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Reflection and Teacher Change

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the
Requirements for the degree Doctor of Education

by

Renee Marie Jeffrey

2018

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Reflection and Teacher Change

by

Renee Jeffrey

Doctor of Education

University of California, Los Angeles, 2018

Professor Kathryn M Anderson, Co-Chair

Professor Megan Loef Franke, Co-Chair

Educational leaders often spend large amounts of time and money on professional development. However, many teachers struggle to change and improve instructional practices in the classroom. Researchers have presented a variety of professional development models and components in the quest for determining practices that lead to improvement in instructional practices. Teacher change is a complicated process and cannot be reduced to one set of components and a simple logic model. Critical reflection in a cycle of inquiry is supported by current research. However, certain conditions may be necessary in order for teachers to participate effectively in critical reflection, particularly when reflection is in a collaborative setting. This study was designed to stimulate critical reflection in order to gain insights related to how teachers identify areas of need, create a plan to improve, and identify supports to reach their goal. This was an interview study with elementary teachers. Participants were presented with a 15 minute, two-part writing prompt designed to promote critical self-reflection, followed by a semi-structured interview. Findings from this study indicated that teachers may need support in order to visualize

improvement in their instructional practices and create an action plan. Teachers in this study identified people who could support their improvement. Reasons for selecting supporters included trust, level of expertise and availability. Furthermore, teachers identified different areas of need, thus sending the message that professional development may need to be more individualized in order to effectively support improvement in instruction. Throughout the entire project the issue of limited time, as related to professional growth, was a factor. As a result of this study, site and district leaders can gain insights toward creating conditions to support teachers improve their instructional practices.

The dissertation of Renee Jeffrey is approved.

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Chapter 1: Reflection and Teacher Change

All professional fields expect continuous growth from their members. In order to become a more effective practitioner, remain up to date with current research, and meet new demands of the field, professional development is encouraged and often required in most professions; education is no exception. Professional development is used as the lever to improving instructional practices. Educators are regularly released throughout the school year in order to attend professional development. Whereas educational leaders often spend large amounts of time and money on professional development, many teachers struggle to change and improve instructional practices in the classroom. As an educational leader, it is important to create conditions that promote teacher growth.

Professional Development Concerns

Large investments are made annually in professional development for the purpose of creating conditions that will ultimately lead to positive changes in instructional practices. Nearly \$3 billion in Title II funds were spent on professional development in 2008 (Hochberg & Desimone, 2010). Given such expenditures, it is important to determine what factors within professional development create conditions for teachers to change and improve instructional practices that could lead to greater levels of student learning.

Since professional development has such a strong potential to improve instruction, many states have adopted expectations that teachers regularly participate in effective professional development. However, given the amount of funds spent on professional development and the potential positive impact that professional development can have on instructional practices, results have varied. In a study conducted by Garet et al. (2010), teachers who were involved in significant amounts of mathematical professional development demonstrated a statistically

positive impact in only one of three areas of instructional practice. Darling-Hammond et al. (2009) also supported this assertion when they reported on the effects of professional development in a large study. Fewer than half of the teachers in the study reported value in professional development as related to their instructional practices.

Significance of Studying Professional Development

Although districts, states and even the federal government invest large amounts of funding toward improving instruction through professional development, limited studies have traced professional development to increased student achievement. Yoon, Duncan, Lee, Scarloss, and Shapley (2007) conducted a meta-analysis of more than 1,300 studies related to professional development and student achievement. Out of the 1,300 studies, only nine met the standards to be included in the What Works Clearinghouse.

In a meta-analysis in the areas of math and science, student achievement was found to be positively affected when teachers participated in professional development (Blank & de las Alas 2009). However, the alarming statistic in the meta-analysis was that 20% of the 104 effect sizes were negative, which means that students performed worse if they were taught by teachers who had received professional development. Since the goal of classroom instruction is to increase student learning, these studies demonstrate the importance of studying professional development with the goal of determining which components will lead to positive change in instructional practices.

Current Research on Effective Components of Professional Development

Researchers have presented a variety of professional development models and components in the quest for determining practices that lead to improvement in instructional practices. One such logic model presents a path from professional development to student

achievement. This model begins with professional development, which leads to an increase in teachers' knowledge and/or skills. The increase leads to changes in instruction and finally in improved student achievement (Guskey & Yoon, 2009; Hochberg & Desimone, 2010; Yoon et al., 2007). This model relies on structured professional development as the means to achieving instructional change. Common features found in structured professional development are content focus, active learning, coherence, time (contact hours), duration, and collective participation (Blank & de las Alas 2009).

A commonly used, site-based professional development model presents a cycle that begins with analyzing student work. Teachers identify an area of need and create a plan. Next, they put the plan into action and evaluate the plan's effectiveness. The cycle then begins again (Guskey & Yoon, 2009). Parise and Spillane (2010) posited that this type of job-embedded learning opportunity can be an effective means for improving instructional practices.

Districts rely on professional development in the process of improving instruction. In order to support coherence and consistency in delivering instruction, educational leaders at the district level often determine the content and type of professional development. Site leaders typically provide continued professional development that supports the district's focus in order to encourage and accommodate teacher growth. District and site leaders provide funds and resources for professional development. Thus, it is important that these leaders are critical consumers of professional development. Educational leaders at all levels must be able to recognize and support elements of effective professional development as a means of creating positive changes in instructional practices that could then lead to increases in student learning.

Observations of Professional Development in Local Context

During the 2015-2016 school year, I conducted four interviews with site and district level leaders regarding the elements of successful professional development. Answers varied considerably when participants were asked about the necessary components of professional development and how they could determine whether professional development was successful. If leaders are unsure of the necessary elements of effective professional development, then there is a chance that professional development is not fully effective in terms of yielding improved instructional practices.

Even when professional development does seem to lead to improvement in practice, it is possible that other practices contribute to the change. While working with my site leadership team that same school year, I observed a practice that supported positive change in instructional practices: a reflection exercise. The result was increased understanding of the gap between the teachers' current practice and the ideal practice, as presented through the professional development. The teacher created a plan based on the perceived gap and changed her instructional practice. Since other teachers participated in the reflection exercise, they reported an increased understanding of the practice and change in their own instruction as well. The reflection activity was meaningful for all participants in the leadership team. They expressed that as a result of the exercise, they reflected upon their own practice and identified improvements they could implement.

When the exercise was complete, I asked members of the leadership team to provide feedback on the process as well as discuss the possibility of replicating the practice with the entire staff in grade level teams. The team described the powerful benefit of the process and expressed a desire to replicate it. However, they also pointed out that the leadership team had

developed strong, trusting relationships over the past 3 years. Overall, the team agreed that the reflective exercise was a catalyst for improvement in classroom instruction. However, they warned that trust must be in place prior to the reflection practice. Although the reflective exercise appeared to contribute to a change in instructional practices, it became clear that prior practices created conditions that led to the success of the exercise. In other words, according to the team, if they had not experienced the prior trust-building activities that supported their development as a team, the reflective exercise might not have yielded the same results.

Connecting Professional Development with Teacher Learning

When teachers participate in professional development, there is an expectation of learning and improvement in instructional practices. However, teacher change is not simple, and other factors must be considered. Teachers can experience the same professional development and work at the same site with the same population of students, yet one teacher may be able to successfully implement newly learned strategies, whereas the teacher next door may not be as successful. As a former principal, I observed teachers after attending the same professional development. I noticed time and again that some teachers effectively implemented the strategies and practices taught during the professional development, while others were not successful at implementation. There is no guarantee that when teachers participate in professional development, they will be able to take the information learned and implement it in the classroom. Teachers must be able to take the information that was gained during the professional development and turn it into practice.

If the expectation is that educators will learn new content or skills in the path or cycle to increased student learning, then it seems logical that professional development is established using adult learning theory. Mirci and Hensley (2011) presented a variety of adult learning

theories. Transformative learning, a form of adult learning theory, was originally developed by Jack Mezirow. This theory includes deep reflection that requires a level of critical self-examination in order for true adult learning to occur. This type of critical reflection is a component of lesson study, which is common in other countries. Gutierrez (2015) conducted close examination of lesson study, identifying three types of reflective practice were identified. The lowest level was descriptive reflection, followed by analytical and critical reflection. Whereas research on reflective practices in professional development can be found in other countries, critical reflection is minimal in the current literature connecting professional development to student achievement in the United States.

In an extensive report devoted to examining teacher development in the United States and abroad, reflective practice was found to be common in other countries, such as Japan and Singapore. Activities common to reflective practice include lesson study, observation of colleagues teaching, learning circles, mentoring, common curriculum planning, and professional learning communities, among others. Reflection in these practices supports building teacher capacity. Critical reflection supports the transfer of learning from professional development to instructional practices. Reflective methods, while common in other countries, are not practiced regularly in the United States (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009).

Although specific reflective practices and protocols in other countries may be different, the type of critical reflection is similar in that they are focused on analyzing current classroom instruction with the goal of increasing student achievement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2009). In a process of critical reflection, educators first look at optimal practice as presented by a coach, professional developer, or another colleague. They then view or describe their own current

practices. Collectively they determine next steps. After implementing the new practices, the cycle repeats in order to create a continuous cycle of improvement.

As a community of learners, teachers will determine the next steps toward the optimum instructional practice. There must be balance in the next steps; if the next step is too small, professional growth is not realized and the educator can become stagnant. If the next step is too difficult, it becomes out of reach and unreasonable, which can cause the teacher to give up and resort to former practices. The key is to find that optimum next step, put it into practice, and then repeat the process in order to improve practices continually. Although this may sound like a simple plan of action, it is very challenging. For example, it is essential to think about who decides the appropriate next step, whether it is the principal, professional development facilitator, an instructional coach, colleague, or the teacher. As educators work toward improvements in instructional practice, critical self-reflection may be key in ensuring appropriate steps. Through dialogue and reflection, the practicing teacher is the only one who knows what he/she can handle toward the optimum practice. Therefore, critical reflection in a community of learners, where the participants determine the logical next step toward the optimal instructional practice, may be the key to bridging content learned in professional development to the classroom.

Statement of Project

Even when research-based professional development practices are in place, change is not guaranteed. Teacher change is a complicated process and cannot be reduced to one set of components and a simple logic model. Critical reflection in a cycle of inquiry is supported by current research. However, as was expressed by my former leadership team, important prerequisites such as trust, may be necessary in order for teachers to participate effectively in critical reflection, particularly when reflection is in a collaborative setting. It was my goal to

study teachers' responses to a reflective exercise designed to promote critical self-reflection of one's own instructional practices. I aimed to discover whether trust is a necessary factor in order to critically reflect on instructional practices for the purpose of improvement. Teachers may look to different people as supports in their efforts to improve instruction. Therefore, I also wanted to learn about who teachers identify as supporters and non-supporters in the quest of improving self-identified areas of need. While learning about supporters and non-supporters, I wanted to gain an understanding of how the principal is perceived as a supporter. Finally, I designed this research project to stimulate critical reflection in order to gain insights related to how teachers identify areas of need and create a plan to improve.

I conducted an interview study with elementary teachers from one school district. Interviews took place after participants participated in a writing activity designed to guide teachers through critical self-reflection of their instructional practices.

Research Questions

The following research questions were the focus of my study:

1. When asked to critically self-reflect on their instructional practices, what areas of need do teachers identify?
2. How are the identified areas of need related to the identified optimum practice?
3. What types of people do teachers identify as supporters in the process of improving identified areas of need? Why do they identify these people?
4. How do teachers view the role of their principal in supporting them to address their identified area of need?

Research Design

Site and population. Pleasantville Unified School District (pseudonym) is composed of 10 elementary schools (grades K-5), one K-8 school, four middle schools (sixth-eighth grade), one comprehensive high school on two separate campuses, one Community Day School and one Alternative Education Center. Teachers serving the population of Pleasantville Unified School District (PUSD) range in years of experience from newly hired to over 30 years. There are several Teachers on Special Assignment, called curriculum specialists. These teachers specialize in a specific content area and provide professional development and support to teachers.

PUSD has a strong professional development program that encompasses the components laid out by Desimone (2011); Heller, Daehler, Wong, Shinohara, and Miratrix (2012); and Blank (2013). Teachers regularly meet as a community of learners. Several research-supported professional development practices are currently in place at PUSD. Some teachers successfully implement the strategies in their regular instruction. However, in spite of building a solid professional development program, there is evidence that other teachers struggle to put newly learned strategies into practice. A close examination through a written reflection intervention, followed by a semi-structured interview, revealed supports and barriers to reflection and planning that could lead to professional growth toward an identified area of need.

Overview of the research design. This research was conducted using qualitative methods. I presented a writing prompt to 24 teacher participants. Following the written exercise, I conducted an interview with each participant. The writing exercise was designed to prompt participants to reflect on their own instructional practices. They were asked to identify and describe one instructional practice that they had deliberately improved in the past. They were also asked to identify current instructional practices that they would like to improve. During the

interview, I asked participants to describe the identified area they would like to improve and explain why they chose that area. I next asked participants to imagine themselves teaching in that area perfectly and what steps they would need to take to reach that optimum practice. I asked participants to identify people who could support their growth in that area and how they could help. I also asked about people who they would not consider to be supports and why. I specifically asked about whether their site principal was a support or not. Finally, if participants had not mentioned reflection during the interview, I asked for their view on reflective practices as a means for professional growth and what factors support and hinder reflection. As a result of this research, I gained insight into conditions that support teacher reflection that leads to professional growth.

Significance of the research for solving the problem. I plan to share my findings with site and district leaders. I would like to work with educational leaders as they support teachers and staff to continuously improve their instructional practices. If reflection is a key component that will lead to positive changes in instructional practices, then leaders need to learn how to create the conditions for productive reflection on a regular basis.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Billions of dollars are spent on teacher professional development every year. Teacher change that involves learning is complex. Accordingly, this literature review begins with transformative learning theory as the theoretical foundation for critical self-reflective practices, which provides a base for teacher change. Reflection is a key component in adult learning according to transformative learning theory. Next, I present reflection as it relates to change in teachers' instructional practices. I then explore three different and widely accepted forms of professional development: professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study. The components of these forms of professional development are presented and analyzed for critical reflection. Professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study rely upon teachers working in a community. Therefore, organizational support and culture are explored in relationship to collaboration and reflective practices. Adult learning that leads to change in practice is complex. While there may be multiple paths to such change, critical reflection within the structures of professional development and collaboration may be an effective means toward this end. Thus, the focus of this study is on an organizational culture that provides supports and conditions for critical reflection within a collaborative setting as a means for teacher change.

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative learning, a form of adult learning theory, was originally developed by Mezirow (1991). This theory includes a deep level of reflection that requires a level of critical self-examination in order for true adult learning to occur. Such examination requires the learner to search for new practices as former ones are found faulty or ineffective.

Mezirow (1991) argued that individuals have difficulty learning and changing because their beliefs and practices have become ingrained. The learner relies on habits of mind and does

not need to put a great deal of thought into practices. However, when a learner goes through transformative learning, assumptions and practices are questioned critically. As a result, the learner enters new paradigms and discovers new realities (Christie, Carey, Robertson, & Grainger, 2015). One key component of transformative learning theory is reflection, more specifically critical questioning of one's practices and beliefs (Harris, Lowery-Moore, & Farrow, 2008). Transformative learning theory is multi-dimensional and iterative. According to Mezirow (1991), an adult learner must go through 10 steps in order to learn and grow. Rational thought and reflection are embedded throughout the 10 steps, which are as follows: experiencing a disorienting dilemma; experiencing fear, anger, guilt, or shame; critically assessing assumptions about the world; realizing others have gone through what they are feeling; revising one's old belief system and exploring new ones; planning a new course of action; gaining the knowledge and skills for implementing new plans; trying on the new role; becoming competent and confident with the new change; and reintegrating into one's life based on a new perspective.

When an adult learner goes through the transformative process, he/she actively engages in the reflective process. The learner explores potential new ways of seeing things as a result of analyzing his/her own values, beliefs, and experiences. If learners do not reexamine their practices and beliefs regularly, then they will develop ingrained habits based on immediate needs and quick fixes (Harris et al., 2008).

Mezirow (1991) distinguished between information-learning and transformative learning, positing that transformative learning is more than merely learning new content or information. Although learning new information is one type of learning, it does not automatically lead to a change in practices (Newman, 2012). Mezirow emphasized the importance of introspection through critical self-reflection as a means of assessing accepted assumptions. As a learner works

through the stages of transformative learning, he/she undergoes lasting shifts in thoughts, beliefs, and actions. Adult learners experiencing change or growth often experience change in professional practices. According to Mezirow, the learning that occurs through transformative learning is life-changing and irreversible. The learning also becomes part of the person and permeates all areas of the learner's life (Hoggan, 2016).

Mezirow (1991) differentiated between learning new content and learning that leads to change in practices. Critical self-reflection is not necessary when merely learning new content or information. However, such learning also does not necessarily lead to change in actions. When the adult learner engages in critical self-reflection, permanent change in practices are more likely. Critical self-reflection can, therefore, be a crucial component of teacher change and is explored in the next section of this literature review.

Reflection

Adult learning is complicated and may occur in one setting, but not in another. Critical self-reflection may be a key component of learning that leads to change in instructional practices. John Dewey was the first to bring reflection to the educational setting when he differentiated between routine and reflective teaching (Day, Pope, & Denicolo, 1990). However, reflection is also a complex phenomenon and is defined differently by various researchers and theories. Reflection is a commonly used term that is open to many interpretations. There are too many theories of reflection and reflective practices to include in this literature review. The following section discusses some ways different experts interpret reflection and connect it to teacher learning. Next, there will be a brief description of when reflection occurs in the learning process. Critical self-reflection, a focus of this research, will then be discussed at the end of this section.

Dewey was the first theorist to link reflection to education. His notion of reflection was to apply ideas and strategies through each phase of problem solving. He posited that reflection is necessary in order to make intentional teaching decisions. Dewey contrasted intentional decisions with routinized actions or spontaneity that do not result in change or improvement. He also maintained that reflective practitioners are continuously open to questioning and improvement (Pultorak, 2010). Therefore, according to transformation theory, this type of reflection is referred to as validity testing (Mezirow, 1991).

Gutierrez (2015) presented a different model of the reflective educator, differentiating among three types of teacher reflection: descriptive, analytical, and critical. When teachers engage in descriptive reflection, the focus is on the events that occur in the classroom with no connection to theory. Events are perceived as random without much explanation. Analytical reflection includes explanations of how practices affect student learning. Teachers who exercise this level of reflection seek possible ways to improve instructional practices. Teachers employ critical reflection when they make a connection to philosophical understandings while examining instructional practices. The teachers then take the insights gained and align their teaching with the various learning styles represented in the classroom.

Another theory of reflection that is similar to transformative learning theory is metacognition, which is commonly referred to as “thinking about one’s own thinking” (Pultorak, 2010). When exercising metacognition, the learner often chooses to modify and even invent strategies as part of problem solving (Mezirow, 1991).

In addition to the different interpretations of reflection, reflection can occur at different points along the course of learning. Reflection does not always occur at the same learning point. Shandomo (2010) described reflection occurring at three points in time for different purposes.

Reflection that occurs prior to instruction is known as “reflection for practice” and is key, as educators anticipate possible scenarios for an upcoming lesson. Accordingly, the reflective teacher prepares alternative strategies to utilize during this type of reflection. Reflection that occurs during instruction is also referred to as “thinking on your feet”. This reflection can be challenging for teachers, since the act is occurring simultaneously with instruction. The third point during which a teacher practices reflection is after a lesson. During reflection on practice, teachers must identify strengths and weaknesses in a lesson and research strategies to improve future lessons. Camburn (2010) also described reflection during and after instruction as a means for improving instruction.

Reflection can be defined in a variety of ways and even utilized at different points of teaching and learning. However, for the purpose of this literature review, I present critical self-reflection that begins with transformative learning. Reflection, which is aligned with transformative learning theory, critically evaluates former learning and beliefs. If the teacher comes to the conclusion that his/her beliefs are invalid, he/she can then create new beliefs and practices as a part of learning (Mezirow, 1991). The teacher who engages in critical self-reflective practices continually analyzes instructional practices and works actively to improve. Day et. al. (1990) posit that reflection and action complement each other. Reflection can lead to new practices and actions can lead to reflection or contemplation. Traditionally, teacher development is based on one or more people telling the teachers what needs to be changed, improved, or added. However, Calderhead and Gates (1993) posited that such verbal advice is of little value until the teacher learns to reflect on his/her own practices successfully and critically. Critical self-reflection is not linear in nature, but occurs when the learner determines that practices and beliefs are no longer effective. Accordingly, first the teacher acknowledges that

current practices are not sufficient for student learning. Next, new practices are researched in order to increase learning. Then the teacher studies the practice to be implemented or revised. Next, the teacher accurately compares her current practices with the practices she plans to implement. She then determines the gap between her current practice and the aspired, new practice and creates a plan of action to adopt the new practices incrementally. The implementation phase is ongoing, as the teacher continually compares his/her current level of implementation with the desired level.

Even when teachers may identify a problem of practice, at times, solutions may be outside the realm of his/her current knowledge. In order to address such issues, Schon (1987) argued that the teacher will need to invent new practices to address the problem and test for effectiveness. This approach to addressing problems requires reflection at each stage in order to determine if the newly implemented strategies fulfill the expected outcomes.

Since humans are social beings, critical self-reflection may require discourse with others. Teachers engaged in critical conversations that encourage mindful listening are able to uncover assumptions that then can lead to reflective practices (Cranton & King, 2003). Professional learning communities provide teachers with a forum for collaborative discourse in the quest for improved instructional practices. Camburn and Han (2016) studied different professional learning experiences, finding that teachers who engaged in reflective practices with a coach were more likely to report changes in instructional practices. When examining the effects of lesson study, Gutierrez (2015) noted the value of critical reflection as related to improvement in instructional practices. Although there are different types of reflection, critical self-reflection can be key to teacher change and growth. As such, various forms of professional development will be analyzed for evidence of reflective practices in this literature synthesis. The reflective practices

may not be the critical self-reflection defined previously. Nonetheless, the professional development practices may include reflective practices that can provide the optimal setting and conditions for critical self-reflection.

Reflective teachers generally look back at what has already occurred. Next, they build new knowledge and implement the new learning in practice, which widens the criteria that influence the reflective process. Calderhead and Gates (1993) suggested that although teachers want to be more reflective, they often have little time or support for such. According to Calderhead and Gates, culture dictates that new knowledge is gained from outside sources rather than personal experiences.

Professional Development

Educational leaders look to professional development as a means of improving instruction. King and Newmann (2001) posited that in order for teacher learning to occur, they must have opportunities to reflect on their instruction as it relates to student outcomes. However, teacher learning and reflection may be different depending on stage of career. Researchers agree that teacher development and growth are not linear, but rather dynamic. Day and Sachs (2004) presented Huberman's argument that teachers have different needs depending on their stage of career. However, there are many theories regarding the details and numbers of stages that teachers experience as they progress in their career. While some researchers present more stages, three stages of teacher development are common. The first stage is often described as the initial stage when teachers are gaining confidence and are focused on classroom management. Teachers are more concerned about their teaching skills at the second, or middle stage of development. Student learning is typically the focus of teachers at the third stage (Gossman, 2008; Lynn, 2002; Watzke, 2003). Some researchers extend the notion of different professional development

opportunities based on career level. They claim that teachers' reflective practices are also unique to career stages and therefore have different needs and supports for reflective practices (Cavanagh & Prescott, 2010; Cornish & Jenkins, 2012). Accordingly, teachers may require different supports and professional development based on career stage.

Teachers have different professional development needs. However, national, district, and school reforms tend to take precedence when decisions are made related to professional development, sending a message that individual needs are second to institutional needs and goals (Day and Sachs, 2004). Regardless of the professional development topic or driving factor, there are numerous models for professional development. Professional learning communities, coaching and lesson study are next presented and explored as professional development models used for instructional improvement.

Professional Learning Communities

Professional learning communities are a group of educators who work together to increase student learning. Essential components of becoming a professional learning community vary by author. However, a few components can be found throughout much of the research and literature. Teachers working in a professional learning community co-construct a shared vision. Inquiry or action research, used interchangeably in this literature review, is conducted as a means to reach the vision. Questions, reflective dialogue, and assessment are key elements of the inquiry process that occurs in professional learning communities (DuFour, 2011; Hord, 2008, 2009).

As educators work toward becoming a professional learning community, one of the first tasks is to create a shared vision designed to relate specifically to their student population. An effective vision statement is designed as a result of collective inquiry and becomes the basis for

continuous improvement (Eaker, DuFour, & DuFour, 2002). All discussion and decisions are driven by the vision. The shared vision sets the foundation for the remaining necessary components that will guide the members of the professional learning community toward increased student achievement (Hord, 2015; Wells & Feun, 2013).

Action research, as a means for working toward the shared vision, is the next component of a professional learning community. During the process of inquiry, teachers identify a specific need based on the current reality, such as student achievement. The active search for research-based strategies is the focus of all members as they analyze student data, investigate research strategies, and adjust instruction in order to meet the identified need (DuFour, 2011). The cycle will then begin again with data collection, research strategies, and adjustment of instruction. The iterative cycle results in continuous improvement. All strategies are related directly to the shared vision and focus on improved student learning. Educators, who are the researchers, actively pursue strategies as they work with colleagues to address students' needs. During the action research process, data are gathered in order to determine whether a strategy was successful. Once data are collected, questions and dialogue are the next step in the process of inquiry.

Members of a professional learning community use ongoing assessment of student learning as the driving force for effective inquiry and reflective dialogue. Regular analysis of common assessments creates the necessary baseline that educators will use to seek practices that will increase student learning. Teachers use data acquired from assessment in order to determine whether their instructional practices are effective. Members of professional learning communities do not use assessments for summative purposes as a final measurement of how much students learned. Instead, assessments are used formatively, as a tool to determine if implemented instructional practices led to high levels of achievement. If students fall short of the expected

outcomes as determined through the common assessments, alternative instructional practices are discussed at team meetings (DuFour, 2011). Through reflection, teachers determine which current practices are ineffective and then collectively agree upon new practices to implement in order to increase levels of achievement

Reflective dialogue is guided by insight gained from questions that are asked continually as the educators work toward the common vision. The very nature of the term *reflective dialogue* implies that more than mere conversation is occurring. Reflective dialogue promotes an examination of current practices while also creating a deeper understanding of effective instructional practices. Since a variety of personalities and beliefs are reflected in the dialogue, diversity of ideas and disagreement may arise. The dynamics of an effective professional learning community are evident when problems are viewed and treated as opportunities, while teachers discuss and reflect on their daily practices. In order for teachers to remain productive in a professional learning community, trust is necessary as they work through disagreements (Liou & Daly, 2014). Such trust cannot be assumed when educators work in professional learning communities. Professional learning communities are more than merely meeting as a group of educators. Hord (2009) and DuFour (2011) emphasized that relational structures must be in place in order to create the necessary culture. Educators in high-functioning professional learning communities display formerly private practices and results to colleagues, such as student achievement data, pedagogical practices, and areas of improvement. In order to conduct productive and meaningful dialogue around these issues, healthy relational structures must be at the core.

When the necessary relational structures are not in place, a toxic culture can be the result, and may be difficult to repair. While examining the characteristics of professional learning

communities, Thessin (2015) identified preconditions that are crucial for effective, high-functioning professional learning communities, which include a culture of collaboration and leadership that consistently provide the necessary structures, procedures, and conceptual foundation. When the preconditions were clearly evident, teachers engaged in productive dialogue with an emphasis on continually improving practices for greater student achievement. In contrast, members of struggling professional learning communities were observed blaming low performance on students, behavior issues, and administration. Patterson (2006) also studied the challenges of creating a professional learning community. Common elements of struggling groups included lack of conceptual understanding, structures put into place in a top-down fashion by administrators, and practices implemented in a recipe-like fashion.

Although organizational structure is a necessary condition for effective professional learning communities, deep cultural change is possibly more important. Cultural structures are more difficult to foster than procedural structures. Creating a culture that provides an environment where teachers openly engage in reflective dialogue in the pursuit of change is no easy task, as there is no checklist for such changes. However, when the conditions are set for such reflective practices, teachers are engaged in high-performing professional learning communities, where student achievement is the continual focus.

The structure of a professional learning community provides opportunities for teams of teachers to use critical reflection in a collaborative model as a means of improving instructional practices. Another professional development model that may provide such opportunities is the more intimate model of coaching where teachers work with one coach to improve practices. The coaching model will be explored next.

Coaching

Cognitive coaching is another form of professional development where teachers work together to improve instructional practices. Coaching structures and practices vary at different schools. However, one common structure is to have teachers work through three phases while engaged in the coaching cycle: preconference, observation, and post-conference (Garmston, Liner, & Whitaker 1993). The unique aspect of coaching is that teachers work through the cycle with a coach. Coaches can be fellow teachers, teachers on special assignment, or even outside consultants. Coaching contributes to teacher learning through reflection and decision making. With the support of a coach, teachers determine which instructional practices to implement in the ongoing process of improvement. Schon (1987) argued that effective coaches guide teachers toward improvement based on their own needs and goals rather than the preferences of the coach. In a sense, the coach and teacher become co-experimenters. It is the role of the coach to suggest or ask questions in order to facilitate reflection, which will lead to changes in instructional practices (Garmston et al., 1993; Gross, 2010). However, Gibbons and Cobb (2017) pointed out that trust between the participating teacher and the coach is an important factor that contributes to the success of the coaching cycle. Another important factor to effective coaching is that clear expectations and norms must be established early in the process. Norms may differ with different people or even with different goals; however, in order to create a conducive learning environment, each participant must know and agree to a set of parameters, thus eliminating confusion and misunderstandings (Schon, 1987).

Coaching is becoming more popular as a form of professional development. Journal articles often present strategies and protocols for the implementation as well as perceived benefits of professional development. However, there are few articles linking the practices of

coaching to effects on instruction or student achievement. Vanderburg and Stephens (2010) conducted a study on coaching and its impact on teacher beliefs and practices. Teachers and principals attended bimonthly group study sessions where coaches presented research-based practices. The topics were not pre-determined, but were rather selected based on needs identified as coaches observed and worked with participants in classrooms during instruction. Coaches also worked directly with teachers in the classroom setting to provide guidance and support with the implementation of the strategies presented during the study groups. As a result of this coaching model, researchers found that teachers openly discussed the practices that worked and did not work while learning to apply the newly learned instructional strategies. They also sought advice in order to continue to work toward successful implementation. This is an example of a coaching model that led teachers to critical reflection as a means of improving instruction.

Although the concept of coaching seems relatively simple, the aforementioned example demonstrates that successful implementation leading to changes in practice is complicated. However, it appears that skilled coaches are able to effectively facilitate critical reflection that can lead to teacher learning and change. The coaching model relies on a coach working individually with teachers during implementation of the desired new practice. It is the coach's responsibility to guide the teacher toward improvements. The next model of professional development to be explored focuses on teams of teachers observing lessons to collaboratively determine next steps in the process of implementing instructional strategies, also known as lesson study.

Lesson Study

Lesson study is another type of professional development designed around collaborative groups of teachers. Although lesson study was first developed in Japan (Stigler, Gonzalez,

Kawanaka, Knoll, & Serrano 1999), educators in the United States are beginning to use the practices in various ways. There is a subtle difference between lesson study and professional learning communities and coaching. Professional learning communities focus on a problem of practice using data and coaching is geared toward improving a teacher's instructional practice or delivery. Teachers engaged in lesson study focus on one or several specific lessons. Teachers collectively design a lesson. Next, one teacher delivers the lesson while the group observes either in real-time or through video. Observation is focused on students' response to the lesson. The team of teachers then gathers to debrief, reflect, and adjust the lesson. The cycle then repeats as often as teachers believe is necessary (Lewis, Perry, Foster, Hurd, & Fisher, 2011; Myers, 2012; Rock & Wilson, 2005).

A close examination of lesson study was conducted by Gutierrez (2015), who identified three types of reflective practices. The lowest level was descriptive reflection, followed by analytical and critical reflection. When critical reflection was utilized during lesson study, teachers questioned their beliefs, analyzed their own teaching practices, and worked toward improving instructional practices.

According to Rock and Wilson (2005), lesson study provides the opportunity for teachers to engage in a cycle of continuous improvement around pedagogical practice. They maintain that the dynamic structure of lesson study, coupled with critique and reflection on the effect of the shared lesson, create a better opportunity for improvements in practice than more traditional models of professional development where teachers passively receive information to implement later in the classroom. While studying the implementation of lesson study with six teachers at one school site, Rock and Wilson found evidence that instruction was positively affected by the ongoing cycles of critique and reflection. However, they also discovered that teachers struggled

with critiquing, which is a critical component of lesson study. Even though the focus of reflection and critique was on improving the design of a lesson, rather than the teacher delivering the lesson, teachers felt uncomfortable. It was noted that teachers needed more support in order to effectively critique and reflect on shared lessons. Myers (2012) reported similar needs when she studied the practice of critical observation related to lesson study. She concluded that one lesson study experience is not sufficient for teachers to successfully observe a lesson and reflect on the practices observed in order to improve them. Based on this conclusion, ongoing practice and support is imperative if lesson study is the desired mode of professional development.

Gee and Whaley (2016) conducted a case study of 16 teachers. As a professional learning community, teachers in this study used lesson study to improve instructional practices in the area of mathematics. Teachers in this study expressed the value of the collaborative practice, particularly related to reflection and dialogue with colleagues. However, evidence of actual change in practice was not consistent among participants. The other important finding in this research is that the success of lesson study as a collaborative practice is dependent on supportive structures, which were compromised at times, thus reducing the effects.

Teachers who implement lesson study practices with colleagues focus on improving instructional practices one lesson at a time. The group works toward continual refinement through observation and critical reflection. Lessons are analyzed critically, refined, and retaught in order to improve the instructional practices.

This literature review presented three models of collaborative professional development: professional learning communities, coaching and lesson study. All three of these models are based upon teachers working collaboratively with other educators in order to improve instructional practices. Various researchers have pointed out that reflection within these models

supports teacher change. However, critical self-reflection in a collaborative mode is not a simple task. Educators must be able to confidently and publicly reflect upon practices that they want to change. This level of transparency must be fostered within the organization. Therefore, organizational culture and supports that may encourage critical reflection are now presented.

Organizational Culture

Professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study are three examples of professional development based on collaborative practices. All three of these models are supported in research as having the potential to create the conditions for teachers to improve instructional practices. While different in distinct ways, all three of these practices have similar critical components, which include working collaboratively with colleagues, implementing an iterative cycle of improvement, and reflecting critically on their practices. These similarities are distinctly different than a traditional professional development model where teachers passively receive new information and are then released to implement this information in their classrooms.

Researchers who have studied these three types of professional development have found that when structures such as trust-building, clear guidelines, and regular time to collaborate are put into place, there are positive effects on teacher changes as related to instructional practices. However, they have also discovered that often it can be a challenge to provide the necessary structures. Structures must be in place in order for teachers to reflect productively with colleagues as a collaborative practice. DuFour (2011) pointed out that if educational leaders only provide time for teachers to work collaboratively in a professional learning community, there is a risk of negative consequences, as culture must also be addressed. He explained that it is better to not engage in professional learning communities if the culture is toxic. A culture that is filled with distrust, competition, isolation, low expectations, or apathy should be addressed prior to

introducing professional learning communities. Liou and Daly (2014) supported the importance of building trust among colleagues when they studied high-performing professional learning communities. They asserted that trust in colleagues is a necessary factor in order for teachers to reflect successfully on their practices as a collaborative practice. They emphasized the important role the site principal plays in creating a safe environment where teachers are able to reflect critically in front of their colleagues.

Educational leaders can influence the culture of schools to support and promote teachers' reflective practices (Pultorak, 2010). Bryk and Schneider (2003) posited that in order to reflect critically with colleagues, teachers must feel safe enough to be vulnerable in the group setting. They asserted further that relational trust is a crucial factor that creates the condition for such vulnerability. When teachers feel a sense of relational trust and are willing to be vulnerable in front of colleagues, they are more likely to engage in critical reflection practices.

School culture is a significant factor in the coaching model. If supporting structures are not in place, culture can create barriers and resistance, which could jeopardize the success of the coaching partnerships' work (Spelman & Rohlwing, 2013). Anderson et al. (2014) emphasized relational trust as a necessary component of the success of coaching practices. They posited that it is the coach's role to provide relationship-building supports with the classroom teacher in order to allow a safe environment where the teacher will feel comfortable being vulnerable and taking risks.

The success of lesson study also depends on organizational structures that support teachers in the practice of critical reflection among colleagues. Gee and Whaley (2015) used lesson study with some teachers over a 2-year period. Teachers reported that lesson study within a professional learning community contributed to positive changes in their instructional

practices. However, they also emphasized that a supportive environment was a critical component of the positive growth. Teachers in the study expressed that when administrators lacked a clear understanding of the process, conflicting messages and limited time was the result, which ultimately limited effectiveness. A supportive culture can be provided through a facilitator. Rock and Wilson (2005) maintained that in order for teachers to reflect and grow effectively during the lesson study process, it is important to have a facilitator who will guide participants through the work in order to keep the work at the forefront.

Researchers have identified different forms of professional development that can lead to changes in instructional practices. However, leaders and teachers must do more than go through a checklist of activities and expect to successfully improve instruction. Critical self-reflection may be a key component of change. However, such public, reflective practices must occur in a supportive and safe environment. The culture of the organization is a key that can support or inhibit the necessary critical reflection needed for instructional change.

Educators participate regularly in professional development with the goal of improving instructional practices. However, teacher change is not easy to realize. According to transformative learning theory, adult change can be realized through a multi-step process that includes critical reflection. Although traditional professional development often creates the condition to learn new content, changes in instructional practices are not usually a result. Collaborative models such as professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study can create the setting for critical reflection that leads to teacher change. However, the culture of the organization must provide the necessary supports for critical reflection to occur in collaborative settings. Ultimately, teacher change is not easy. However, with appropriate structure and supports, teachers can change instructional practices in order to work toward increased student

learning. Therefore, the goal is to determine what supports and structures are necessary in a collaborative model of professional development that will lead to teacher change and improvements in instructional practices.

Chapter 3: Methodology

As discussed previously, strong and effective professional development is the key to improving instructional practices. Although educators often spend large amounts of time and money on professional development, many struggle to improve instructional practices in the classroom. Traditional professional development, often referred to as a 1-day seminar, is considered ineffective. However, some common components are considered effective and necessary in the quest for improved instructional practices. Researchers have examined different types of professional development such as professional learning communities, lesson study, and coaching, among others. Each of these types of professional development is unique and distinct, yet there are some similarities. One of the similarities that may have a positive impact on teacher change is critical self-reflection. However, critical self-reflection is not an easy task, which is the basis for my research. I presented a self-reflection writing prompt to 24 teachers. The prompt asked teachers to explain how they deliberately improved an instructional practice in the past. Immediately following the written reflection, I conducted interviews to explore how teachers identified steps, supports, and barriers to improving their identified area of need. This research is beneficial to educational leaders as they work to create conditions for professional growth for their teachers.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided my study:

1. When asked to critically self-reflect on their instructional practices, what areas of need do teachers identify?
2. How are the identified areas of need related to the identified optimum practice?

3. What types of people do teachers identify as supporters in the process of improving identified areas of need? Why do they identify these people?
4. How do teachers view the role of their principal in supporting them to address their identified area of need?

Research Design

My qualitative study was conducted in two parts. First, I asked participants to draft a short written reflection. After completing the reflection, I conducted interviews with participants. The reflection was designed to prompt participants to begin the process of self-reflecting critically on their own instructional practices. After participants identified areas of need during the written reflection, the interviews provided insight as to how teachers approach improving areas of need. I examined how critical self-reflection can lead toward improvement in instructional practices. By conducting interviews, I was able to probe in order to gain deeper insight during the process. Using interviews for this research allowed me to investigate each participant's reality and gain an understanding of how they construct meaning based on their experiences (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015).

Rationale for Site Selection

This study took place in an urban K-12 school district that serves approximately 15,000 students in Southern California. Teacher participants were interviewed from four of the 10 elementary school sites. Table 1 presents basic student demographic information for each research site as compared to the entire district. As outlined in Table 1, student populations at Sites A, B, and C are comparable to the district. However, site D has a higher percentage of African American students and a lower percentage of Hispanic and English Learner students than the district and the other three sites.

Table 1

Student Population Demographics

	Site A	Site B	Site C	Site D	PUSD
African American	7%	4%	6%	35%	8%
Asian	1%	1%	1%	4%	1%
Hispanic	88%	94%	89%	53%	89%
White	1%	1%	3%	3%	1%
Socio-Economically Disadvantaged	94%	92%	96%	92%	89%
English Learners	47%	50%	52%	29%	35%
Students with Disabilities	15%	10%	7%	12%	10%

Pleasantville Unified School District (PUSD, pseudonym) was chosen due to the cohesive, multi-layered professional development practices in place that include District curriculum specialists, regularly scheduled grade-level collaboration time during the school day, site coaches, Instructional Leadership Teams, and Cohort Visits. Since professional growth is a priority for PUSD, it was an ideal district to study in order to determine if teachers are more likely to reflect on their instructional practices when they are part of such a culture.

District curriculum specialists conduct most professional development sessions, which promotes coherence throughout the district. curriculum specialists vet and align curriculum, instructional practices, and key terminology with district initiatives. This practice ensures that conflicting messages and confusing terminology are avoided. Curriculum specialists also work together to provide instructional strategies that build upon practices throughout all grade levels, which also supports coherence throughout the district.

Grade-level teams are released every other week during the school day for the purpose of collaboration. Teams of teachers meet to discuss student performance, based on data. They determine areas of need across the grade level or in individual classrooms and then identify strategies to be implemented to address the need. Since the steps are repeated regularly, some sites have formalized the process and call it a “Cycle of Inquiry.”

Another component of the ongoing professional development practices in PUSD is that there are two instructional coaches at each site who focus on math and language arts. Instructional coaches support teachers during collaboration time and in the classroom. This practice creates consistency and supports district professional development. Coaches support and work with individual teachers and groups of teachers in the implementation of practices that are presented during formal professional development sessions.

Another layer in the overall professional development practices at PUSD are regular Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings. Principals and coaches attend ILT meetings every other month. Material that has been presented previously to teachers is then presented to the site teams through the lens of a leader. During the meeting, team members from each site create a plan to support the implementation of the instructional practices presented.

The final layer in PUSD’s professional development practices is a biannual cohort visit. Twice a year, principals, coaches, curriculum specialists, and district administrators visit each school. Members of the cohort conduct classroom visits with a focus on district professional development initiatives. The purpose of the visit is three-fold. Visiting members have an opportunity to see instructional practices in place at other sites. Practices are validated as the cohort members point out evidence of the practices. The members of the cohort also ask clarifying questions as a means for the host site to determine next steps. Due to its strong, multi-

layered system for professional development, PUSD is an ideal setting to study elements that support or hinder critical self-reflection practices of teachers as a means of professional growth.

Recruitment

I randomly selected one of the 11 elementary schools in PUSD, calling the principal to ask if I could attend a staff meeting to invite teachers to participate. Next, I attended a staff meeting at the site to explain the study and ask for volunteers. As an incentive, I also said that each teacher who participated would receive a Starbucks gift card (See Appendix A for recruitment script). During the staff meeting, I explained that even if a teacher volunteered, he/she could change his/her mind and choose not to participate. I did not want teachers to feel pressure from the principal or me to sign up. Therefore, I left the meeting when I distributed the sign up sheet for teachers to volunteer and asked that a teacher send it to me after the meeting concluded. Once I had interviewed all voluntary participants from one school, I randomly selected another school and repeated the process. I reached out to five schools, however one principal did not respond to my request. Since my goal was to interview twenty teachers, I did not select any other schools once I met my goal. While I planned to conduct twenty interviews, I did not turn any volunteers away when I reached 20 and still had more volunteers from the final site.

I contacted each volunteer to schedule interviews via email. If a teacher did not respond to the first email, I sent a second email. However, if a teacher did not respond to the second email, I did not send a third email. Thirty teachers signed up to participate in my research, however, six did not respond to my emails. One teacher out of 18 volunteered from site A and all participated. Ten teachers out of 27 signed up from site B and nine participated. Four teachers

out of 29 volunteered from site C and three participated. Fifteen out of 25 teachers signed up from site D and 11 participated.

The written reflection and interview were conducted in one session. Participants chose the location for the process. Three participants chose a local coffee shop. Four chose to meet in my office. The remaining 17 chose to meet in their own classrooms.

Participation in this study was voluntary and anonymous. Voluntary participation was necessary in order to increase the likelihood that participants were willing to engage fully in the process. Anonymity was essential, as participants were more likely to honestly answer sensitive questions related to supports and inhibitors of their own professional growth. Teacher participants were identified using a participant number in order to ensure anonymity. If teachers used names in their responses, the name was replaced with a title, such as coach, colleague, principal, or curriculum specialist.

Participants

All 24 randomly selected teachers were female. One teacher participant taught at Site A, nine teachers were from Site B, three teachers were from Site C, and 11 teachers were from Site D. The years of experience in the field of teaching varied from 2-32 years. Teacher participants were identified using a participant number in order to ensure anonymity. If teachers used names in their responses, the name was replaced with a title, such as coach, colleague, principal, or curriculum specialist. Table 2 reflects the teachers from each site and years of experience.

Table 2

Participants and Years of Experience

Participant	Years of Experience	Site
1	2	A
2	22	B
3	4	B
4	10	B
5	28	B
6	9	B
7	25	B
8	13	B
9	4	B
10	4	B
11	27	C
12	23	C
13	6	C
14	32	D
15	10	D
16	7	D
17	2	D
18	4	D
19	2	D
20	12	D
21	20	D
22	2	D
23	4	D
24	11	D

Data Collection Methods

Data collection included written reflections and interviews from all teachers. In the process of developing the writing prompt and interview protocol, I sought input from a university professor who is an expert in the area of professional development. Next, I piloted the protocols with four teachers who did not participate in the study. I asked for input regarding the length of writing time as well as the clarity of each prompt. At the end of the pilot interviews, I shared the research questions and sought suggestions for revisions or additional questions in order to fully address each research question. I transcribed and coded the pilot written reflections

and interviews in order to verify that questions prompted responses related to the research questions.

During this study, I presented the writing prompt for participants to reflect on their instructional practices, particularly on one or more areas of practice in which they identified as a need for improvement. I asked participants to write for at least 15 minutes, although they could choose to write longer if they desired. The writing task was split into two sections. It was suggested that teachers write for 5 minutes on the first section and the remaining 10 minutes on the second section. The first section of the prompt asked participants to identify and describe a practice that they deliberately worked to improve and in which they believed did improve. The second section asked teachers to identify and describe at least one area of practice that they currently want to improve (See Appendix B for writing prompt).

The written reflection was presented prior to the interviews as an intervention. The first part of the written reflection was designed to provide teacher participants a warm-up or lead in to identifying one or more areas to improve. The written reflection also provided processing time for teachers to reflect on their practices without feeling the pressure to answer immediately. There is no awkward silence while thinking and processing, which can occur during an interview. The written reflection was timed to give participants ample time to process and respond. Since I asked participants to utilize the full 15 minutes; if they finished prior to the time, they continued to reflect, often adding a detail or another area of need.

When participants were finished with the written reflection, I conducted a short, semi-structured interview. Questions focused on the one or more areas of practice that they identified as a need for improvement. Once participants described the desired area to improve, I asked them to imagine themselves teaching in that particular area absolutely perfectly. Then I asked if

they could identify steps to reach that optimum practice and who they could seek as supporters. Once participants identified the supporters, I asked why they chose those particular people and how the supporters could help in the quest for improvement. Once participants described the identified supporters, I asked about people they would not seek as supporters and why. If a participant had not mentioned the site principal, I intentionally asked about the principal as a supporter. Once all supporters and non-supporters were discussed for each identified area, I asked about self-reflection. I asked if there were opportunities and structures for teachers to reflect on their teaching practices as a means to improve (See Appendix C for interview protocol). Interviews ranged from 20-35 minutes.

All the voluntary participants completed the written reflection and semi-structured interview. Each participant wrote for the entire 15 minutes and most wrote approximately 1-3 minutes longer in order to complete their thoughts. Interviews immediately followed the written reflection and ranged between 15-30 minutes.

As a result of conducting interviews, I was able to probe in order to gain deeper insight during the process. I examined how critical self-reflection can lead toward improvement in instructional practices.

Data Analysis Methods

I recorded and transcribed interviews within a week of each session. I input written reflections and transcribed interviews into Quirkos, a type of coding software. I coded transcripts according to the themes that emerged from the data, which were as follows: Identified Areas to Improve; Supporters and Non-Supporters; Reasons Chosen as a Supporter; Reasons Chosen as a Non-Supporter; Principal as a Supporter; Principal as a Non-Supporter; How Supporters Can Provide Assistance; Supports for Reflection; Barriers to Reflection; Image of Optimum Practice;

and Comparison of Steps to Improve Identified Area of Need with Steps that were Taken in Past to Improve.

Trust was explored as participants identified people who they believe could help during the process of improving the identified area of need. Insight related to trust was revealed as teachers explained why they chose particular people as supporters as well as reasons they did not choose particular people. Trust between the teacher and principal was explored when teachers explained why the principal was or was not identified as a supporter for improving the identified area of need.

Role Management

Since I am a director in PUSD, I had previous work-related encounters with four of the voluntary participants. Although I did not have one-on-one conversations with the remaining 20 participants, some of them may have seen me at various district events. I am not in a supervisory role with any of the participants or the volunteers who helped pilot the protocols. Since I wanted to explore the perception of principal as a supporter or non-supporter, I did not mention that I was a former principal. Although I was never a principal in PUSD, some participants may have deduced that I was a principal at some point in my career. However, none of the participants asked about former positions while I was recruiting, nor during the interview sessions.

All of the participants appeared comfortable during the written reflection and interview session. Several commented at the end that they felt the exercise was beneficial because it gave them a time and reason to think about their instructional practices and growth in a manner they typically do not do.

Ethical Issues

Teachers did take some risk while participating in this study. They were asked to reflect and share information about their areas of need as well as reasons various staff members would be supporters or non-supporters. I explained at the staff meeting when I asked for volunteers and at the beginning of the interview sessions that everything was completely anonymous. A few participants asked about anonymity during the interview, prior to sharing information they felt was sensitive. I reassured them that no one would ever know what they shared. I maintained confidentiality with all participants. Information gained was not shared with others, including their colleagues or administrators. Pseudonyms were used to identify the district. Schools were labeled with letters and participants were identified with numbers. Data were not labeled with any personal identifying information. The writing prompt and the interview protocol were labeled with a number in order to be matched for analysis. When recording began during interviews, I spoke the same number into the recording device as was on the written reflection in order to maintain data in an organized fashion.

All transcripts were secured in nested folders and password protected. I offered transcripts of the interviews and versions of the final report to participants as a means of reducing bias and ensuring an accurate depiction of narratives and interviews. One participant asked to review her transcript. She made some minor revisions prior to approving its use for the purpose of my research. Participants seemed more willing to share sensitive perceptions and beliefs when I explained that there was no identifying information written or recorded during the interviews or writing assignment.

Credibility and Trustworthiness

Specific procedures that I put into place during the research reduced bias, reactivity, and sloppy procedures. I recorded and transcribed interviews in order to capture them verbatim. I provided opportunities for participants to check the data prior to using it in my research.

I identified trends from the written narratives and interviews. I included outliers as well as trends, thus reducing the likelihood of presenting limited and biased findings. Since I did not use any identifiable labels, I was not able to over represent participants that I knew from prior, work-related interactions.

Results are not generalizable since participants are from one school district. However, my goal is for readers to gain insights regarding how to support teachers in the process of using critical self-reflection as a means for improving instructional practices.

Summary

The purpose of this research study was to explore critical self-reflection as it relates to teacher change and professional development. Through a written reflection and interviews, I gathered data to learn more about what teachers identify as areas of need, how they might work to improve those areas, and who they would choose to support their growth. Regarding supporters for growth, I explored why they would choose specific people and why they would not choose others. The following chapter will detail findings from my research.

Chapter 4: Findings

The purpose of this study was to understand how teachers use self-reflection to identify areas of need and develop a plan to improve their instructional practices. While examining the plan, the focus was on the people identified as a system of support and how the identified people could aid in the improvement of their instructional practices. I continued to narrow the focus in order to determine if trust was a prerequisite for the selection of supporters.

From November 2017 through February 2018, I presented a 15 minute, two-part writing prompt designed to promote critical self-reflection, followed by a semi-structured interview with 24 teacher participants. The focus of my investigation was to explore the following research questions.

1. When asked to critically self-reflect on their instructional practices, what areas of need do teachers identify?
2. How are the identified areas of need related to the identified optimum practice?
3. What types of people do teachers identify as supporters in the process of improving identified areas of need? Why do they identify these people?
4. How do teachers view the role of their principal in supporting them to address their identified area of need?

The findings in this chapter are based on my analysis of participants' responses to the short, written reflection, followed by a semi-structured interview. This chapter first describes the teacher participants followed by findings organized by topic. The remaining sections of this chapter describe findings from the written reflection and interviews.

First, I present areas that participants identified for improvement when they completed the written reflection. Participants described what the practice would look like if they were to

reach their goal in that area, and is therefore presented next. Participants wrote about the steps they took when they improved a practice. They also described the steps they would follow in order to improve their identified area of need. Accordingly, a comparison of the two plans of action follows. As participants described a plan of action for improving areas of need, I asked about people that would support or not support their efforts for improvement. The identified supporters or non-supporters in the pursuit of improving the identified area of need are presented next. After participants identified supporters, I wanted to understand the reasons for such identification, which is then reported, followed by ways the supporters could aid the improvement effort. Next, I noted reasons participants identified people as non-supporters. Since principals are evaluators, their role as supporter and non-supporter are explored separately in the next section. The final section of this chapter delves into self-reflection, including practices that participants identified as supports of and barriers to reflective practices.

Identified Areas to Improve

During the written reflection, participants first described an area of practice that they had improved in the past. Next, they identified at least one instructional area to improve. A variety of areas and strategies were identified as areas of needs. The identified areas to improve are categorized into two specific areas: content and delivery of instruction. Some participants identified more than one area to improve. Table 3 illustrates the areas of need identified by participants.

Table 3

Areas of Need Identified by Participants

Participant	Years of Experience	Content as Area of Need				Delivery of Instruction as Area of Need					
		English Language Arts	Math	Science	Social Studies	Classroom Management	Questioning	Project-Based Learning	Technology	Differentiation	Clearer Delivery or Integration
1	2						X				
2	22							X	X		
3	4	X			X			X			
4	10	X								X	
5	28								X		
6	9		X				X				
7	25						X	X			
8	13	X									
9	4	X		X						X	
10	4									X	
11	27	X									
12	23										X
13	6						X				
14	32								X		
15	10			X	X					X	
16	7	X								X	
17	2	X				X					
18	4	X									
19	2	X				X				X	
20	12									X	
21	20									X	
22	2					X					X
23	4		X			X		X			
24	11	X						X	X		
Total		10	2	2	2	4	4	5	4	8	2

As Table 3 indicates, 10 of the 13 participants that identified a content as an area to improve chose English Language Arts. While math, science and social studies were identified as a content area to improve, each was identified by two participants as opposed to the 10 participants that indicated English Language Arts as the area they chose to improve. Reading,

writing, and English Language Development were included in English Language Arts.

Participants expressed a desire to improve in several areas related to delivery of instruction, including classroom management, differentiation, questioning, gradual release, inquiry, and integration of technology.

Sometimes participants were very specific when identifying English Language Arts as an area to improve. For example, participant 17 identified high frequency words as an area of need. She explained that her students do not appear to have mastered the number of high frequency words as her colleagues' students and she would therefore like to work on finding ways to help her students master more high frequency words. Six of the 10 participants were more general when identifying English Language Arts as an area of need. Some stated that they wanted to improve English Language Arts or writing.

PUSD has provided intense levels of professional development in the area of English Language Arts for the past 5 years. Two supplemental programs were strategically implemented and supported in the area of written language beginning in 2013. Implementation has taken place incrementally with a new concept added each year in order to allow teachers the time and support necessary to fully apply strategies in their instruction. Support and professional development continues to be provided 5 years later. Last year, the district adopted a new English Language Arts curriculum. Curriculum specialists provided the professional development in such a manner that the supplemental writing programs were embedded into it, thereby eliminating conflicting messages and terminology. All K-5 teachers attended training and coaches also supported the implementation at each site. With the amount of support and professional development that PUSD has provided over the past few years, it is possible that teachers are focused on improvement in English Language Arts since they know what areas they would like

to improve. As they have learned more in this area, perhaps they are able to identify a gap in their instruction and want to reach levels of practice that they learned during the ongoing professional development.

The two participants that indicated math as an area of need provided different reasons for their decisions. Participant 6 expressed that since most of her teaching experience was at the middle school level, she was more comfortable with English Language Arts. She said,

Moving down to elementary level, teaching math was new to begin with, and I did feel like a first-year teacher when it came to teaching math. I feel like I understand the concepts, and I can get to the answer, but to teach it has been different, especially with Common Core being implemented.

She chose math because she felt she did not have enough experience in that area. In contrast, participant 23 had recently attended professional development in the area of math. She explained that there is a disconnect between the current district-adopted math curriculum and the strategies she recently learned. She would like to implement inquiry-based lessons in the current curriculum in order to “create more meaning for the students.”

It is interesting that math was only identified as an area of need by these two participants. PUSD implemented a math program the first year textbooks were available after the new State Standards were adopted. After 1 year of implementation, it became evident that the adopted curriculum does not address several of the State Standards. Due to deficiencies in the curriculum, several supplemental lessons have been added with the expectation that teachers use them in their instruction. With the expectation that teachers supplement the adopted curriculum in order to meet State Standards, I would have predicted that teachers would have identified math as an area of need.

Both of the participants that chose science as an area of need explained that they would like to use more of a hands-on approach to teaching. They felt that most of their science

instruction was structured around reading content, as opposed to using hands-on activities and interactive lessons. The participants that indicated a need for improvement in social studies similarly explained that they would like to rely less on merely reading text. Instead, they would like to learn how to teach social studies through project-based learning.

Four participants specifically identified classroom management as an area that they desired to improve. All four of these teachers taught at Site D. Three were in their second year of teaching and one was in her fourth year of teaching. The fourth year teacher was teaching for the first time at this site. All four participants expressed that the students at their site were particularly challenging. They shared that they felt the students at their site were more challenging than at any other site in the district. Since these teachers are newer and three of them have only taught at Site D, it is interesting that they compared behavior challenges with the other sites in the district. The perception that Site D is more challenging than other K-5 schools within PUSD is a common opinion among staff at this site.

As indicated in Table 1, Site D has a different demographic profile than the other three sites. Site D also has a different profile than the district. Since the student population at Site D is unique within the district, it may be that district initiatives and professional development are designed to meet the needs of schools with similar student population profiles that match the district profile, and may not meet the needs of the students at Site D. It is also worth noting that Site D is the only elementary school in PUSD to have an assistant principal and social worker due to the high need for support related to social-emotional needs.

All four participants acknowledged that they had received support and professional development in the area of classroom management during their employment in the district. However, they believed they needed more strategies in order to effectively teach their unique

population. These four teachers may have expressed the desire to improve in classroom management due to their novice level of teaching, because Site D has needs that are different than other schools in the district, or both. Regardless of the reason, they shared that they would like to receive continued support in this area.

Questioning was another area that some teachers identified as an area of need. Four teachers expressed that they wanted to work on improving their questioning strategies so that students would discover answers without direct input from the teacher. Although three of the four participants desired to improve questioning strategies across all content areas, participant 13 was more precise in that she wanted to improve questioning specifically to improve her delivery of Cognitively Guided Instruction in the area of math. All four of the participants expressed that students could benefit if presented with questions as opposed to answers or more information. Participant 7 summed up the desire to work on questioning when she said,

How do we ask the right questions so that we're pushing their thinking without giving them the answers? As teachers, we want to help with the answers instead of letting the students discover it. Discovery sticks with you more instead of somebody telling it to you.

All four participants shared that student learning would be deeper if guided through better questioning.

Inquiry-based and project-based learning was another area of need identified during the interview process. Five participants described inquiry-based or project-based learning as an area of need. Three of the five participants had a general understanding of inquiry-based learning, but have never seen it in practice, nor have they received professional development on it. Participant 3 was not sure what it would look like, but had the desire to learn more about it in order to implement it with her students. Participant 7 saw such practices in her colleague's classroom when her colleague was implementing for her master's program. Participant 23 was the only one

of these five who had received professional development in inquiry-based learning. However, she explained that it was difficult to make it part of her regular instruction because the current curriculum was not set up for such practices. All five of the participants felt that inquiry-based or project-based instruction would increase opportunities for student learning. Participants 2 and 7 explained that when focusing on such practices, the act of inquiry gives purpose to the learning, makes it more meaningful, and supports an authentic learning experience that can be applied outside the classroom.

Four participants shared that technology was their identified area of need. All four participants expressed that basic technology skills were desired in order to enhance lessons, troubleshoot problems, and navigate basic technology effectively. Whereas participant 2 explained that the reason she wanted to improve in the area of technology was to help students with 21st century skills, when she described the optimum practice, she also expressed that a basic understanding of technology was a necessary prerequisite. Beyond the desire to support 21st century skills, all the participants spoke in general terms when discussing technology as an area of need. Participants did not offer specific skills, strategies, or practices when discussing technology.

Although each site in PUSD has at least one computer lab, most instruction related to technology at the elementary level is focused on ST Math or word processing. ST Math is a web-based, visual math program that uses games and puzzles to support math instruction. PUSD had just begun to roll out one to one devices at select grade levels and schools. As devices were implemented in grade levels and schools, targeted professional development in the area of technology integration was provided and supported by curriculum specialists. At the time of the interviews, third grade was the target group with one to one devices and professional

development at the elementary level. None of the four participants taught third grade. It is possible that these participants heard and saw third grade teachers implementing technology in their instructional practices, which may have sparked interest to begin to use technology for more than word processing and ST Math.

Differentiation was identified by several participants as an area of need. Five of the eight participants were from Site D. Most of the participants that talked about differentiation explained that they wanted to focus on small group instruction in order to meet the needs of all students. Several felt that they tended to teach to the struggling students most of the time and wanted to find ways to reach the more advanced students. Participant 16 explained her struggle when she said,

I have a wide range in my class. I have some kids that I think should be identified as GATE, and I also have the RSP cluster, so it's like a huge gap. And so just making sure those kids, the RSP kids aren't getting left behind, but also making sure the ones that I feel are GATE, are being challenged and not bored. But then there's the group in the middle you don't want to leave out. So just being more purposeful.

GATE is an acronym for Gifted and Talented Education. In PUSD, students are generally identified for GATE in second grade. Identified students usually display similar characteristics, including higher levels of abstract thinking, rapid learning, large vocabulary, and advanced comprehension, among others. RSP is an acronym for Resource Specialist Program. Students in RSP are generally identified as students with mild learning disabilities who can often succeed in a general education classroom with appropriate support.

Although students identified for GATE and RSP have different needs, in PUSD both types of students are placed in general education classrooms. Students identified for RSP are supported for part of the day by the Resource Specialist. Students are not supported by another staff member if they are identified for GATE. All teachers with GATE clusters are GATE

certified and receive support from a GATE curriculum specialist. However, the general educator is the primary educator for both types of students.

As mentioned earlier, for a few years, professional development focus has been in the area of English Language Arts, including meeting the needs of English Learners for PUSD. For example, targeted vocabulary instruction, sentence frames to support language structure, and other instructional scaffolds so English Learners can access the content has been a focus during professional development sessions. Site D has significantly fewer English Learners than the other sites. It is possible that Site D has needs that the other sites do not have. While teachers at Site D may feel prepared to meet the needs of English Learners, it could be that they do not believe they are meeting the needs of the entire student population, which could explain why they want to focus on differentiation. Another possible explanation may be that because more participants were interviewed from Site D than the other sites, capturing more teachers with the desire to improve in the area of differentiated instruction. Other sites may have several teachers that want to improve in the area of differentiation who did not participate in this study.

Image of Optimum Practice

After participants completed the written reflection, they were asked to discuss areas of need that they identified in writing. During the interview, I asked participants to imagine themselves teaching in that identified area perfectly. In other words, I asked them to picture that they had worked on improving in that area and reached the optimum teaching practice. The interview question was as follows:

Now, I would like you to take a moment and picture what the ideal practice would be related to that area. In other words, imagine yourself teaching. Focus on that one area you would like to improve. But picture yourself teaching perfectly in relation to the area you would like to improve. Please describe what your best possible teaching would look like in the area you identified.

All participants responded to the interview question. Interestingly, less than half the participants described themselves teaching optimally. Several participants described students in their description. However, many of these descriptions included compliant student behavior as opposed to how students might respond to the optimum instruction. Others provided vague descriptions with few or no details. The following images were offered by participants: Image of Teacher and Instructional Practice; Image of Students; Vague Image without Details; and Current Issues Rather than Image of Optimum Practice. Table 4 illustrates the perspectives of optimum practice as described by the participants.

Table 4

Participants' Perspectives of Optimum Practice

Participant	Image of Teacher and Instructional Practice	Image of Students	Vague Image without Details	Current Issues Rather than Image of Optimum Practice
1	X			
2	X	X		
3	X			
4		X		
5	X			
6	X	X		
7		X		
8				X
9		X	X	X
10	X	X		
11			X	X
12			X	
13		X		X
14		X	X	
15		X	X	
16		X		
17		X		
18	X	X		X
19	X			
20				X
21		X		
22		X		
23	X	X		X
24	X	X		X
Total	10	16	5	8

When asked to imagine teaching perfectly in the identified area of need, 10 participants put themselves in the description. Four of the 10 participants provided detailed descriptions of themselves teaching optimally. They explained what strategies and actions they would use throughout the lesson. For example, participant 1 described how she wants to improve at setting the purpose for the lesson, so students understand why they are learning something. She continued to tell me that she wants to use questioning throughout her lessons. Participant 3 explained that she would be able to use one piece of authentic literature to teach multiple skills and concepts in an optimum project-based unit of study. She explained that if she reached her vision students would be working on individualized tasks and assignments. This participant went on to explain how she would set up the classroom environment in a manner that would support differentiated instruction as she works to meet the needs of all learners in a project-based unit:

I would have one area with a few students, a small group of students in just working with fluency and decoding to meet their specific needs. And then I would have another group specifically working on just comprehension. And then another group, maybe a more advanced group where they're reading stories and questioning each other.... I would have different sets of leveled content and I would be able to work individually in each small group with each group, at their level.

These participants provided a description that outlined how their current teaching practices would change or improve, describing themselves teaching in a different manner.

The remaining six participants that put themselves in their description were vague as they talked about their optimum practice. Participant 2 was describing inquiry-based instruction when she stated, "And I would somehow be able to hold all students accountable to producing quality work and be able to get them all to persevere and solve whatever they're trying to solve." It is possible that these participants have not had much exposure to the area in which they would like to improve and therefore were not able to create a clear, detailed picture. Another possibility is that the participants are not accustomed to describing areas of instruction and were unable to

create a detailed description in an interview setting. Perhaps they would have provided more detail if I had included this question in the written reflection.

Sixteen participants outlined student actions and behavior in their image of the optimum practice. Although six of these participants also described their own actions, 10 did not mention themselves at all; instead, the focus was on students and other entities. These participants did not explain how their improved instruction would create the conditions for the student behavior that they described, which was the focus of the written reflection and interview. Most of these participants described the students gaining the intended information and completing tasks independently. For example, participant 22, who was a second year teacher at site D, said, “Every student is on task. They’re listening. Once they’ve listened to the instruction they are ready and participating in doing whatever they need to be doing without any redirection.” Participant 22 identified classroom management as an area of need. It appears that she described the student compliance that she would see if she improved in classroom management. However, she did not describe her own actions in attaining her goal. Similar scenes were reported by the remaining 10 participants that described students in relation to a lesson. They did not describe how the participant would deliver the lesson, nor how her instructional practices would change or improve. It is worth noting that nine of the 16 participants were from Site D. There may be a connection between the focus on students and other identified areas of need, such as classroom management and differentiation. If teachers are focused on managing classroom behavior and meeting the needs of all student groups, it may be that students are at the forefront of their concerns, possibly explaining the focus in their descriptions.

When describing their optimum practice, five participants provided no details about the practice. For example, participant 12, who identified integration of reading and writing in science

and social studies as the area she would like to improve, said, “It would just naturally flow.” She did not talk about her actions or student behaviors in the description. Participant 15 was similar with her description of optimum teaching during the following exchange:

Interviewer: Now that you identified an area that you would like to improve, picture yourself teaching it perfectly. So, describe yourself doing exactly what you want your teaching to look like.

Participant 15: Hmm, so like a perfectly differentiated lesson?

Interviewer: Yes, what would that look like?

Participant 15: Everyone engaged and involved and participating and excited about it.

These participants were vague and unable to describe either student or teacher actions when describing how they wanted their instructional practices to change.

When asked to describe optimum teaching in relation to their identified area of need, eight participants included details regarding current issues and struggles. For example, participant 13, who identified questioning as an area of need, talked about concerns related to students when she said, “I have a solid group that is just struggling and struggling in both areas. It’s a larger group than in the past. I’m just trying to figure out how to reach them.” When asked to describe optimum practice, this participant talked about student interactions and focused on the student needs and challenges of this year’s class. Similarly, five of the eight participants that focused on issues did not describe themselves during their response to this question, nor did they discuss how they would plan to address the issues.

More than one-half of the participants did not include themselves in their description of the optimum practice as related to their identified area of need, nor were they able to describe a clear vision of what their practice would look like once they improved. It is true that educational leaders want teachers to focus on how students respond to instruction for the purpose of

determining next steps. However, the importance of teachers noticing how they deliver instruction is still relevant and crucial.

Comparison of Steps to Improve Identified Area of Need with Steps that Were Taken in Past to Improve

During the written reflection, participants described how they worked deliberately to improve an instructional practice in the past. They also outlined steps they would use to improve a current instructional practice. When outlining steps to be used to improve a current area of need, eight participants described similar steps that they used to improve a practice in the past. For example, participant 17 explained that when she improved math inquiry, she collaborated with her team to pre-plan and create questions and observed her math coach and fellow team members. Similarly, when she identified steps to improve a current area of need, she said that she would read about the area of need and collaborate with her team. Sixteen participants described different strategies. For example, participant 1 used co-teaching to improve written language in the past. However, she said that she would use planning to improve connecting purpose to learning objectives. She reiterated several times how pre-planning would be the necessary step to reach her goal. Several participants provided much more detail when describing the steps used to improve a practice in the past. However, they were vague and less detailed when explaining the steps they would use to improve a current practice that they identified as an area of need. For example, participant 14 explained that in the past, she co-planned with site coaches, discussed what strategies colleagues found effective, and used formative and summative assessments to continually identify next steps. However, when asked to identify steps to use for her current area of need, she said she would like training, but gave no details regarding the type of training or how she would use information learned during the training to change her instruction.

Supporters and Non-Supporters

Participants identified an area of practice to improve during the written reflection. During the interview, they visualized it being implemented, and determined steps to reach the optimum practice. During the interview, they also talked about people who could support or not support their endeavor toward improvement. For the purpose of this research, supporters are identified as people who could help the participant improve in the identified area of need. Non-supporters are identified as people the participants would not approach in the quest for improvement in their identified area. Participants talked about members of their grade level team, members of other grade levels, instructional coaches at their site, curriculum specialists, and principals. One participant identified younger colleagues as supporters, but did not differentiate between members of her grade level team or members of other grade levels. Table 5 illustrates the supporters and non-supporters discussed by the participants. Interestingly, some participants identified the same resource as a supporter as well as a non-supporter depending on the identified area of need. Four participants did not identify non-supporters.

The following sections describe reasons participants identified resources as supporters and non-supporters. Since principals are in a supervisory role, they are discussed as supporters and non-supporters in a separate section.

Table 5

Supporters and Non-Supporters

Participant	Supporters					Non-Supporters				
	Instructional Coach	Grade Level Team	Curriculum Specialist	Other Grade Level Team Members	Younger Colleagues	Instructional Coach	Grade Level Team	Curriculum Specialist	Other Grade Level Team Members	Wouldn't Identify Non-Supporters
1	X	X	X	X			X		X	
2		X	X			X	X		X	
3	X	X		X				X	X	
4		X		X			X			
5					X			X		
6	X	X				X		X	X	
7	X									X
8	X		X			X		X	X	
9	X	X		X			X	X	X	
10	X	X				X		X	X	
11	X	X				X			X	
12		X				X				
13			X			X	X			
14	X	X					X	X		
15				X			X	X		
16	X	X					X	X		
17	X	X	X	X		X			X	
18	X	X		X						X
19	X							X		
20			X							X
21	X	X					X	X		
22	X	X	X	X						X
23	X	X	X					X		
24	X		X			X	X	X	X	
Total	17	16	9	8	1	9	10	12	10	4

Reasons Resources Chosen as a Supporter

Participants identified four reasons for choosing resources as a supporter while working to improve an identified area to improve. The reasons are availability, years of experience, trust, and level of expertise. Some participants identified one reason for choosing people as supporters,

and others named two reasons. Only participant 1 identified all four reasons for selecting people as supporters. Table 6 illustrates reasons supporters were identified by each participant.

Table 6

Reasons Why Participants Chose Supporters

Participant	Availability	Years of Experience	Trust/Rapport/Relationship	Level of Expertise
1	X	X	X	X
2			X	X
3		X		X
4		X		X
5				X
6			X	X
7				X
8			X	
9			X	X
10			X	
11			X	
12			X	
13			X	X
14			X	
15			X	
16	X			
17			X	
18			X	X
19		X		
20			X	
21				X
22				X
23				X
24	X			
Total	3	4	14	13

Four participants identified years of experience as a reason they would choose someone as a supporter. Participant 4 explained the reason she turns to colleagues with years of experience as supporters when she said,

Honestly, I really feel like it's the older teachers. The ones - who even if they've been doing the same thing for so many years. They still have the experience and a deep understanding of what students know, and need to know, and how to get 'em there.

Availability was another reason three participants would choose people as a supporter.

Two participants expressed that the instructional coach is available to demonstrate lessons, co-

teach, and provide feedback during the school day, unlike other teachers who would need to be released in order to provide similar supports.

Trust and rapport were factors that 14 participants cited as a reason they would choose specific people as supporters in order to improve instructional practices. Several of these participants said that the person they would seek had provided help and support in the past, and therefore could be trusted to help in the future. Other participants expressed that trust was a result of accomplishing difficult tasks together. As participant 2 explained,

Years ago, when we were starting close reading a colleague and I were both fourth-grade teachers and we really jumped into creating close reads based on the Open Court stories and we would stay late so often, making thinking maps and creating questions and everything and there was just a click there with that. So, sometimes you can grow when both of you don't know much and you're kind of learning together.

As participant 2 indicated, supporters were not always selected by level of expertise in the identified area of need. If trust was developed, participants would choose colleagues to work together toward improving instructional practices. Others indicated that since rapport had been developed, they knew the supporter would find a way to assist.

Expertise or specific training was the reason 13 participants chose people as supporters. Several of these participants identified a very specific strategy as an area to grow, and would seek others who are considered proficient or expert in the area to grow. For example, participant 4 stated, "They have the experience and a deep understanding of what students know, and need to know, and how to get 'em there." When these participants identified a supporter, they explained that they knew the person was successful or considered an expert in a particular area.

It is interesting that 16 of the 24 participants only identified one reason for choosing supporters. Out of these 16 participants, five identified level of expertise and seven identified trust as the single reason for selecting a supporter. Also of interest is that 10 of these 16

participants identified more than one resource as a supporter; however, they had one reason for choosing multiple supporters. It seems that these participants valued one trait and identified supporters based on that single reason. For example, when participant 14 explained the reason she would go to the instructional coach and her grade level team, she said,

She's [instructional coach] really good with curriculum. I trust her, and she's really good at getting me to think outside the box and challenging me, the cutting edge of my abilities.... they're [grade level team] always there and I can always talk to them about anything. They are willing to help and give me ideas. I don't have to worry about what I say to them and that makes a difference.

Six participants chose one supporter and one reason for choosing the supporter even if they identified more than one area as a need. It appears that these participants have experienced strong positive experiences with one supporter. While talking about the curriculum specialist, participant 20 explained, "I feel like I can talk to her about pretty much anything." Participant 19 also expressed strong positive feelings when she described working with the instructional coach.

For support wise, our ELA coach has been extremely supportive. She's come in and she's demoed lessons for me, and that has been amazing because watching her come in and her teach it the way she would teach it, it's given me more ideas on how to reach different students or how to do different things and give the kids a variety of ways of approaching the topic. So, I would definitely choose her [ELA coach] because everything that she's done with me so far has been amazing and I'm so grateful for being able to have that support because she's just been really good. It's just been amazing having her come in, watching her teach the lessons and seeing her approaches to it.

It seems that all sixteen of these participants place value on one reason for selecting supporters. In addition, six of the participants value a specific supporter and would continue to rely on that supporter.

While analyzing the data, I also identified supporters and reasons for choosing specific supporters. Table 7 outlines reasons why participants identified specific supporters.

Table 7

Reasons Why Participants Identified Specific Supporters

Supporters	Reasons Chose as Supporters			
	Availability	Years of Experience	Trust/Rapport/ Relationship	Level of Expertise
Younger Colleagues				1
Grade Level Team		1	10	7
Other Grade Level Team Members		3	1	4
Instructional Coach	5	1	5	6
Curriculum Specialist	2		2	5

It came as no surprise that more participants cited that trust was the reason they identified members of grade level teams as supporters. However, it was interesting that seven participants explained that they would choose their grade level team members due to their level of expertise. This is surprising because level of expertise cited for grade level team members was slightly higher than for instructional coaches and curriculum specialists. Level of expertise was cited six times for choosing the instructional coach and five times for choosing a curriculum specialist. I found this interesting because instructional coaches and curriculum specialists are chosen for their positions due to their high level of expertise. I expected instructional coaches and curriculum specialists to be chosen due to their level of expertise at a much higher rate. It is possible that instructional coaches are considered to be experts in only one specialized area. There are two instructional coaches at each site; one is identified as a Math instructional coach and the other one is an English Language Arts instructional coach. In the same respect, curriculum specialists work in one specific content area: English Language Arts, Math, Science, Social Studies, Technology, or Classroom Management. While they do cross over to other areas, including English Language Development or Health, their primary role is in one content area. This specialization may prevent teachers from using them as a resource for other areas of need.

One other surprise was that only seven participants identified availability as a reason to choose a supporter. Out of those seven participants, only five said availability was the reason they would choose the instructional coach as a supporter. I found this interesting because there are two full-time instructional coaches at each site, and their main duty is to provide job-embedded support for teachers. It is possible that the availability of coaches is a given to teachers and therefore they did not cite availability as a reason for selecting as a supporter. It is also possible that instructional coaches are pulled by site administrators for other duties. Recently, in preparation for a mandated state assessment, I met with people identified by site administrators as supports for testing purposes. All the staff in the meeting were instructional coaches. During the meeting, several coaches mentioned that once “testing season” started their services were not used for coaching purposes for the remainder of the year. There are at least two mandated tests required every year beginning in February; this is an interesting use of instructional coaches. I did not interview instructional coaches or site administrators, nor did I focus on specific duties of instructional coaches. Therefore, this observation is only based on speculation.

How Supporters Can Provide Assistance

All participants identified supporters as a means for improving identified areas of need regarding instruction. Once supporters were identified, participants next talked about how the identified supporters could provide assistance. Participants identified six different types of assistance: Cycle of Inquiry, collaboration, materials and prepared lessons, feedback, training, and modeling or co-teaching lessons. Table 8 illustrates how identified supporters could provide assistance.

Table 8

How Identified Supporters Could Provide Support

Participant	Cycle of Inquiry	Collaboration with Colleagues	Provide Materials/ Prepared Lessons	Feedback	Modeling/ Co-Teaching	Professional Development/ Training
1			X	X		
2			X		X	
3		X	X		X	X
4					X	
5					X	
6	X	X				X
7				X	X	X
8		X		X		
9		X			X	
10			X			X
11		X				
12						X
13		X				
14	X					
15						X
16					X	X
17			X			X
18		X			X	
19		X		X		
20						X
21		X			X	
22				X	X	
23		X		X	X	
24				X	X	X
Total	2	10	5	7	12	10

Two participants shared that they could improve their identified area of need if they could work with colleagues through a Cycle of Inquiry. There are different versions of Cycle of Inquiry. However, PUSD follows the following steps: use data to identify a problem of practice, determine goal, research strategies to address gap between current reality and goal, create a plan that includes how to measure for success, implement plan and gather data, assess new current reality, and adjust if necessary. The cycle continues until the current reality is reached, in which

case a new problem of practice will be identified and addressed through the same cycle. Both participants identified the larger topic of Language Arts as the area of need to improve and explained that through the Cycle of Inquiry, they could identify a more specific skill to focus on, determine strategies to teach the skill, assess progress, and adjust instruction.

Nine participants explained that collaboration with colleagues could provide needed assistance toward improving their identified area of need. Although these participants did not use the term “Cycle of Inquiry,” they described a process similar to a Cycle of Inquiry. These participants emphasized that they could rely on their grade level colleagues as a forum for discussing possible strategies to address their identified areas of need. Participant 11 explained that her colleagues could have similar struggles and they could work together to develop strategies and lessons to improve identified areas of concern. Several of these participants expressed that after planning lessons together, it would be most beneficial if the team discussed the results of implementing the new strategies and then adjust for future lessons.

Six participants stated that the best way to provide assistance regarding their identified area of need is to provide materials or prepared lessons. They reported that if materials and prepared lessons could be provided, then they could spend more time on planning for delivery of instruction. Participant 2 stated,

And I think it would be nice to have some projects already created for me that I could just take and try. That would give me some of the practice without me having to figure out how do I teach this standard with a project or an inquiry question. To create all that would be very time-consuming. To have some things already pre-created, so I can just practice it. And eventually I could incorporate my own ideas. But sometimes it's easier to start with ideas already been created before you branch out into doing your own thing.

These participants expressed that they would like well-developed, prepared lessons and units of study provided to them. They would like these lessons and units to address state standards and include research-based strategies. As participant 2 described, the participants

would be able to follow the lessons with the confidence that it is a solid lesson. The participants would then personalize the instruction after practicing with the strategies included in the lesson. Teachers in PUSD recently implemented new curriculum based on new state standards. The former curriculum was very scripted and detailed. The new curriculum and guidance from the district expect teachers to develop lessons based on student need, which may vary. Thus, teachers in PUSD are learning to differentiate instruction and adjust instruction in response to student understanding and mastery. These six participants described support similar to former curriculum and expectations.

Feedback was mentioned by seven participants as a means of helping them improve an identified area of need. Participants that identified feedback shared that having someone from the outside observe a lesson and offer suggestions is helpful because it can be difficult to pinpoint ways to improve when teaching in the moment. Participant 19 said, “They could observe to see what I’m missing or what I need or what I’m working well on.” These participants identified coaches and members of their grade level team as supporters that could provide feedback.

Modeling and co-teaching lessons were also identified by 12 participants as a way for supporters to help improve identified areas of need. These participants explained that a coach or grade level team member would first teach an agreed-upon lesson while the participant observed. Next, they would debrief and the participant would teach a similar lesson, followed by another debriefing, which would include some type of feedback or reflection. When asked how the identified supporter could help with improvement, participant 4 explained, “Seeing somebody do something well gives you something to model your practice on.” A few participants expressed the desire to see the practice with their own students. Participant 24 explained, “I need to see it in action, and it would be helpful for me to see it with my own group of kids.” These participants

expressed that it is beneficial when they can see another person implementing the desired practice with students in real-time. This type of assistance requires release time of one or more teachers in order to observe, debrief, and provide feedback. Although some participants expressed that the instructional coach is the desired supporter for this type of assistance, others mentioned members of their grade level team. Coaches are more familiar with the structures and procedures of co-teaching. Members of grade level teams may need support in order to effectively implement co-teaching practices.

Professional development or training was also mentioned when participants were asked how supporters could assist in identified areas of need. When participants expressed the need for training, they often included that they would like specific lessons and strategies. Participant 3 shared that she would benefit from a training that would provide materials and 2-3 days of training on the materials.

Although each participant identified ways people could support their efforts to improve identified area of need, the types of assistance varied. In addition to identifying supporters and assistance, participants also explained reasons they would not choose a person as a supporter. The following section describes reasons participants would not use a person as a support.

Reasons Chosen as a Non-Supporter

Although there were primarily four reasons participants chose people as a supporter, there were seven reasons people were identified as non-supporters. The reasons people would not be asked to support a participant were as follows: stigma related to seeking help, lack of trustworthiness, resource was never considered, disconnect with current realities in the classroom, lack of expertise or specific training, lack of understanding in a particular situation or

grade level, and resource seems too busy. Table 9 illustrates reasons why non-supporters were identified by each participant.

Table 9

Reasons for Non-Supporters

Participant	Stigma	Lack of Interdependence	Resource Never Considered	Disconnect with Current Realities in the Classroom	Lack of Expertise or Specific Training	Lack of Understanding for Situation or Grade Level	Resource Seems Too Busy
1						X	
2					X		X
3				X			X
4	X	X					
5							X
6	X						X
7							
8			X			X	
9			X		X		X
10						X	X
11							X
12					X		
13					X	X	
14		X		X	X	X	X
15			X			X	X
16			X		X		
17						X	
18							
19							X
20							
21		X	X				
22							
23	X		X				
24			X	X		X	X
Total	3	3	7	3	6	8	11

Three participants expressed that there could be a stigma connected to seeking support from another resource. Participant 4 explained,

Well, if you have to have someone come in and show you how to do something it might look as if you're not adept. You're not good at it. Because I think that's what it sometimes is like. Oh well, I'm not good enough.

Stigma is a deterrent the participant has placed on herself. It is an internalized concern about how others will perceive her. Participant 23 acknowledged this feeling when she said,

I have a really hard time asking for help. It's just my personality, the way that I am. So, it's something that I'm working on because I know that, you know, I need help to make sure that all of these kids succeed. And asking for help is something that obviously would be beneficial to me and my kids.

When these participants talked about this reluctance, it was not directly related to one particular person that they identified as a non-supporter. All three were discussing their general reluctance to reach out for support. Because stigma is connected to the participant, rather than the support, it differs from the remaining reasons participants chose not to seek support.

Three participants talked about not feeling comfortable working with members of their grade level. For that reason, they would not seek support. Participant 4 reminisced about a former team from the past. She explained how the team had a strong connection with each other and supported each other. She then talked about her current team and how it just isn't always the case to have the same positive relationships that she felt with her former team. Participants 14 and 21 were on the same team and were talking about each other when discussing their reluctance to reach out to grade level team members. All three of these participants added that if they had different team members, they might choose their grade level team members as supporters.

Three participants expressed that, while professional training is important and delivered in a high-quality manner, oftentimes the curriculum specialists who are presenting are "out of touch" with the realities of the classroom. Participant 3 stated,

So, whenever we've gone to the trainings, they [curriculum specialists] have come up with amazing lessons. They definitely do. And the trainings are very helpful. But, sometimes I feel they can be out of touch with the classrooms, in that, when they're doing their trainings, they're working with adults.

The disconnect between what is presented and the struggles experienced in the classroom are reasons to not seek support.

Related to the disconnect associated with being “out of touch” is the lack of training or expertise cited by six participants. These participants stated that it is a challenge to seek support from others when the area of need is not understood by those who could typically provide support. Participant 14 shared, “So it’s really difficult when you know more than somebody to go to them for help.” Five of these six participants had previously stated that they would choose a supporter based on trust and that was more important than expertise. However, the supporters they identified based on trust were different than non-supporters they identified based on lack of training. The supporters they identified had previous experiences with the participants that were considered successful. When these participants discussed these specific non-supporters, they did not discuss past experiences. They talked about what they had observed or their perception of lack of knowledge.

Another reason that several participants cited as a deterrent is the feeling that others do not understand a particular situation or grade level. This was expressed by eight participants. Participant 14 explained, “because of the very specific needs of each of our classrooms, it’s very difficult.” Seven of these participants currently teach kindergarten, first, or second grade. They identified upper grade level team members or coaches who had never taught in the primary grades as non-supports for this reason.

Eleven participants expressed that time was the reason they would not seek support from various people. Five of these 11 participants identified various people as ‘too busy’ to be asked for support. Three identified coaches and two identified curriculum specialists as people who are too busy with other things to help. Participant 9 explained,

She’s got her hands tied in so many different areas that I think it would probably be more beneficial for her if I just asked other people. I feel like she’s busy. Having to schedule a time with her is a little tough sometimes.

The remaining six of the 11 participants that discussed lack of time talked about it as a general factor that would prevent them from reaching out to people as supporters. These participants explained that they were busy and seldom saw the identified non-supporter. For example, when talking about members of other grade level teams, participant 11 stated, “We’re too busy in trying to make sure that we meet our needs for our own grade level, that we don’t have a lot of time to go and meet with them.” These participants expressed that if they were to take the time to seek out support from people they did not see in a typical day, they would not be able to complete some of the tasks they needed to accomplish.

During the interviews, if I noticed specific resources were not mentioned as a supporter, I specifically asked about that person. Some participants gave reasons why they would not be a supporter. However, seven participants acknowledged that they just had not thought of some of the possible supporters until I mentioned them during the interview. When she was asked about curriculum specialists, participant 16 stated, “I never even thought to ask them, to be honest.” Six of the seven participants expressed similar reactions during the interview when asked about curriculum specialists for supporters. All of these participants had attended professional development sessions provided by curriculum specialists. However, they expressed that they had not considered them as supporters for improving in an identified area of need.

While participants spoke about colleagues, instructional coaches, and curriculum specialists as supporters or non-supporters, insights were gained regarding the site principal as a possible supporter as well. Following is a description of participants’ perceptions of the site principal as a supporter in the act of improving identified instructional practices.

Principal

During the interview, if participants did not mention the principal as a supporter, I specifically asked about the principal. Table 10 illustrates the principal as a supporter and non-supporter as identified by each participant.

Table 10

Principal as a Supporter and Non-Supporter

Participant	Supporter	Non-Supporter
1	X	X
2	X	X
3	X	
4		X
5		X
6	X	
7	X	
8	X	
9	X	X
10	X	X
11	X	
12	X	
13		X
14	X	X
15		X
16		X
17		X
18	X	
19	X	
20	X	
21	X	
22	X	
23	X	
24	X	X
Total	18	12

I asked about the principal when each participant was sharing about an identified area of need. For example, if a participant talked about two areas of need and did not mention the principal as a supporter or non-supporter for either area, I asked about the principal twice. Thirteen participants mentioned the principal unprompted. Eleven of those 13 participants identified the principal as a supporter. While I prompted some participants to address the principal as a

supporter or non-supporter, there was no other prompting during the interview as related to the principal. Eighteen participants expressed that the principal could be a supporter in working toward improving her identified area of need. Twelve participants expressed that the principal would not be a supporter. Seven of the participants expressed that the principal could be a supporter as well as a non-supporter.

Principal as Supporter

Participants identified four types of assistance the principal could provide as a supporter. Participants would seek team-building opportunities, resources such as funding or release time, permission to try new strategies, and feedback or suggestions from their principal. Table 11 illustrates the types of assistance participants would seek from the principal as a supporter.

One participant mentioned that her principal would not be able to provide direct support toward improvement. However, this participant stated that her principal would create team-building opportunities that would lead to stronger grade level teams that could support each other as teachers work to improve practices. She said,

She's been really strong at doing teambuilding activities and doing activities for self-reflection and personalities getting along. But I haven't seen her do a lot of like professional development activities. I think that comes more from the coaches. So, I don't picture her as someone that's doing the inquiry process with us necessarily. Though she is open to learning.

This participant explained that she would use other resources as supporters while working to improve her instructional practices.

Table 11

Types of Assistance Participants Would Seek from Principal as a Supporter

Participant	Team-building	Resources such as Funding or Release Time	Permission to Try New Strategies	Feedback or Suggestions
1				X
2	X			
3		X		
4				
5				
6		X		
7		X		
8			X	
9			X	
10				X
11		X		
12		X		
13				
14				X
15				
16				
17				
18				X
19				X
20				X
21				X
22				X
23			X	
24				X
Total	1	5	3	9

Five participants said that their principal would support their efforts to improve their identified area of need by providing funding or release time to observe colleagues. They expressed that they had approached their principal to ask for support. The principal asked how she could provide support. The participants shared that they specifically asked to be released to observe another teacher. For example, participant 3 shared,

I have asked my principal - but it was more of a question asking her, “Can I go see another grade level?” So, I thought of it more as an administrative support, rather than an

ELA instruction support. But, I did have this conversation with her. She did support me by providing the time to observe.

These participants explained that their principal would be able to provide the time to observe others in order to learn from colleagues.

Three participants shared that their principal would give them “permission” to try something new as they worked toward improving an area of need. Participant 8 explained,

I don’t like to be a deer caught in headlights, so I always ask her, “Is this okay if I do this or that?” I think having her reassurance allows me to do what I do in the best way because I feel confident and I don’t feel like I’m doing this secretly or anything.

These participants explained that they would want to implement strategies that were different from what was included in the district-adopted curriculum. They explained that in an effort to improve their effectiveness with students, they would like to try something different and would seek permission from their principal.

Nine of the 18 participants would expect their principal to support with feedback or suggestions. Several of these participants acknowledged that their principal was a former curriculum specialist and coach, which is the reason they would seek their support. Participant 19 shared, “I know she was the curriculum specialist and she knows everything.” These participants talked about the principal providing feedback during regular, informal observations. They explained that the principal regularly walks through classrooms and provides feedback on the lesson in progress. Feedback usually comes in the form of writing or a verbal suggestion. These participants expressed that they would seek such feedback from their principal as a means for improving an area of need.

Principal as Non-Supporter

There were three reasons participants would not reach out to the principal as a supporter: participant’s pride, principal is too busy, and principal does not have an understanding of

curriculum. Table 12 illustrates the reasons participants would not choose the principal as a supporter. Two participants explained that their own pride would prevent them from approaching their principal as a supporter. Participant 5 expressed, “I would hope that I would always shine for my principal and not make it seem like I don’t know how to do things.” Both of these teachers are veteran teachers and shared that it was important to them that their principal view them as teachers who do not need a lot of support.

Table 12

Reasons Participants Would Not Choose Principal as a Supporter

Participant	Pride	Principal is too busy	Does not have deep enough understanding
1			X
2			X
3			
4			X
5	X		
6			
7			
8			
9			X
10		X	
11			
12			
13			X
14		X	
15			X
16		X	
17			X
18			
19			
20			
21			
22			
23			
24	X		
Total	2	3	7

Three participants expressed that the principal is too busy and oftentimes is “putting out fires.” Participant 16 shared, “And honestly, there’s days when I don’t even see her, ‘cause I know she’s running around. She has so many things to do...I don’t know. In my mind, I feel like I don’t wanna bother her.” All three of these participants expressed that they respected the principal and would want to consider her as a supporter. However, since the principal appears to always be extremely busy, the participants felt it was important not to add more to her plate. While other participants identified being too busy for the reason to identify other non-supporters, these participants conveyed a stronger feeling of staying out of the way of the principal due to the high demands on her time.

Seven of the participants stated that their principal does not have a deep enough understanding of curriculum, which is necessary in order to provide support. Participant 4 said,

Well, I don’t think that principals are trained to the depth of knowledge that teachers are. And I don’t think that they are familiar with standards for particular grade levels or - I mean, they’ll pop into a training. But, I really don’t think that they know things to the depth that - I think teachers are by far the expert in that area than principals are.

The seven participants that expressed their principal did not have a deep enough understanding of the curriculum or strategies came from all four of the school sites represented in the sample. Therefore, all four principals are perceived by some of their teachers as not having depth of knowledge. Three of the four principals in the sample have been principals for less than 5 years, which means they were teachers or curriculum specialists less than 5 years ago.

Self-Reflection

Although the interview questions did not specifically ask participants to discuss reflection, the writing prompt was designed for participants to reflect on their instructional practices. Some participants discussed self-reflection without additional prompts during the interview. However, if participants did not mention self-reflection during the interview, I

explained that the exercise was about self-reflection and asked if they had opportunities to self-reflect on their practices. When participants discussed self-reflection, they were not relating it to an identified area of need. They were responding to using self-reflection as a tool for improvement in general. I also asked what might support or inhibit self-reflection. All participants indicated that self-reflection is an important practice that can help improve instructional practices. However, participants varied in their experiences with reflection. They also identified different supports of and barriers to reflection practices.

Several participants said that they regularly reflect on student-learning in order to guide and adjust their daily instruction. Other participants explained that they used data to guide reflection when they met with the members of their grade level team. A third group reported that reflection was usually focused on specific curriculum or strategies that were being implemented at their site.

Supports for Reflection

Participants identified several practices that would support reflection. Among these practices were the following: tool or rubric to guide reflection, structure during regularly scheduled staff meetings, being observed or recorded as a means of providing feedback for reflection, opportunities to observe someone else, and use of data to guide reflection. Not all participants identified activities that would support reflection. Table 13 illustrates practices that would support reflection as identified by participants.

Table 13

Practices that Would Support Reflection

Participant	Tool or Rubric to Guide Reflection	Structure during Regularly Scheduled Staff Meetings	Being Observed or Recorded as a Means of Providing Feedback for Reflection	Opportunities to Observe Someone Else	Use of Data to Guide Reflection
1					X
2					
3					
4					X
5	X	X		X	
6					X
7				X	X
8	X				
9					X
10			X	X	
11				X	
12		X	X		
13					X
14					X
15					X
16					X
17		X			
18					
19					
20				X	
21					
22					
23					X
24			X		
Total	2	3	3	5	10

Two participants shared that they regularly use a rubric provided by their principal as a means of reflection. These participants felt that by using such a tool, they can identify their current level of implementation and then identify specific steps to improve. Similarly, three participants said that their principal regularly provided guided opportunities for reflection during

staff meetings. The purpose of the guided reflection during staff meetings was to identify the level of implementation and determine next steps.

Three participants reported that reflection was supported when other people (coaches, colleagues, or principal) observed their instruction and provided feedback. They expressed that when an honest description of their teaching practices was provided after an observation, they could then have an open dialogue to determine areas to be improved. Participant 10 explained, “Even just having my coaches come in and watch me and tell me what they saw worked or what they saw needed improvement would help, simply because when you’re there teaching, you don’t really see everything or catch everything.” Five participants felt that reflection could be supported if they had the opportunity to observe other people. Participant 5 shared, “Reflection can occur when you’re watching somebody else. When you’re watching, ‘Oh, how does that differ from what I do?’” Several participants that talked about observation as a tool for supporting reflection added that many teachers do not like to be observed or observe others. They shared that teachers fear that judgment and evaluation occurs during such practices. Two participants offered that trust must be in place in order for observation to support reflection.

Several participants stated that analyzing data was an effective means of supporting reflection. Five participants reported that data analysis was regularly used to support reflection. Participant 4 explained, “At the site that I’m at now there’s more of a reflection on data. And I think when you analyze data you can’t help but look at your own teaching practices.” These participants said that data was examined regularly to determine areas that need to be improved based on student common assessment benchmark test scores. Six participants emphasized that reflection with colleagues was a necessary support to reflection. Only two participants used the phrase “Cycle of Inquiry.” However, all of 10 ten participants that discussed using data with

colleagues described looking at data within what was earlier defined as the “Cycle of Inquiry.”

Participant 9 shared,

I think one thing that has been great for self-reflection is our Cycle of Inquiry, where we look at the data, and see what areas we as teachers need to focus on. That’s been really helpful. Even though it’s students’ results, it’s obviously our teaching. Seeing those results and having to plan for them has been really helpful in improving those scores. I have really enjoyed the Cycle of Inquiry as a self-reflection tool.

These participants expressed that by examining data and researching practices to improve an identified problem of practice, they had to reflect on their own instructional practices and determine what areas needed to improve. In addition to activities that would support self-reflection, participants also discussed barriers to reflection.

Barriers to Reflection

Although all participants expressed that self-reflection is beneficial that can be used to support identified areas of need, they also described barriers that often prevent such practices. The three types of barriers are: assigned tasks, difficult team members, and expectation to reflect on one’s own due to lack of time. Not all participants identified barriers. Table 14 illustrates the barriers that participants identified.

Table 14

Barriers to Reflection

Participant	Assigned Tasks	Difficult Team Members	Expectation to Reflect on One's Own Time
1			
2	X		
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			X
8			
9			
10	X		
11			
12			X
13			X
14		X	X
15			X
16			X
17			
18			X
19			X
20		X	
21			
22			
23		X	X
24			
	2	3	9

Two participants explained that their principals put practices in place that were intended to promote reflection. However, these participants shared that the end result was the completion of more tasks and forms, which actually inhibited reflection. Participant 2 explained,

Sometimes we're trying to fill out a form or fill out something to put in the file, you know to show evidence of our work. But it almost distracts from the time of reflecting. It becomes more about the form instead of about the actual practice. I feel like we get distracted with all the forms.

Three participants shared that reflection in a collaborative environment is often stifled if there is a difficult or reluctant team member. Participant 23 explained that, “If you don’t have a good relationship with your team, it’s kind of difficult.” All three of these participants felt that lack of trust among team members created a barrier to honest reflection in a collaborative model.

Ten participants felt that since there is little time during the day, reflection was expected to occur on the teachers’ own time. They expressed that as elementary teachers, they were constantly moving from one task to another, with no time to stop and reflect on their practices. Participant 16 said, “But on a daily basis, I don’t really do it, ‘cause I’m moving on to the next thing.” Several explained that reflection is not something that can occur in just a few minutes between activities; there needs to be dedicated time in order for reflection to be meaningful.

Participant 2 said,

Learning takes time. Time to let the brain kind of marinate all the information. So, I think sometimes we need more time that doesn’t require evidence that that time is taken. We don’t have as much time to just sit and look like you’re doing nothing. But really your brain is working. The brain needs that downtime and we’re so often – like go, go, go.

These participants emphasized that they found value in self-reflection. However, they explained that they were often so busy with day to day tasks involved with delivery of instruction, they could not find time to reflect upon their practices for the purpose of improvement.

Summary

As a result of the written reflection and interview, participants identified areas of need that they would like to improve. When asked to critically self-reflect on their instructional practices, teachers identified content areas and instructional delivery as areas of need. English Language Arts and differentiation of instruction were the top two identified areas of need. It seems that the areas selected by most participants were also a focus for the district. When participants elaborated on areas of need related to instructional delivery, they related the area to

how improvement would better meet the needs of students or provide opportunities for students to reach higher levels of learning.

All participants identified areas of need and gave a description of what instruction would look like if they improved in that area. However, only four out of 24 participants described the optimum practice with any detail. Many of the descriptions were vague, focused on student behavior or compliance or related to current issues.

Teachers identified colleagues from their grade level and other grade levels, curriculum specialists, coaches, and principals as supporters for improving self-identified areas of need. Reasons for identifying supporters included availability, years of experience, trust or rapport, and level of expertise. Participants also explained why they identified people as non-supporters. The top two reasons for not approaching a person for support were that the person seemed too busy and participants had not considered that person as a supporter.

Principals were identified as supporters as well as non-supporters in this study. The most cited reason for the principal to be considered a non-supporter was that she did not have a deep enough understanding in the strategies or curriculum. Interestingly, feedback was the most cited type of assistance participants would expect from the principal as a supporter.

While the research questions did not specifically address self-reflection, the entire process was designed to provide an opportunity for self-reflection. At the end of each interview, I asked about self-reflection in order to connect the process completed for the purpose of my research with their daily, or regular practices. They described practices that would support reflection. The most commonly cited support for self-reflection was using data to inform instruction. The expectation that reflection occur on a teacher's own time was the most cited

barrier that inhibits self-reflection. However, all participants explained that there is value in self-reflection as a means for improving instructional practices.

In the next chapter, I will discuss these findings further. I include implications and suggestions for instructional leaders as they work with teachers to improve instructional practices.

Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

Reflection is an opportunity to make meaning of what we experience, and without explicit attention to its practice, experiences can flow by and be quickly forgotten as the next priority pops up.

-Tracy Crow – Learning Forward October 2017

As this quote from Tracy Crow expresses, when we do not explicitly attend to reflection, day to day duties and tasks interfere and the opportunity to reflect passes. This research project was designed to investigate how teachers respond to a written reflection with the purpose of identifying an area of need and creating a plan to address the area. While focusing on the plan, teachers were asked to visualize themselves teaching perfectly in relation to the area of need, identify steps, and name supporters who could help them improve. In addition, participants were asked to discuss practices that support and create barriers to reflective practices. This chapter continues the discussion of findings with connections to current literature. In addition, I present recommendations based on the findings, followed by limitations. I close this chapter and paper with my own final reflections.

Findings in the Context of the Literature

Professional development needs. Although all teachers identified areas to improve as well as supporters and practices that would aid in reaching their goals, there were two findings that were of particular interest and worth discussion. First, as mentioned in chapter 4, the number of teachers that identified English Language Arts as an area of need was surprising since that has been a district focus for the past few years. Teachers have received formal professional development and site support in English Language Arts and little support in math.

An implication for principals, is that the focus and support provided by site and district leaders may influence teachers' identified areas of need. This is significant for site leaders to consider. While English Language Arts is a large part of the K-5 curriculum, it is important to

create a balance related to content need, which may help teachers see the necessity to improve in all areas.

The second finding of interest related to teachers' identified areas of need was related to delivery of instruction. The amount of variance was striking. The differences may be in alignment with the research that supports different professional development needs based on stages of career. The teachers who identified classroom management as an area of need tended to be at newer stages of their teaching career. Those who expressed questioning, project-based learning, or delivery of instruction may be more focused on improving their teaching skills, which is in alignment with the second stage of teacher development as outlined by several researchers. When teachers described differentiation as an area of need, they expressed the desire to increase student learning, which is in alignment with the third stage of teacher career development (Day and Sachs, 2004; Gossman, 2008; Lynn, 2002; Watzke, 2003).

Another consideration related to the variances in identified areas of need could be due to school culture. For example, the participants that identified classroom management as an area of need are newer in their career. However, as mentioned in chapter 4, the school where these participants teach has a different student profile when compared to the other schools and the district. Table 1, which outlined the student demographics for each participating site illustrated a higher percentage of African American students and fewer Hispanic students. The difference in demographics alone does not explain a difference in need. The desire to improve classroom management may be due to ways staff respond to this population. Extra staff have been assigned to that school to address the social emotional needs of the students. However, such support does not address teacher needs as they work directly with students. A site leader may need to take a step back to analyze how staff respond to the students, which may lead to professional

development or support that is different from the rest of the district. Once again, the unique needs of the teachers should be identified and addressed.

Educational leaders work toward systemic change in order to continuously improve. In working toward increasing student achievement, administrators generally create systems, similar to PUSD, that provide ongoing, targeted professional development. Systemic change is important. In fact, when leaders do not focus on such practices, fragmentation and instability are usually the result. However, as an educational leader, it is crucial to know one's teachers and support each individual to meet his/her unique needs (Day & Sachs, 2004). Supports for effective professional growth may differ for teachers depending on stage of career or other factors not discussed in this research. Educational leaders must balance between moving the entire system to greater levels of achievement and meeting the professional needs of their individual teachers. Leaders may focus on the systemic needs at the expense of their teachers' needs. Participant 13 expressed this when she stated, "The focus is more on the kids. It's never on how we want to grow and what do we want to do better, what do we think we need help with." This message is an important reminder to leaders of the importance to balance meeting the needs of individual teachers while working on improvement throughout the organization. If teachers do not improve in their areas of need, then they will struggle as they work to implement new strategies throughout the system.

As site leaders strive to create systemic improvement and simultaneously work to address the unique needs of teachers, there will always be a struggle for balance. It is important to move the entire organization forward. However, leaders must acknowledge and help teachers with their individual needs. It is expected that teachers differentiate instruction based on student need. It is just as important that site leaders differentiate professional development and support based on

teacher need. If teachers cannot grow and develop based on their own need, it is unlikely that they will be able to contribute to the greater systemic improvement.

Image of optimum practice and plan to improve. When teachers were asked to picture themselves teaching optimally and identify steps to reach that practice, many participants were unable to do so with any detail. During this study, the visions shared were vague or focused on student compliance.

This finding leads to implications for site leaders who often formally meet with teachers at least once or twice each school year. During those meetings, and possibly throughout the year, it may be beneficial for leaders to conduct conversations around identifying areas of need and creating a plan of action with teachers. It may be a good practice for teachers to identify the area of need for their personal growth. The site leader and teacher can then develop an attainable plan and supports to reach the goal. It will be important to guide teachers to identify a goal that can be realized in one school year, thus making it more attainable.

Lack of time as a barrier. One barrier that surfaced throughout the entire research process was lack of time. Although lack of time is a common excuse, it is interesting that it is a common thread that was expressed by so many participants. Therefore, it appears that it must be addressed. Participants expressed that they would not choose people as supporters because they appeared too busy. One of the most frequently cited barriers to reflection was due to lack of time. Interestingly, one way some participants felt they could be supported in the process of improving an area of need was to be given pre-made lessons, which would allow for more time in other areas.

Over one-third of the participants expressed that, even though they saw the value of reflecting on their instructional practices, they felt they were expected to do so on their own time.

This is concerning since reflection is a necessary component of change and improvement. If teachers do not find the time to reflect on their practices, it is unlikely that they will identify areas to improve. Only when we reflect can we identify areas of need, which will lead to the next step of identifying a goal, as well as steps and supports to reach the goal.

Researchers present the factor of time when presenting components of effective professional development that lead to teacher change. Professional development and teacher learning are limited to the availability of time. Constant pressures and fast-paced, demanding tasks often place burdens on teachers that prevent continuous learning and improvement (Day & Sachs, 2004). Job-embedded professional development—such as professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study—that were presented in the literature review of this research are all dependent on an iterative cycle of improvement, which requires significant amounts of time.

Another finding of interest related to time was that coaches were perceived to be too busy. Some participants expressed that they did not identify their coach as a supporter because she was busy with other people or doing other things for the school. Site leaders need to be aware of such perceptions and find ways to protect those people for the purpose of coaching. If coaches are not available for teachers then the underlying message may be that teacher growth is not really the priority. Rather tasks like testing or other school needs takes precedence. The perceived lack of time is an issue that site leaders must address. Time will be addressed in the recommendation section of this chapter.

While structures, such as time, must be in place in order for teachers to productively reflect as a collaborative practice with colleagues, it is imperative for instructional leaders to realize that merely providing time or other supports is not sufficient. DuFour (2011) warns that if

educational leaders only provide time for teachers to work collaboratively in a professional learning community, there is a risk of negative consequences. Culture must also be addressed. He explains that it is better to not engage in professional learning communities if the culture is toxic. One component of the culture that must be considered and developed is trust, which is discussed in the next section.

Trust. When I first became interested in reflective practices as a means for professional development and instructional improvement, members of my staff expressed that trust was a necessary prerequisite. They warned me that without trust, some reflective professional development activities could become counterproductive. Their concern is in alignment with many researchers that cite trust as a contributing factor to various models of professional development, including professional learning communities, coaching, and lesson study (DuFour, 2011; Gibbons & Cobb, 2017; Gutierrez, 2015; Hord, 2009). The findings in my research add to this theory.

Teachers in this study identified various people as supporters. However, the reasons they chose supporters was more interesting. Most participants identified trust or rapport as a factor for choosing a person as a supporter. Many explained that trust had been developed over a period of time. Individuals who had positive experiences with participants in the past were often identified as a supporter. In fact, some participants explained that they would continue to seek support from former grade level team members over current team members because of the trust that had been developed.

While facilitating trust among grade level team members is important, site leaders might also want to consider developing trust between teachers and ancillary staff members, such as coaches and curriculum specialists. These support staff are often hired and expected to support

staff based on their level of expertise, without consideration for trust-building. Another consideration for site leaders is the importance of ensuring that coaches and curriculum specialists participate in professional development opportunities that will support the level of trust. For example, many teachers expressed that they would not seek support from a coach because that person was not familiar with a particular grade level. Therefore, these support staff need to have opportunities to continue to develop as a professional. Not only will this raise the level of expertise, but it will also aid in the level of trust. Teachers may be more likely to reach out to a coach or curriculum specialist if they realize they have had experience at their grade level or in the identified area of need. It is really important that coaches or curriculum specialists continue to develop professionally in order to become adept at various grade levels.

Reflection. Teachers find value in reflecting on their instructional practices as a means to improve. Current research suggests that reflective practices are necessary in order to evaluate effectiveness and adjust in order to improve, (Camburn, 2010; Pultorak, 2010; Schon, 1987; Shandomo, 2010). All participants in this study expressed that reflection is valuable. Reflection is embedded in effective professional development practices, such as lesson study, professional learning communities, and coaching. However, in the field, even when these types of professional learning are regularly used, tasks assigned for accountability purposes and lack of time create barriers to productive reflection. Reflection is a skill that needs to be supported and developed. It should not be left for teachers to do on their own time.

Researchers support the notion that reflective practices are a key component of professional growth (Camburn and Han, 2016; Gutierrez, 2015; Pultorak, 2010). Based on the responses in this study, teachers find value in reflective practices. Therefore, it is important to support, guide and create conditions for reflection.

Role of the principal. Principals were identified as supporters as well as non-supporters for various reasons. However, the most surprising reason given for identifying the principal as a non-supporter was the perception that he/she does not have a deep enough understanding of the curriculum. One-third of the participants cited this as a reason the principal was considered a non-supporter. I was surprised at this reason because now, more than ever, principals are trained and tasked to be instructional leaders rather than managers. In fact, in PUSD, the position of instructional coach and curriculum specialist is usually a step toward becoming a principal. Currently eight of the 11 K-5 principals were previously instructional coaches or curriculum specialists, which requires a deep understanding of curriculum and strategies. However, there seems to be a perception that now that they are principals, they no longer have that level of expertise. This perception may actually be connected to the time issue that was discussed in the previous section. If principals are viewed as busy and preoccupied with a multitude of other tasks, teachers may interpret that principals focus on these other tasks, which takes away from a curricular focus. Another possible reason is that teachers often feel a disconnect with administrators, since they are in an evaluative role. It could be that there is a shift of perception once a person becomes a principal.

The principal may not be perceived as an expert in the area of curriculum. However, as an instructional leader, the principal is the person who can create a culture that supports reflective practices toward instructional improvement. Whereas principals may not be the people to provide coaching or sit in other collaborative sessions, teachers need to see them as instructional leaders who know and understand the nature of solid instruction. The principal is also the driving force related to the culture of the school. If teachers are consistently pressed for time and are not able to spend quality time on reflective professional activities that promote reflection, the principal is

the person who needs to make it a priority. There are numerous instances of principals thinking “outside the box” in order to provide regular professional growth activities for teachers. When professional growth is a priority and lack of time is not an issue, school cultures develop into cycles of continuous reflection, growth, and improvement.

Limitations

The results of this study are not generalizable due to its small sampling and the fact that only one district was represented. Since all participants volunteered, the results may be indicative of a group of teachers who are willing to share and talk about their areas of need and professional growth. Another limitation is that, although I am not in a supervisory role with any of the participants, I am a district administrator in PUSD.

Another consideration when considering the findings in this research is that participants only had a limited amount of time to reflect on their practices during this study. Results may have been very different if participants had been guided through a more detailed step-by-step process to identify areas in which they would like to improve and develop a vision and plan for that identified area.

Participants may have responded differently if they had been guided through self-reflection exercises by someone with whom they had developed trust. Although participants appeared open and willing to share with me during the sessions, they may have been more willing to reveal their vulnerabilities if they were working with someone they trusted. I think about some of the comments regarding trusted colleagues that were shared during the interviews; a few participants revealed that they had experienced positive relationships with former grade level team members. Even though they currently work collegially with their current team

members, they expressed that there was a bond that supported their willingness to be transparent, be vulnerable, and take risks in an effort to improve instructional practices.

Recommendations

There is a common expectation that teachers differentiate instruction in order to meet the varied needs of their diverse students. I bring forth the same message related to professional development with teachers. Although a district or school may move forward with a key instructional initiative, it is crucial that the professional growth needs of individual teachers be considered. A teacher who is struggling with classroom management will not be able to effectively implement new strategies related to complex areas such as rigorous vocabulary instruction or structures of language as related to comprehension. I do not suggest that teachers opt out of such professional development. Rather, it is extremely important that an entire school or district move toward cohesive practices. However, the instructional leader must learn the strengths and weaknesses of each teacher and work to support areas of need. Additionally, teachers respond to various supporters and types of professional development differently. Just as effective teachers provide different modes of instruction for students, instructional leaders should provide different structures of professional development for teachers.

Principals are the creators of the culture at each site. When teachers view them as experts in the area of instruction, they will see that instructional improvement is important. Also, while principals are extremely busy with the business associated with running a school, they must make time a priority. Teachers need time to reflect on their practices; they cannot be expected to do so on their own time. When teachers are not given adequate time for their own professional growth, the message is conveyed that everyday tasks are the priority. Teachers must be given time and support to reflect on their instructional practices.

Site leaders might benefit by moving focus from students to staff. This is not to say that principals will not care or take care of students. However, if the principal takes care of staff's unique needs, then they will in turn take care of the students. Teachers become the students for the leader.

As mentioned earlier, trust was a key component that was discussed by participants when identifying supporters. Sometimes the word "trust" was not used. Other words were used related to trust, such as rapport, relationships, partnerships, and friendships. The common message was that these participants were talking about the benefits and desire for relationship-building. The implication for site leaders is to take time to support relationship-building. This includes purposefully constructing teams that will support each other. It also could be the way time is spent during regularly scheduled meetings.

These recommendations do require time, which was discussed throughout this paper. Time is always going to be an issue. However, there is often a sense of urgency that creates a perception of lack of time. When the principal is all over the school and the coach is never available there is a perception of urgency and lack of time. Therefore, it is important for site leaders to create time. There are opportunities, now more than ever, to use funding and creative ways to create time. More important, is the message that is sent to teachers. The message that, while schools are busy, the principal, coach, and other support are available and have time to meet teachers' needs. There are so many things that principals must do as a site leader. However, if teachers know they have support for their own professional growth, the culture of the school will shift toward a learning environment for all.

Emphasis in this research has been on site leaders. However, district leaders are a key factor as well. It is important to create a culture where principals feel that it is safe to address the

individual and unique needs of their site and staff. There must be a balance between moving the school forward while working toward meeting teachers' unique needs. District leaders can provide the guidance and support that encourages principals to take the necessary time to focus on trust. District leaders can provide the support to help principals prioritize leadership versus management. This would create a culture where principals could take the necessary time to focus on relationship-building and individual teacher development. Another consideration for district leaders is the reason and amount of time principals are pulled from sites. District leaders send a message to site leaders and even school site staff every time principals are pulled from their schools. When the tasks revolve around managerial tasks that can be accomplished in other ways, the message is that the priority is completely different. However, when district leaders focus on professional development and needs of school sites, the message reflects that improvement and growth is the priority.

Final Reflection

I was inspired to conduct this research when I noticed change in instructional practices after going through a reflection exercise with my leadership team. The message from the team was very clear. Self-reflection can lead to meaningful change. However, before embarking on self-reflection with colleagues, it is important to take time to build trust and create positive relationships. This research supports these notions. However, as a result of this research I also learned that reflection must be taught, supported and practiced. Teachers and staff cannot be expected to meaningfully reflect without guidance and support. Participant 14 summed this idea up nicely when she said, "I think self-reflection comes with risks...you have to be able to look at yourself honestly and say 'Wow, I didn't do that well.' Some people have a hard time with that...because it's a skill like everything else."

Professional development, culture of learning, addressing needs of teachers, and practice of reflection are dependent upon the culture of the site. Participant 7 expressed this notion when she said,

I think the school culture has a lot to do with it. If teachers feel valued and listened to, then I think that goes a lot towards it [reflection]. Where if they don't feel they have to look over their shoulder for someone judging them or out to get them, then that opens the comfort level. Then they can explore.

There will always be challenges that create obstacles toward creating such a culture. However, the site leader can create an environment where learning and reflective practices are a priority, which supports a culture of learning and growing for all.

APPENDIX A

Recruiting Script

Hello, my name is Renée Jeffrey. I am a graduate student at UCLA in the Educational Leadership Program. I am conducting research on critical self-reflection and systems of support as a way to improve instructional practices, and I am inviting you to participate. As professionals, we are always working to improve our craft and as educators, we participate in regular professional development. Yet, we often do not take the time to reflect on our own practices to help guide us to improving practices. I am studying critical self-reflection and supporters that lead to improvement. If you agree to participate in this study, I will ask you to reflect on your practices and identify people who you believe would provide support as you work to improve.

Participation in this research includes writing about your instructional practices, which will take approximately 15 minutes. An interview will follow directly after the writing exercise, will take approximately 30 minutes. If you participate, your total time commitment will be approximately 45 minutes.

In order to ensure confidentiality, participants will be coded, using a numbering system. All data and information collected will be secured in a locked cabinet. Electronic files will be password protected.

You will receive a \$5.00 gift card to Starbucks for participating in this project.

Are there any questions at this time?

If you are interested in participating, I ask that you sign up on this sheet. Please write your name, phone number and email. I will contact you to schedule an interview. You are not committing to the interview by filling out your information. You may choose not to participate at any time before and even during the research. Your participation is strictly voluntary.

(Pass out my business cards with phone number and email information)
If you have any questions, please call or email me.

APPENDIX B

Writing Prompt

As educators, we frequently attend professional development to learn new content and instructional practices. The focus is on the new strategy or content to be implemented. However, we do not usually reflect on our own current practices to determine areas of need. Today I would like you to think about your teaching practices. For the next 5 minutes please write about an area of your teaching practice where you made a deliberate attempt to improve and saw improvement. Who or what helped you improve in this area?

For the remaining 10 minutes, please write about areas of your teaching practices that you believe need to be improved. You may choose to fully describe an area that you would like to improve with details and examples. Or you may choose to write about a few different areas to improve. At the end of the 15 minutes, I will follow up with a few questions.

APPENDIX C

Interview Protocol

Thank you for writing for the duration of the 15 minutes I would like to ask you some questions related to what you wrote. Is it okay if I record this interview?

1. Will you describe one practice that you identified as an area which you would like to improve and explain why you chose that?
2. Now, I would like you to take a moment and picture what the ideal practice would be related to that area. In other words, imagine yourself teaching. Focus on that one area you would like to improve. But picture yourself teaching perfectly in relation to the area you would like to improve. Please describe what your best possible teaching would look like in the area you identified.
3. Okay, so you identified and described an area of your teaching practice you would like to improve as well as what the optimum practice would look like. What steps would be necessary to help you move from where you are to where you would like to be in this area?
4. If you were to work toward that best possible practice, who or what would you turn to as a resource or support? How might _____ support you in your growth in this area? (Follow-up: after they give one resource, ask if there are any other resources for support)

A couple of probing questions – depending on the resources reported

5. I noticed that you mentioned _____ as a resource. How might _____ support you in developing in this area of teaching?
6. I noticed that you didn't mention _____ (curriculum specialist, coach, grade level colleagues) as a resource. What might be some reasons why _____ would not be a support in this area?
7. I noticed that you didn't mention your principal as a resource. What might be some reasons why your principal would not be a support in this area?
8. I noticed that you mentioned your principal as resource. In what ways might your principal be a support in this area?
10. We've talked about what kind of support it might take for you to move from where you are in teaching _____ to what you consider to be your best possible, or optimum, teaching practice. As you reflect on your growth as a teacher, is there anything else you would like to share?

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