was a sign of weakness before or not.

During the focus group, Samantha said, “The leadership here is so supportive of an environment of trust and [empathy]...I think that lays the groundwork for that feeling of trust amongst teachers.” Linda added, “I agree...We want the best for our students and that's first and foremost...nothing is impossible here.

In his interview, Hector shared about the importance of communication. He said, “I think that being able to communicate...It's a really a positive thing being able to get that feedback and being able to trust one another and share.” Cynthia shared a similar sentiment: “If you can't be truthful, then you have to rethink why you're here. And if you can't stand up for your convictions and, therefore, the children, then this school is not functioning.”

During her interview, Laura, a design team member and 15-year teacher, said,

Oh [trust] is huge. It's the entire thing. [I have to feel] that I could put myself out there—and I'm a relatively experienced teacher—and say that I'm struggling...I had to feel comfortable putting myself out there and knowing that people would respond...So, it's all about trusting that they're not going to judge you for having trouble, no matter how many years of experience you have...[It's] very reassuring.

Olivia, also a design team member, explained, “I think this is an area where because we're a small faculty, people are pretty willing to talk about [trust]. And I don't think there's a lot of judgment here.” She added, “that's a kind of collaboration that I have never seen before.”

Teachers at UAA spoke of the interaction between trust and collaboration. They believe that trust drives their willingness to be honest about teaching challenges and to accept support from their peers and their principal.

**Collaboration, trust, and distributed leadership.** During interviews, I asked: “Could you please describe a time when you were having a teaching challenge? Did you confide in anyone at this school?” Three teachers said they confided in the principal, four in lead teachers, five in fellow teachers, and four in other staff in conjunction with other teachers. Table 5.5 shows that 68% of respondents strongly agreed that teachers trust the principal.

Table 5.5

*Trust in Principal (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Teachers in this school trust the principal.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	1	5.3
	Somewhat Agree	2	10.5
	Agree	3	15.8
	Strongly Agree	13	68.4
	Total	19	100
	Declined to state	1	

Hector gave a detailed account of the circumstances prompting his communication with the principal and the resulting outcome. Hector described a challenge he was having with a seemingly resistant class. He explained that the principal encouraged him to keep trying to reach the students. He said,

At first, I was kinda like, “You don't understand, they're really difficult.” And she said, “No, I understand, and I know, but you can do it.” And then as soon as I had that discussion with her, I just felt like, “I can. I can do it, and yeah it's not out of my control. I can.” And that helped so much, because when I went in there with the attitude that Debbie told me I can, I did. And it was perfect.

Ninety-five percent of UAA teachers reported that they agreed or strongly agreed that teachers have faith in the integrity of the principal. Among the teachers that spoke about the principal’s leadership, most noted two factors: the small size of the campus allows for a high level of responsiveness and the principal’s 30 years of teaching experience. Interview data support this finding (see Table 5.6).

Table 5.6

*Faith in Integrity of Principal (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Teachers in this school have faith in the integrity of the principal.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	1	5.0
	Agree	4	20.0
	Strongly Agree	15	75.0
	Total	20	100

Patrick shared this experience:

I want to talk to my principal sometimes and there's this little voice saying well I'm not meeting all of my goals...and every time I've had that, and then speak to her afterwards, it's like, what was I worrying about? She knows that I'm human. She's been 30 years in a classroom...She knows where I can do better and she'll be very candid about that, but she knows the difficulties and struggles.

Michael, a 29-year teacher, explained a similar level of openness and support:

If I went down to [the principal] and said, “We're not doing this well, I don't like the way we're doing this,” she would say, “Well, let's get together and see if you're right, and if you're right, we'll change it somehow.”

He added, “I've worked with Debbie since '98, she was a teacher for 35 years. It's the first time I've worked with a principal in that situation.”

Linda said, “How did we get that trust? It's not an oppressive atmosphere here. And that's pretty rare. It's not top-down.” She added,

We're all in it for the kids and if the kids need something, we're trying to change [our practice] to make that happen. And I didn't see that at any other school, and granted I've only been at five different schools. But that oppressive atmosphere existed at every school I was in, whether it was a nice principal or a not very friendly principal. It was just the way the structure was, that made me not feel valued.

Isabelle said,

I think Debbie's really professional as principal. I think she's open and she's honest with people. I feel like she addresses the problems that are in front of us and she's not afraid to talk to people about the things that she feels they need to do better.

Cynthia said, "If leadership isn't really knowledgeable enough to see what it's like in the classroom, then decisions are made without you." She added, "If you don't have excellent leadership, if the captain of the ship isn't doing what they should, the ship falls over."

UAA teachers made a direct connection to the principal's collaborative practices and faculty trust. As described previously, trust was rooted in the principal's reputation as an excellent teacher and in her willingness to respond to and follow through with suggestions from the teaching team.

Participants believe that they can count on support from their peers. When asked to respond to the statement, "Teachers can usually count on staff members to help them out," 75% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed and 25% somewhat agreed (see Table 5.7).

Table 5.7

*Peer Support (N = 20)*

Statement	Agreement level	Frequency	Percent
Teachers can usually count on staff members to help them out.	Strongly Disagree	0	0
	Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Disagree	0	0
	Somewhat Agree	5	25.0
	Agree	2	10.0
	Strongly Agree	13	65.0
	Total	20	100

Four teachers shared in interviews that they confide in lead teachers when they struggle. Isabelle described an experience wherein a lead teacher helped her find perspective. She said, “I painted myself into a teaching corner.” She added, “I dreaded going to class every day; I just didn’t have it; I couldn’t see past what I was doing. And so I would confide in Jessie. To me that’s not even a secret.”

Five teachers said that they confide in other teachers. Ingrid said, “I feel like a lot of the issues that I have are very relatable to the other teachers as well, and it’s good to just share and I guess that’s a form of collaboration too.” Lizette said, “Informally during lunch I would say, ‘Are you also having problems?’ It was in general and it wasn’t only one person. It was the group, because of the trust.”

Four teachers reported confiding in other staff members such as the counselor. Olivia, a design team member and a 12-year teacher, gave a specific example of a teaching challenge related to fully including special education students into the general education classes. She said,

I think about last year and my first real experience with full inclusion of a range of kids with special needs, and it was a frustrating time for me because I’m at the point in my career where I’m generally successful at what I do...I felt unprepared for helping some of the kids that I had who had special needs. I went to the inclusion specialist Sheila and had some very serious conversations with her. And she was really up front with me about the thing I was doing wrong...It was really eye opening to talk to her and then it also helped me understand that if I was having this problem, that probably everyone was having the problem.

Olivia explained that she and Sheila then worked together to communicate the problem to the entire staff:

Then Sheila and I tried to work together to do a series of professional development workshops with the rest of the staff. And I went in front of the staff and I was totally honest and said, “For the past couple of months I think that I have really been messing something up in my classroom and here’s what I’ve been doing wrong.” After talking to Sheila here’s how I did things differently and this is what it looks like now. And I need everyone here to be really honest about the ways they’re not doing this right because we need to do this right for these kids.

She added, “I think we have a real wealth of different kinds of experience and when we're in a place that we can match those experiences with people who are struggling, things go really well.”

Not everyone was satisfied with the support they received. Maria said, “I did reach [out to a colleague], but then she has other things to deal with, and time goes by, a day goes by and then a week goes by and nothing happened, and we have more problems.”

The faculty confirmed the interaction between collaboration and high levels of trust. At the center of their trust is a willingness to examine their practices and sought support both within and outside their academic departments.

**Teacher profile: Exposing failures in a culture of trust.** Linda joined the UAA faculty 2 years before retirement because she wanted to become a better teacher, and she trusted that the expectation of collaboration would help her achieve this goal. This year marks Linda’s 37th year as a teacher in a community of concentrated poverty. She has been a mentor teacher and is a content expert in her area. She is a master teacher who works with a local university to develop high school curriculum. Considering Linda’s level of curricular expertise and her years of service, I was surprised and compelled by her honesty about her need to improve her practice.

Linda attributes the changes in her practice to her collaborative experiences at UAA:

Collaboration [makes me] want to be a better teacher...It's changed the goals I have for my students...[but] the change didn't happen overnight...I invested my energy in that because I saw it working. I wasn't afraid that I'd fail at it because of the collaboration, and I knew I could call on people if I got stuck. I wasn't alone trying these new things...We're all in this together.

In her interview, Linda elaborated on how, for her, trust is not assumed, but rather is earned through teachers’ actions:



I think one of the ways that trust happens is that, for me, I have to know that you can do your job and I have to know that I'm not going to have to do your job for you. And I have to know that if ...these are the things we're going to do, that you will carry it out...I have to know that I can trust you to be a good teacher. And I have not known that all my teaching years. And I have not ever known that for an entire faculty. There is not one person on this faculty that I don't trust is a good teacher.

Linda emphasized the mutual respect that results in a culture where trust and willingness to collaborate are strongly linked:

We never give up and we never doubt that we will make a difference. We can call on other people to help...I've seen the difference that it makes when I'm willing to listen and I don't know if I thought it was a sign of weakness before or not...but that's one of the operating things here: "What can I help you with?" I don't think I had that as a standard before...trust goes with teachers, it goes with students...it's just so apparent that I know that I'm in good hands. It's the attitude, it's the way kids are treated, it's the way teachers treat kids, it's the way kids, hopefully, treat teachers. How did we get that trust? It's not an oppressive atmosphere here. And that's pretty rare. It's not top-down.

Interview, survey, and focus group data confirmed that ongoing collaboration among teachers influences faculty trust. Teachers revealed that feelings of trust are validated by the actions of their peers and that collaboration makes these actions visible and provides evidence that their colleagues are meeting school-wide expectations.

### **Summary of Findings**

Teachers at UAA confirmed that ongoing teacher collaboration influences their sense of shared responsibility for students, their perceptions of teacher competence/collective efficacy, and their trust in their colleagues' ability to achieve the school mission. Teachers confirmed that collaboration both catalyzes and sustains shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and faculty trust. For UAA teachers, collaboration serves as an aspiration and expectation as well as visible evidence that they can feel confident in their colleagues' collective capacity to achieve desired outcomes for students.

## CHAPTER 5

### Discussion and Recommendations

#### **Introduction**

This study confirms that teacher collaboration both catalyzes and fosters three essential conditions for student achievement in a community of concentrated poverty: (a) teachers' beliefs in their colleagues' professional competence, or collective efficacy; (b) teachers' understanding that they collectively share responsibility for student success; and (c) teachers' trust that their colleagues are implementing the school mission with fidelity. Nineteen teachers participated in a large, high-poverty urban school district's CSR initiative. They reported that their collaborative practices were fundamental to the successful implementation of their teacher-developed school. The success of these 19 teachers can be replicated in any school district looking for innovative approaches to CSR. The evidence clearly demonstrates that a collaboratively designed and implemented small school can create conditions that research proves leads to high student achievement for students, regardless of socio-economic status. When teachers become agents of change, they hold one another accountable for the collaborative practices necessary for improving outcomes for their students.

In this final chapter I reflect on the implications of my findings and recommend ways that school districts can empower teachers to share responsibility for improving student outcomes. I consider these recommendations within my guiding theoretical framework: shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and relational trust. I then analyze my study's limitations, posit possible implications for policy, and suggest opportunities for future study. I conclude by reflecting upon

the significance of research addressing educational inequities in communities of unrelenting poverty.

### **Recommendations for Primary Findings**

**Recommendation One: Empower teachers as agents of change.** Four teachers and the principal, who had been a teacher just prior to opening UAA, responded to their district’s CSR initiative by submitting a competitive proposal to operate a small school. The Board of Education approved their proposal and rejected the competing proposal submitted by a large charter management organization. This vote of confidence for urban teachers to develop high-impact schools for youth of poverty catalyzed a district-wide movement—one aimed at empowering teachers to assume full responsibility for school transformation. This study confirms that when teachers are empowered as change agents and are expected to engage in sustained and purposeful collaboration, they develop a sense of agency. They hold themselves mutually accountable for successfully implementing the change they seek. As one teacher said, “If you're not accountable to the people you work with you're never going to have a cohesive working or learning environment.” She added, “I feel like we have some ownership [over what] we actually would like to see accomplished.” The preceding sentiments were shared by most of the UAA staff and reflect the belief that shared accountability is fueled by a strong sense of teacher agency.

Research shows that when teachers develop interdependent relationships they are more likely to accept mutual accountability for improving student outcomes (Goddard et al., 2000). Studies also reveal that when teachers are empowered to make values-driven rather than mandate-driven decisions, student achievement is higher (Lee & Smith, 1996). Teachers in this study confirmed that interdependence and values-driven decision-making are outcomes of their

ongoing collaboration. This study was conducted in the middle of the second year of operations at UAA, and student data were not available; however, this study confirmed that shared responsibility for student success is a widely-held principle for teachers at UAA and that collaboration both fosters and sustains collective accountability for student success. When collaboration is the core professional methodology, teachers' discourse and action remain focused on student welfare.

Any school district undergoing CSR can empower teachers as agents in the change process. If such reforms are to be successful, I found that the conditions for shared responsibility must be present. Most teachers at UAA felt strongly that fellow teachers shared responsibility for student success, and they held themselves accountable to their peers for implementing professional practices directed toward this end. I also found that teachers felt confident when their colleagues shared responsibility when that belief becomes manifest in teachers' collaborative practices. For instance, most teachers described how their collaboration confirms that their colleagues are dedicated to serving students. One teacher summed up the relationship between shared responsibility and collaboration thusly:

A lot of our mission is about community building and collaboration and creating a challenging curriculum...There's a great feeling in the mission of always believing in the student—that they can do it—they can meet the challenge. And then [we help] them in any way to make that happen.

This teacher synthesized the critical interaction among the aspirations reflected in the mission, the collaboration necessary to achieve the mission, and the resulting benefits to students.

Teachers at UAA confirmed that they are driven to improve their practice because of the support they receive from their peers during both formal and informal collaboration. This finding suggests that districts wishing to implement, or at least learn from, teacher-led reform need to empower teachers to develop school designs that place authentic, ongoing, and robust teacher

collaboration at the center their transformation strategy. Newmann and Wehlage's (1995) seminal 5-year study of restructured schools lends credibility to the notion that successfully restructured schools build collective capacity to improve outcomes for students. When teachers collaborate, they are making both their practice and their attitudes visible to their peers; increased visibility enables teachers to support one another's professional growth.

Teachers reported that the teacher-directed nature of UAA enables them respond to student needs with speed and agility, and that their collaboration ensures a unified and coherent approach to meeting those needs. According to decades of research, agentive teachers seek creative solutions to challenges (Bandura, 1993.) Survey data indicate that teachers believe their peers are qualified to meet the needs of all students, but interview data revealed a more nuanced assessment of teacher responsiveness. All teachers in this study confirmed a direct connection between collaboration and meeting student needs; however, three teachers were dissatisfied with their particular level of collaboration. These data are both hopeful and cautionary; teachers desire more fulfilling collaborative experiences, yet they are easily dissatisfied when their expectations are not met.

Teachers confirmed that responsiveness does not occur in isolation, but rather is an explicit act of collaboration driven by a tacit agreement to share responsibility for all students. Collaboration, as the stated core work process of UAA, creates the expectation for the shared value of collective responsibility. When I asked teachers who they feel is responsible for student success, one said she felt personally responsible, all others said the responsibility rests in all teachers, collectively. They also said that this responsibility is confirmed in their daily collaborative practices, in their weekly school-wide professional development, and in their informal discourse outside of class. Research confirms that de-privatized practice increases

feelings of mutual accountability for students (Seashore Louis & Marks, 1998). The research and my findings lead to the recommendation that school districts ensure that they empower teachers to make site-based decisions that are aligned to the needs of their student population rather than based on district-level mandates. In addition, my findings indicate that districts should consider school governance and operational models that embrace collaborative decision-making processes based on student needs.

Teachers' sense of agency creates the conditions for interdependence among staff members; collaboration gives meaning and intentionality to interdependent relationships when teachers direct their collective work to improving individual practice. Teachers at UAA said that collaboration both de-privatizes their practice and creates the expectation that all teachers, regardless of their levels of experience, are learners. A 37-year teacher explained this connection in the context of collaboratively designing and assessing curriculum:

I wasn't afraid that I'd fail because of the collaboration and I knew I could call on people if I got stuck. I wasn't alone trying these new things, so I've never really felt as discouraged as I used to feel, because I knew somebody would be there and be able to make a suggestion to get me out of the hole I dug myself into or the hole I thought I was in. I guess it's like I'm not alone and we're all in this together.

According to teachers, collaboration both promotes improved practice by setting up the expectation of making their practice public and nurtures teacher growth when teachers feel safe asking for support. Districts, and even individual schools, can encourage high levels of purposeful collaboration by allowing teams of teachers to create their own curriculum and assessment and then provide time for teachers to analyze the effectiveness of their practice based on student outcomes. Despite the current budget crises that most states are enduring, districts can find more time in the school day for teacher collaboration by creating master schedules that

allow for common planning time and implementing modified block schedules that increase both instructional and collaboration time.

Data from this study indicate that not all teachers—even at this teacher designed and operated school—see themselves as agents of change. Some teachers are not prepared to accept responsibility for every aspect of the school’s operation. Teachers still look to strong principal and teacher leadership to guide their decisions. When teachers fully apprehend that they are working in a school that is responsive to their input, their level of need increases. This places an extra burden on the principal and lead teachers to respond to every emergent need, desire, or suggestion of faculty members. To minimize the potential for teachers to create this level of dependency, I recommend that teacher-developed schools organize grade-level team leaders who convene their teams weekly to air teachers’ questions and needs. Since, in small schools, teachers likely serve on two or even three grade levels, teachers can meet in the grade-level that constitutes the bulk of their work. These brief meetings could establish a protocol for hearing teacher concerns and create another layer of teacher interdependence and collaborative problem solving. Many districts have instituted teacher leader positions, but they should consider imbedding multiple levels of teacher leadership to be more responsive to teacher needs and to increase shared accountability.

Finally, the teachers’ workload necessarily increases as a result of being given the opportunity to own their work. They are not only required to prepare for their subject area, but also tasked with collaborating across disciplines and with addressing all student needs, both academic and personal. Teachers indicated that they find increased autonomy a driving force in their motivation to engage in this work. However, teachers also admitted that their current workload is not sustainable under present district conditions. Teachers cited their district’s

sluggish response to emergent school needs as a barrier to sustainability. I recommend that districts place innovative schools in a charter-like mini district or innovation division that offers both the economies of scale of the larger district and the inventive practices of a charter.

**Recommendation Two: Create mission-driven schools to fuel faculty trust.** When the teachers at my study site responded to their district's CSR initiative, they were required to define and defend how they would organize their school to ensure high levels of achievement for every student. Every element of their school design had to show a direct link to the school's mission of responding to the holistic needs of students and to prepare them for the rigors of college. To place the latter goal in context, at the two nearby comprehensive high schools from which UAA students were drawn, only 12% of graduates had completed the minimum requirements for University of California acceptance. This study confirmed that every endeavor of the teachers at UAA is aimed at improving this percentage and providing the social and emotional supports to eliminate barriers to student achievement. One UAA teacher summed up the mission thusly: "Success for all of us is to be able to get [students] accepted into college."

A mission-driven school, focused on high-quality academic experiences for students, can provide clear expectations for teachers and can galvanize their collective efforts, particularly in challenging environments (Goddard et al., 2000). This study confirmed that teachers at UAA believe the school mission has two core features: removing barriers that prevent students from achieving personal and academic success, and preparing students for post-secondary education. Teachers at UAA directly linked their feelings of trust to their belief that their colleagues were implementing this vision, and they indicated that the veracity of that belief is evidenced by teachers' collaborative work. Teachers often cited the connection between structure and trust,



noting that small school size and contiguous space make their colleagues' practice and commitment to shared values visible.

Districts preparing for CSR and individual school administrators should consider engaging teachers in the rigorous process of creating a school's mission statement. While this task is arduous, it builds ownership in the people who create the mission and credibility for those who join the faculty later. Teachers at UAA who were not involved in creating the mission reported that the teacher-driven nature of the process increased their feelings of trust.

That was the primary reason I chose to teach here...I really felt like I could be honest about everything I wanted to do in the classroom...The whole idea of teachers in the community starting a school...I felt that as a starting teacher I could [grow] in this environment.

A teacher-developed mission has the potential to shift teachers' level of responsibility. Rather than directing efforts towards compliance-driven mandates, faculty teams can establish cultural norms based upon values-driven practices. When teachers participate in defining goals, they become clear about their role in upholding expectations (Moore Johnson & Birkeland, 2003; Supovitz, 2002). A teacher-developed mission has the potential to shift responsibility away from a centralized or bureaucratic locus of control and towards collective teacher responsibility. With one exception, teachers at UAA reported that every teacher shares equal responsibility for student success; the dissenting teacher reported feeling individually responsible.

Teachers at UAA confirmed that they were working collectively towards the school mission. Teachers reported that they were actively engaged in providing instruction and support that was specific to student needs. They said that their collaborative experiences helped them construct knowledge based on their teaching experiences rather than being passive and compliance driven. Individual actions were inextricably linked to collective efforts to implement courses of action aimed at achieving the school mission, which reinforced the interdependent

nature of UAA's practices. According to teachers, trust is essential to building and maintaining high levels of interdependence and avoiding the isolating nature of the comprehensive high school campus. The voluntary acceptance of responsibility engages teachers in working toward collective goals and collaborative school cultures ensure that this work is public and visible, thereby increasing levels of relational trust.

Data from this study confirm that teachers can overcome the challenges associated with high-poverty communities when they believe that, as a group, they can implement the strategies necessary to achieve their mission. Research indicates that persistence in the face of challenges is a sign of collective efficacy (Goddard, Hoy, et al., 2004). Teachers discussed their persistence in the face of numerous challenges associated with improving outcomes for high-needs students. One teacher reported that in one class alone, five students had been in jail. Another talked about a student with special needs associated with being born addicted to crack cocaine. Other teachers noted that students had gotten lost in large, comprehensive high schools, and, according to Mario, were "disenfranchised." Teachers reported that reaching their shared goals for students was a non-negotiable characteristic of school culture. For instance, one teacher who, according to Patrick, "did not own the idea that the students are reachable," was dismissed. Research makes clear the importance of collective efficacy, particularly in challenging circumstances. This study confirms that ongoing teacher collaboration fosters perceptions of strong collective efficacy.

Teachers indicated that this level of drive and persistence is fundamentally connected to faculty trust. Marilyn summed up the relationship between trust, school mission, and collaboration thusly: "You want to know that you can trust someone...to make sure everything gets done. I think if there wasn't that trust that we wouldn't want to collaborate with each other." When Marilyn refers to getting the work done, she is referencing how teachers must work

together to achieve the goals of the school. She also indicated that collaboration depends on trust. Research confirms that faculty trust is conditional and depends on faculty members fulfilling their commitments. This study extends the literature by adding collaboration as a driver of trust. It is important to note that the collaboration came first and was an expectation of all UAA teachers, most of whom had not met prior to the school's opening.

**Recommendation Three: Allow faculty to hire and replace fellow teachers.** Under the guidelines of the CSR initiative under which the UAA teachers were working, they were authorized by the Board of Education, their district, and their Union to hire teachers whom they felt embraced UAA's vision; they were also authorized to replace teachers whose practices were not adequate to achieve the school mission. The school's design team members were automatically offered a position, which one member ultimately refused. The other staff members were keenly aware that they had been hired specifically to uphold and implement the UAA mission. It is important to note that all teachers, with the exception of hard-to-staff math and science positions, were drawn from the pool of Union teachers. Interview data revealed that, after the first year of operations, one teacher was replaced, which meant that he was sent back into the pool of teachers seeking positions within the district.

Data from this study confirm that teachers understood that they were hired to implement the school mission. Participants spoke openly about the necessity of working with a team that was committed to a common goal: preparing all students for post-secondary success. The significance of this goal is made clear by data that reveal a 48% graduation rate at both of the nearby high schools, with only 12% of graduates completing the minimum requirements for University of California acceptance. Teachers said that collaboration was both the stated and implied vehicle for achieving better results for students in the UAA community. Teachers who

do not believe that all students are capable of graduating ready for college, or who do not value collaborative efforts to affect positive outcomes for students, receive sanctions from their peers. Ultimately, teachers whose practice violates established school norms risk being replaced.

These findings suggest that school districts considering comprehensive reform initiatives can learn much from UAA as one approach to school transformation. Empowering teachers as agents of change rather than passive recipients of school district mandates is a critical first step. Increased teacher accountability in exchange for increased teacher agency is a concept that both teachers and the unions that represent them are likely to support. The district must ensure that the supports for teacher-developed and operated schools are in place to ensure success. Once unions are satisfied that teachers will be supported and protected, they may be more amenable to modifying their labor/management contracts to make room for innovations. Districts will need to create a rigorous request for proposal process whereby all submissions must provide research-based evidence that their mission-driven plans will address the needs of students in their communities. Finally, teachers will need the flexibility to hire staff members who are passionate about the school's mission, and the authority to remove teachers who do not live up to school-wide expectations.

### **Limitations of the Study**

There are several notable limitations of this study. First, all data come from a small group of teachers who self-selected to join a school where collaboration is the expectation. If teachers are randomly placed in collaborative schools, there is no guarantee that they will cooperate with their peers and, if they do, there is no assurance that such collaboration will lead to shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and trust.

Another limitation is that I chose to conduct a single rather than a multiple case study. This site is one of 30 teacher-developed schools in the district; including a greater number of schools in this study may have revealed that small school size was as likely or more likely to foster collective efficacy, shared responsibility, and trust.

A third limitation was the short timeframe of this study, which did not allow time to collect student data. Since last year was the first year of implementation, student data could only serve as a baseline and would reveal nothing about the progress students were making as a result of being at UAA. Data for this year will not be available until next year. While research indicates that shared responsibility, collective efficacy, and trust are present in schools where student achievement is high, regardless of SES, it would be especially revealing to know whether students at UAA had improved achievement as a result of attending the school.

A final limitation is potential researcher bias. I am not personally invested in UAA, but I am deeply interested in teacher-led reform, and while I took great pains to triangulate my data and to note data that diverged from the norm, my eagerness to see teachers as change agents may have colored my perception.

### **Opportunities for Future Study**

Scarce research exists on teacher-led school reform generally and teacher-developed schools specifically. Additional research that looks at these models of reform can provide insight into their impact on student achievement. The nation is struggling to find school models that improve outcomes for students of poverty, and teacher-led reforms may provide one approach worth investigating further. In my 15 years working with teachers in high-poverty schools and communities, I have learned that teachers become attached to their schools, their students, and their specific communities. If we think of schools as hubs of the community, then we can think

of teachers as potential agents of change within the communities they serve. Developing a greater understanding of what motivates teachers to serve their communities may deepen our understanding of how to galvanize teacher efforts to make lasting change.

## **Reflection**

*Faith is taking the first step even when you don't see the whole staircase.*  
-Martin Luther King, Jr.

This is the quote that began my first assignment for my doctoral program at UCLA. I cannot say that I fully comprehended its meaning at the time. I did not know then that I would discover that public high school teachers would take that first step in designing and operating their own schools; I did not know then that I would finish my studies by honoring their faith in one another. Three years ago, I thought this quote applied to me and to my leap of faith. Now I see how small my actions as a researcher are in comparison to those who are trying to move an entire system to make way for one small change at a time. Those small changes represent acts of faith and hope in an educational and funding environment that prevents these teachers from seeing more than a few of those steps, let alone the entire staircase.

I began this study with a question about which instructional methods improve student achievement. I did not know anything about isolating variables. I did not know that the multiple inputs in a student's day render knowing which methods impact achievement impossible to prove. What I began to discover is that concerted and coherent teacher efforts improve outcomes for students.

Fifteen years ago, when I was a teacher, I knew that ongoing and purposeful collaboration around curriculum, instruction, and assessment made me feel confident in my colleagues' effectiveness as teachers. Three years ago I learned that the term for that sense of

confidence is collective efficacy. I found this belief to be a critical feature of both teachers' trust and their willingness to work hard and to persist in their endeavors.

During this study I listened to a 37-year veteran talk about changing her practice as a result of making her shortcomings known to her team. I heard the Teachers' Union chapter chair tell me that teachers need to be proactive removing their underperforming peers. I listened to a young teacher in her second year talk about political praxis and relate it to teachers taking ownership of their schools. I learned what I sought to learn and much more. I learned that these teachers' voices and so many more like them need to rise to the surface of the dialogue about teacher quality. I learned that there is hope, and that it is our responsibility in education reform and in education policy to give that hope shape and form by empowering teachers to become agents of change.

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## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent Form

University of California, Los Angeles  
**CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**  
*Collective Impact through Collaboration:  
A Case Study of One Teacher-Developed Urban School*

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Jane Patterson, Ed. D. candidate, sponsored by Dr. Durkin and Dr. Howard from the Graduate School of Education and Information Studies, at the University of California, Los Angeles. You were selected as a possible participant in this study because you have expressed interest in participating in a case study that seeks to understand the influence that teacher collaboration has on the culture your school site. Your participation in this research study is voluntary.

#### **Why is this study being done?**

This study seeks to understand and describe how the faculty at a teacher-developed school creates a culture of collaboration.

#### **What will happen if I take part in this research study?**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, the researcher will ask you to do the following:

- 1) Participate in one audio recorded interview outside of your paid work time with primary researcher lasting no more than 45 minutes.
- 2) Participate in one focus group (only applies to 5 self-selected participants).
- 3) Respond to four questionnaires, outside of your paid work time.
- 4) Permission for primary researcher to conduct one observation of a team planning session.
- 5) Respond to 2 weekly reflections after school hours and outside of your paid work time requiring no more than 40 minutes of your time over 4 weeks (only applies to 4 self-selected participants).

#### **How long will I be in the research study?**

Participation for you as a teacher will last 4 weeks during spring semester.

#### **Are there any potential risks or discomforts that I can expect from this study?**

There are no potential risks and no foreseeable discomforts to participating in this study.

#### **Are there any potential benefits if I participate?**

As a teacher participating in this study, you will help researchers and practitioners understand the nature of teacher collaboration and its impact on the professional culture at a school site. As

teachers working in a teacher-designed and implemented school, you provide a unique opportunity to show how teachers use collaborative work processes to implement a school's mission.

**Will I receive any payment if I participate in this study?**

Your participation in teacher-led reform is a model for grassroots comprehensive school reform in the district, state, and nation. I appreciate your engagement in my study as both a scholar and practitioner committed to serving high-poverty urban youth. I understand that your participation requires time out of an already impacted schedule. As this study is self-funded, I will not be able to compensate you for your time; however, I will provide a \$25 gift card as a small token of my appreciation for your participation in one interview and the completion of the surveys. Teachers who participate in the above and the focus group will receive a \$50 gift card. Teachers who participate in the interview, questionnaire completion, and the reflections will receive a \$100 gift card. If more than five teachers volunteer for the focus group, then I will randomly draw five names. If more than one teacher from each subject area volunteers to complete the reflections, then I will randomly draw from each content area.

**Will information about me and my participation be kept confidential?**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study that can identify you will remain confidential. It will be disclosed only when required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by means of protecting your name, the name of your school and the name of all other teachers and students with codes. This study is designed to understand how teachers develop collaborative cultures and how such cultures impact instructional practices; therefore, all activities will be kept in the strictest of confidence. All data collected will be password protected on computers and also on hard drives that only the researcher has access to at all times. Interviewees will not be identified by name and, therefore, should recordings be transcribed by someone other than the primary researcher, participants' identities will remain confidential. All participants will be asked to keep what is said during the focus group between the participants only. However, complete confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. You have the right to review, edit or erase the research tapes of your participation in whole or in part.

**What are my rights if I take part in this study?**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty or loss of benefits to which you were otherwise entitled.

You can choose whether or not you want to be in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may leave at any time without consequences of any kind. You are not waiving any of your legal rights if you choose to be in this research study. You may refuse to answer any questions that you do not want to answer and still remain in the study.

**Who can answer questions I might have about this study?**

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about the researcher, you can talk to the one of the UCLA Dissertation Chairs. Please contact:

Principal Investigator: Jane Patterson at XXXXXXXX and [XXXXXXX](#)  
Dissertation Co-Chair: Diane Durkin, Ph. D. XXXXXXXX at [XXXXXXX](#)  
Dissertation Co-Chair: Tyrone Howard, Ph.D. XXXXXXXX at [XXXXXXX](#)  
UCLA GSE&IS Moore Hall, Box 951521, 405 Hilgard Avenue, Los Angeles, CA 90095

If you wish to ask questions about your rights as a research participant or if you wish to voice any problems or concerns you may have about the study to someone other than the researchers, please call the Office of the Human Research Protection Program at (310) 825-7122 or write to Office of the Human Research Protection Program, UCLA, 11000 Kinross Avenue, Suite 102, Box 951694, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1694.

**SIGNATURE OF STUDY PARTICIPANT**

I understand the procedures described above. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Participant

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**SIGNATURE OF PERSON OBTAINING CONSENT**

In my judgment the participant is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Jane M. Patterson  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Person Obtaining Consent

XXXXXXX  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Contact Number

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX B

Participant Time Commitment

**Collective Impact through Informal Collaborative Leadership:  
A Case Study of One Teacher-Developed Urban School**

Thank you for your interest in this study. The study timeframe is approximately 4 weeks. Please select the activities that you are willing to participate in below.

**Your Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

<b>Your Department:</b>		
<b>Activity</b>	<b>Time Required</b>	<b>Willing to participate</b>
1:1 interview	45 minutes	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
Focus group (5 participants)	1 hour	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaires	10 minutes	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>
Reflections (1 participant from English, math, social studies, and science)	2 times a week for 4 weeks (estimated time 20 minutes per week)	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> N <input type="checkbox"/>

Your participation in teacher-led reform is a model for grassroots comprehensive school reform in the district, state, and nation. I appreciate your engagement in my study as both a scholar and practitioner committed to serving high-poverty urban youth. I understand that your participation requires time out of an already impacted schedule. As this study is self-funded, I will not be able to compensate you for your time; however, I will provide a \$25 stipend as a small token of my appreciation for your participation in one interview and the completion of the surveys. Teachers who participate in the above and the focus group will receive a \$50 stipend. Teachers who participate in the interview, questionnaire completion, and the reflections will receive a \$100 stipend. If more than five teachers volunteer for the focus group, then I will randomly draw five names. If more than one teacher from each subject area volunteers to complete the reflections, then I will randomly draw from each content area.

## APPENDIX C

### Participant Background

#### Background Information

**Directions:** Please take a moment to answer each question below. Your answers are confidential.

1. How frequently do you collaborate with another teacher on instructional issues (planning curriculum, discussing instructional strategies, analyzing student work)?
  - a. Daily
  - b. Twice weekly
  - c. Monthly
  - d. Less than once a month
  
2. What is your primary academic department?
  - a. Art
  - b. Foreign Language
  - c. Language Arts
  - d. Mathematics
  - e. Physical Education
  - f. Science
  - g. Social Science
  - h. Special Education
  - i. Other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. Are you on an interdisciplinary team?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No
  
4. What number of years have you been a teacher?
  - a. 1-3 years
  - b. 4-7 years
  - c. 8-11 years
  - d. 12-20
  - e. More than 20
  
5. Were you on the original design team for this school?
  - a. Yes
  - b. No

APPENDIX D

Collective Responsibility Scale

CR Scale

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

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. Principal consults staff before making decisions affecting them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
2. Administration knows problems faced by staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Teachers can usually count on staff members to help out.	1	2	3	4	5	6
4. This school seems like a big family.	1	2	3	4	5	6
5. The principal is interested in innovation/new ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	6
6. There is broad agreement among faculty about school mission.	1	2	3	4	5	6
7. There is a great deal of cooperative effort among staff.	1	2	3	4	5	6
8. I am encouraged to experiment with my teaching.	1	2	3	4	5	6
9. Principal lets staff know what is expected of them.	1	2	3	4	5	6
10. Teachers at this school are continually learning.	1	2	3	4	5	6
11. Colleagues share beliefs about the school's mission.	1	2	3	4	5	6
12. Staff members are recognized for a job well done.	1	2	3	4	5	6
13. Teachers union and administration work together.	1	2	3	4	5	6
14. I am familiar with content of other courses in my department.	1	2	3	4	5	6

## APPENDIX E

### Collective Efficacy Scale

#### CE-Scale Form L

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

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

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Retrieved from <http://www.waynekhoy.com/pdfs/collective-efficacy-long.pdf>

## APPENDIX F

### Faculty Trust Scale

#### Omnibus T-Scale

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

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

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Retrieved from <http://www.waynekhoy.com/pdfs/org-trust-scale.pdf>



## APPENDIX G

### Individual Interview Protocol

#### **One-on-One Interview Protocol**

This research project is a case study at a teacher-developed and operated small school that was created as a result of an urban district's comprehensive school reform initiative. The goal of this study is to understand and describe the impact of teacher collaboration during the second year of school implementation.

**Objectives:** Interviews will elicit discussion of teachers' beliefs about the way in which collaboration 1) influences their perceptions of collective efficacy 2) influences collective responsibility for student success and 3) influences faculty trust.

**Description of the participants:** Interviews will be open to all 16 teachers at my case study site.

**Informed consent:** I will distribute and collect informed consent forms prior to conducting interviews.

**Description of the interview:** The participants and the facilitator will sit face-to-face in a quiet room. I will begin the discussion by introducing myself and explaining that the purpose of the interview will be to learn about how the teacher's collaborative work processes function and about how collaboration impacts the school environment and individual practice. Interviews will last approximately 30 minutes. They will be tape-recorded.

**Scheduling the interviews:** I will conduct interviews during teachers' conference/planning periods or before or after school. I will schedule times during a regularly scheduled whole-school meeting.

**Interview Guide:** The following questions will provide the framework for the interviews. While questions that are not listed here may be asked in order to follow up on participant responses, the discussions will center on these main questions. The introduction and debriefing statements will be read to participants.

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to learn how teacher collaboration affects the school environment. I would you to share your honest feelings about how you collaborate with colleagues at this school and how you think your collaboration impacts other aspects of your professional experience. Everything that you say here will be kept confidential and your names and any other identifying information will not be used in any report coming from this research.

We have a limited amount of time, so I might have to interrupt from time-to-time to keep things moving.

*Opening question*

Could you tell me your first name and tell me how long you have been a teacher and how long you have been at this school?

*Introductory question*

Why did you decide to teach at a teacher-developed and operated school? (CE, CR, C, T)

*Transition question*

Can you describe what your interactions with colleagues look like on a typical day at this school? (CE, CR, C)

*Key questions*

What role, if any, does collaborating with your peers play in how you accomplish your goals at work? (C, CE, CR)

Can you describe what teachers at this school generally do when they are having difficulty reaching a student? (CE)

What role, if any, does faculty trust play in how teachers interact at this school? (T)

Could you describe the mission of this school? (CR)

What role, if any, does teacher collaboration play in achieving the school's mission? (C, CR)

Whose responsibility is it to ensure that students at this school are successful? (CR, CE)

Could you please describe a time when you were having a teaching challenge at this school.

Did you confide in anyone at this school? Why or why not? (CR, CE, T)

*Ending question*

What do you think will ensure this school's success?

*Follow-up questions* will be asked, when appropriate, to gain clarity and deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs.

*Debriefing*

I would like to thank you for your participation. I also want to restate that what you have shared with me is confidential. No part of our discussion that includes names or other identifying information will be used in any reports, displays, or other publicly accessible media coming from this research. Finally, I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this research. Do you have any questions for me?

## APPENDIX H

### Focus Group Protocol

#### **Focus Group Protocol**

This research project is a case study at a teacher-developed and operated small school that was created as a result of an urban district's comprehensive school reform initiative. The goal of this study is to understand and describe the impact of teacher collaboration during the second year of school implementation.

**Objectives:** The focus group will elicit discussion of teachers' beliefs about the way in which collaboration 1) influences their perceptions of collective efficacy 2) influences collective responsibility for student success and 3) influences faculty trust.

**Description of the participants:** The focus groups will be open to all 16 teachers at my case study site. If more than 8 teachers choose to participate, I will conduct two focus groups.

**Informed consent:** I will distribute and collect informed consent forms prior to the focus group(s).

**Description of the focus group:** The participants and the facilitator will sit in a circle or around a table for the discussion. I will begin the discussion by introducing myself and explaining that the purpose of the focus group session will be to learn about how their collaborative work processes function and about how their collaboration impacts the school environment and individual practice. The focus group discussion will last approximately 60 minutes. It will be tape-recorded.

**Scheduling the focus group:** The focus group will be held either during scheduled teacher planning time or after school. I will work with the school principal and lead teachers to determine a time that is suitable.

**Focus Group Discussion Guide:** The following questions will provide the framework for the focus group discussion. While questions that are not listed here may be asked in order to follow up on participant responses, the focus group discussion will center on these main questions. The introduction and debriefing statements will be read to participants.

#### *Introduction*

The purpose of this study is to learn how teacher collaboration affects the school environment. I would you to share your honest feelings about how you collaborate with colleagues at this school and how you think your collaboration impacts other aspects of your professional experience. Everything that you say here will be kept confidential and your names and any other identifying information will not be used in any report coming from this research.

We have a limited amount of time, so I might have to interrupt from time-to-time to keep things moving.

*Opening question*

I'm going to ask you a question that I asked in our 1:1 interviews: What motivated you to teach at a teacher-developed and operated school?

*Transition question*

What is the difference between teaching at a teacher-developed and operated school and teaching at a traditional high school?

*Key questions*

Could you please define teacher collaboration?

When teachers at this school are working together, what does that look like? What are they doing?

What role, if any, does collaboration at this school play in creating the conditions for trust among teachers?

How do you gain confidence in your colleagues' teaching abilities?

What role, if any, does knowing that teachers at this school are competent play in your willingness to collaborate?

At this school, what structural conditions foster collaboration? (common planning time, proximity?)

What are some of the barriers to collaboration at this school?

*Ending question*

In your individual interviews, you each described your beliefs about the mission of this school. What do you believe the faculty expects of each teacher in order to achieve that mission?

*Follow-up questions* will be asked, when appropriate, to gain clarity and deeper understanding of teachers' beliefs.

*Debriefing*

I want to provide you with a chance to ask any questions that you might have about this research. Do you have any questions for me?

APPENDIX I

Collaboration Observation Protocol

Date:	Time:	Topic:	Number present:
-------	-------	--------	-----------------

RQ	Tallies of Units of Observation	Comments on Units of Observation
#2	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teachers discuss and share strategies to reach struggling learners</li> <li>2. All teachers share ideas</li> <li>3. Teachers share content knowledge</li> <li>4. Teachers use data and/or student work to discuss student progress</li> <li>5. Teachers discuss student successes</li> <li>6. Teachers discuss how to support students' non-academic needs</li> <li>7. Teachers discuss community support opportunities</li> </ol>	

#1	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Teacher conversations focus on teaching and learning</li> <li>2. Principal attends teacher planning sessions</li> <li>3. All teachers are working with at least one other teacher</li> <li>4. Expectations for collaboration time/meeting are stated</li> <li>5. Protocols are established</li> <li>6. Protocols are used</li> <li>7. Teachers are given positive feedback from principal</li> <li>8. Teachers are given positive feedback from other teachers</li> <li>9. Teachers discuss content in other courses</li> <li>10. Decision-making processes are clear</li> <li>11. Decision-making processes allow for new or alternate points of view</li> <li>12. Decision-making is collaborative</li> </ol>	
----	---	--

#3	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li data-bbox="337 237 716 306">1. Teachers discuss teaching challenges with one another</li><li data-bbox="337 384 688 453">2. Teachers discuss teaching challenges with principal</li></ol>	



## APPENDIX J

### Daily Collaboration Protocol

#### **Reflection upon Daily Formal and Informal Collaboration**

**Directions:** Thank you for volunteering to record your collaborative interactions with your colleagues. Please keep the following in mind as you record and reflect upon your collaborative processes:

- For the purposes of this study, collaboration can be both formal and informal. Formal collaboration includes 1) grade-level curriculum planning; 2) whole-staff professional learning that requires meaningful participation from teachers; 3) discussions with other teachers regarding student progress; 4) collaboratively assessing student work. Informal collaboration includes: 1) discussions about teaching and learning that occur in the hallways between classes; 2) discussions about teaching and learning that occur in the Faculty Lounge or before or after school.
- Please record and reflect upon your daily collaborative interactions and send them once a week for four weeks via email to: [XXXXXXXXX](mailto:XXXXXXXXX).

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